



P R E S S

"Daring and imaginative. Heartbeat Opera [is] an enterprise that, while small and still young, has already contributed more to opera's vitality than most major American companies."

-Joshua Barone, *The New York Times*

"Icy vodka shots of opera instead of ladles of cream sauce ... stripping away centuries of expectations and tradition."

-Zachary Woolfe, *The New York Times*

"Bold and vivid. This small, adventurous company strives to make opera a visceral, intimate and immediate 'encounter.' Their alterations to masterpieces aim to get past dated elements that can mute the raw emotions and the timeless issues coursing within the original works."

- Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*

"Intimate, intense and contemporary, the scene aptly represents the mission of the young company Heartbeat Opera: streamline and rearrange canonical works both musically and dramatically, paring them down to their concentrated cores and stripping away centuries of expectations and tradition."

-Zachary Woolfe, *The New York Times*

"A categorically imaginative company, [Heartbeat] has made its name with vital reshapings of repertory operas. A radical endeavor -- less pint-sized grand opera than an appropriation of the genre for theatre of the black-box type."

- Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*

"Pioneers...reformatting the opera experience from the grand to the deliberately intimate. Ingenious. [A] radical transformational approach to the standard repertoire."

- Heidi Waleson, *The Wall Street Journal*

"One of the most agile and dynamic companies on New York's indie opera scene. Every Heartbeat event feels like a happening. Judging by the average audience age and enthusiasm level, the company is succeeding."

- Joanne Sydney Lessner, *Opera News Cover feature*

"Urgent, rigorous, and young, Heartbeat Opera poses another beacon of hope against New York City's gloomy operatic landscape. Heard and Proske are a pair of auteurs to watch for. Their intelligence and warmth saturate the respective works, making for a thoroughly enjoyable evening at the opera house."

- Patrick Clement James, *Parterre Box*



F I D E L I O **(National Tour 2022)**

"Daring and imaginative. Heartbeat Opera [is] an enterprise that, while small and still young, has already contributed more to opera's vitality than most major American companies."

- *The New York Times* - Critics Pick!

"Stunning. Powerfully sung and revelatory. This *Fidelio* does not flinch at hard questions."

- *LA Times*

"Laceratingly powerful... a blunt reminder of how little has changed since Beethoven's day, and how much these familiar old stories still have to tell us about the way we live now."

- *The San Francisco Chronicle*

"Heartbeat Opera's *Fidelio* works so well because it is interrupting a musical discourse that is so familiar and well-loved."

- *Musical America Worldwide*

"Daniel Schlosberg, Heartbeat's co-music director, is an amazing creative force... The events of the last two years have only made the need for artistic voices such as Heartbeat Opera more urgent. This *Fidelio* is powerful stuff – heroic in fact."

- *Seen and Heard International*

"Heartbeat has found, well, the heart of the opera... it was the chorus of more than 100 voices of incarcerated singers and 70 volunteers from six prison choirs that made for a thrilling experience, both touching and exhilarating."

- *BroadwayWorld*

NPR's All Things Considered - Interview with Ethan Heard, Daniel Schlosberg and Derrell Acon
(originally aired on February 19, 2022)

Spectrum News 1 - TV Segment with interviews from Ethan Heard and Derrell Acon
(originally aired on February 25, 2022)



B R E A T H I N G F R E E **a visual album (2020)**

“Grippingly produced. The video’s harrowing climax includes footage from a performance of Beethoven’s extraordinary Prisoners Chorus sung by actual inmates at prisons across the country. “O Freedom,” they sing, “when will you return?” And the music holds open a space for its arrival.”

-The Boston Globe

“Gloriously moving and exquisitely produced, Heartbeat Opera has created theater to last the ages. Justice and equality are hard to come by but “Breathing Free” allows us to wonder if it’s possible. An intense work of shimmering beauty. Heartbeat Opera has achieved something new and remarkable.”

-LA Dance Chronicle

“Bracing, compelling, and heartbreaking. An artwork that strikes a resonant chord for these hard times. That is an achievement worth celebrating.”

-Musical America

“For Cisco, working on the project has been a way to feel more deeply connected to a historically exclusionary art form. She hopes *Breathing Free*, a film that puts a different spin on opera, will help more Black people “want to also claim opera as theirs.” To Heard, *Breathing Free* is a form of protest and celebration. “It’s a fight for survival. It’s a rallying cry that says, look, Black artists matter. Black Lives Matter.”

-Los Angeles Times

“Magnificent and vivacious.”

-Broadway World

“Beautifully done and very moving. The music, the dance, the visuals, the choirs, the heartache, the transcendence!”

-Phylicia Rashad



L A D Y M **an online fantasia of Verdi's MACBETH (2020)**

"A groundbreaking and interactive feast! [Heartbeat] places itself at the vanguard of new, virtual opera experiences, forging a path for other companies, big and small."

- *Opera Wire*

"Gripping, vibrant, and creepily brilliant."

- *The Wall Street Journal*

"Hacking the corporate contours of Zoom into a postmodern proscenium. Lithe leadership and arrangements. Each of the performances reach through the screen."

- *The Washington Post*

"Heartbeat is full of ideas...and it hit the dramatic core of the Verdi's sleep-walking scene."

-WQXR's Most Memorable Classical Moments of 2020

"Soprano Felicia Moore's reading of Lady Macbeth's 'Vieni, t'affretta' was riveting. Tremendously exciting."

- *Opera News*

"Leading the charge in online opera... [An] extraordinary cast and creative team whose ingenuity and spirit should be applauded."

- *Parterre*

"New and fresh. Excellent singers. Infectious energy and excitement."

- *OperaGene*



DER FREISCHÜTZ (2019)

“Icy vodka shots of opera instead of ladles of cream sauce ... stripping away centuries of expectations and tradition.”

—Zachary Woolfe, *The New York Times*

“This inventive *Freischütz* delivered ... Heartbeat’s production team wanted to delve into the work’s disturbing, timely subtexts by streamlining and modernizing it. They succeed.”

—Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times* (*New York Times Critic’s Pick*)

“One of the most visceral experiences that I have ever had in the theater. ... Heartbeat Opera took the gamble with Weber’s *Der Freischütz* and won.”

—*Seen and Heard International*

“A Complex & Chilling Re-Imagining of Weber’s Iconic Work In the Context of Trump’s America ... The bold approach taken by Heartbeat Opera affirms its promise to take risks in its staging of classical operas, and it makes a persuasive case for the contemporary relevance of Weber—and of opera more generally.”

—*Opera Wire*

“Heartbeat Opera’s take on Weber’s *Freischütz* hits the mark ... a rootin’ tootin’ version by Louisa Proske ... in an eerie production that kept my head swiveling like Linda Blair in *The Exorcist*.”

—*BroadwayWorld*



LA SUSANNA (2019)

a co-production with Opera Lafayette

“A thoughtful production that did full justice to a forgotten work. Heard gave new punch to an old story of female abuse at the hands of men.”

-Anne Midgette, *The Washington Post*

Changing the gender of Testo and Daniel is a “small but crucial shift” which is “the difference between this story being one of a helpless woman’s male savior, or of a young feminist’s coming into her own.” Lucía Martín Cartón sang with “unadorned, celestial purity that later turned to emotive exasperation.”

-Joshua Barone, *The New York Times*

“A fascinating production. A great way for neophytes to introduce themselves to an art form with a long and complicated history. The soaring melodies and vocal stylings are gorgeous all on their own, and it’s amazing to see people within this medium challenging what it means to put on an opera in the fallout of Trumpism.”

-*Observer*

“A highly theatrical version with political resonance today, never scanting the exquisite baroque musical sensibility of the piece.”

-*Parterre*

“A marvel both musically and dramatically. Artistic past and political present mingled in a way both uncomfortable and thought-provoking. Heard pulled no punches.”

-*Washington Classical Review*

“Superb. Beautifully staged. Revives wonderful, rarely-heard music and tells an old, forever-new story with love, humor, and seductive grace.”

-*Blog Critics*



DON GIOVANNI & FIDELIO (2018)

"The dedication and achievement of all participants is remarkable. High standard of music-making ... gripping and entertaining."

- David Shengold, *Opernwelt*

"Imaginatively deconstructed and reconceived. Ingenious seven-player arrangements of their orchestral scores...[with] artful transitions."

- Heidi Waleson, *The Wall Street Journal*

"No holds barred ... Donna Anna knows damn well who's in her bedroom, Donna Elvira means business when she threatens to rip out Giovanni's heart, and Zerlina isn't about to let her bumpkin husband keep her from a sexual adventure. Director/adaptor Proske delivered that version—and more."

- Joanne Sydney Lessner, *Opera News*

"I saw *Fidelio*, and was blindsided by its impact. Leading the cast were Nelson Ebo, grittily affecting as Stan, and Kelly Griffin, giving a confident, full-voiced performance as Leah. But the heartbreaking centerpiece of the production was the chorus 'O welche Lust.' Heard and Schlosberg refused to coat this wrenching spectacle in feel-good sentiment. Mindful of American reality, they discarded the opera's happy ending and imposed a bleak coda, with a scrambled, dissonant collage of *Fidelio* music and other Beethoven snippets to match."

- Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*

"A Mozart lover's wet dream ... Heartbeat's *Giovanni* successfully bucks tradition ... I'd given up hope that *Giovanni*'s plot could surprise me. ... I implore Mozart fans and novices alike turn out for this singular production."

- *Schmopera*

"Urgent, powerful, and poignant. I nearly missed Heartbeat Opera's *Fidelio*, and I'm so glad I didn't. The production, staged smartly, deftly navigated the tricky art of adaptation with new English-language dialogue."

- Joshua Barone, *The New York Times* - Best Classical Music Moments of the Week



BUTTERFLY & CARMEN (2017)

"Excerpts from [*Butterfly's*] Act I — especially crucial scenes when we see the beer-swilling Pinkerton (the vibrant tenor Mackenzie Whitney) before his wedding and some melting strands of the love duet — are intriguingly presented as dreamlike recollections. The most affecting element was the presentation of their child, a silent character. The devotion of the company to Puccini's music was evident in the sensitive arrangement of the score for five strings and harp, a richly detailed yet delicate rendering that enhanced the drama's intimacy.

"The gritty modern production ... and smoldering Carmen (Sishel Claverie) won me over. Then, at the end, after Don Jose brutally murdered her and the house went dark, the lights came on, revealing the bloodied, shaken Carmen staring at the audience. After a dramatic pause, Ms. Claverie finally sang the "Habenera." Now that was a riveting and unexpected moment. "

- Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times* - Best Classical Music Moments of the Week

"Relevant and worthwhile. What's so pleasing about Heartbeat's *Butterfly* is how well its artistic intentions dovetail with its limited means. The orchestra is cut down, but to an arrangement for harp and string quintet that recalls the mellifluous elegance of the original. The cast members are young but promising enough that you wouldn't mind hearing them in a grander production and a bigger space."

- Russell Platt, *The New Yorker*

"Gripping as music theater in its own right, not just as a gloss on a (straw man) "traditional" reading. Proske set out to examine and challenge the all-too-timely oppositions structured around borders of all types. This was an anti-touristic *Carmen* ..."

- *Opera News*

"[Proske's] productions are full-fledged dramas, affecting their audiences as complicated, well-thought-through, emotion-packed narratives as well as occasions for expressive song. ...I have never felt [this special variety of theatrical magic] at an opera to quite the same extent. Or rather, I hadn't until I saw Proske's *Carmen*."

- Wendy Lesser, *The Threepenny Review*



DRAGUS MAXIMUS **a homersexual opera odyssey (2018)**

“The company is known for its timely adaptations of classics and forward-thinking rearrangements. But its collaborative spirit is fully realized in its annual Halloween Drag Extravaganzas, of which *Dragus Maximus* is the fifth. Visually and musically stunning. A wild, sexy bacchanal.”

- *Observer*

“*Dragus Maximus* left us grinning from ear to ear. The entire evening was dazzling. Supernally creative. Manning-White is a riveting performer with equal dramatic and vocal skills. We could not imagine a better celebration of the arts and gender diversity/fluidity!”

- *Voce di Meche*

“Stunning. Captivating. Eye-popping. The entire evening was a free-wheeling, fun-loving operatic romp, with tongue firmly in cheek but with beautiful music filling the air.”

- *Feast of Music*