



11 February 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: Andrew Smith, Vancouver Live Sound

City Opera Vancouver is a professional chamber opera company established in 2006. From that date to this we have given five commissions in nine years, over 170 concerts and special events, produced 11 mainstage operas, and worked particularly in an arena of Canadian themes and artists.

Like every company, we are now pivoting to online opera. In January 2021, we published our first: THE HUMAN VOICE, an adaptation in contemporary terms of Poulenc's 1958 masterwork, LA VOIX HUMAINE. It is now available at www.cityoperavancouver.com. Its filming took place in November 2020, at the Historic Cultch Theatre in Vancouver.

From the outset, we were determined to provide studio-quality sound. Sound engineer and editor Andrew Smith was strongly recommended to us. After due diligence on our parts, he and I spoke for 90:00 in August about the parameters and ambitions of the proposed work. It was immediately clear that he spoke from a position of strong experience and wide capacity. (In my early career, I edited and produced for Naxos, and worked in Hollywood at the music end of such films as *Grand Canyon*, *Prince of Tides*, *The Fugitive*, *Flatliners*, *Alive*, and on concert and recording projects with Mel Tormé, Linda Ronstadt, and Sarah Vaughn – all as assistant to Marty Paich.) I have worked with many, many sound engineers over many years.

I have seen for myself Andrew Smith's abilities. He listens with a fine ear for blend and balance. He gives the voice the presence it always requires. He understands what must live in foreground and background. He knows how to record the piano with tremendous sensitivity to its issues of voicing and warmth. In particular, he understands and honours the vitality of text. Fearing the worst, I had planned to provide English super-titles – until I heard Andrew's first mix. The sound was so good that I abandoned all such correctives.

His manner during sessions is immensely collegial, collaborative, congenial. This is essential. I have seen more than a few sessions go off the rails when certain personalities simply could not handle the risk and stress of such work. Andrew is a pro. Nothing fazes him. He has seen it all, and is not thrown off his plan, ever. This is terrifically engaging and reassuring.

In editing our project, we worked from the sound track first. Andrew provided 'best takes', we chose among them, and only then chose the video tracks best suited. Like the good micro-surgeon all good engineers must be, he removed all extraneous noise, pedal thumps, page turns, and the like. They are now inaudible.

In consequence? We have already engaged him to serve in identical capacity in our next online opera, going up in May 2021.

Andrew Smith has earned my confidence and respect. I hope he merits yours.

Very Sincerely,

Charles
Dr Charles Barber (MA, DMA Stanford)
Artistic Director
City Opera Vancouver