

SMPTE Spotlight:

Mark Schubin

BY RUSSELL POOLE

CURRENT POSITIONS:

Engineer-in-charge of The Metropolitan Opera,
Live in HD Program Maestro
of the Hollywood Professional
Association Tech Retreat

**PROFESSIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS:**

SMPTE and the Technology
and Engineering Awards
Committee of the National
Academy of Television Arts &
Sciences

DEGREE:

Bachelor of Engineering

It's rare for someone to become a foundational figure in their field, and rarer still to become one while remaining humble and hungry to learn after more than 50 years of work. Yet Mark Schubin, the program chair of HPA Tech Retreat, the engineer-in-charge (EIC) of *The Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD*, engineering historian, educator, and writer, among many other accolades, has become a pillar in the media technology industry. Through decades of community building, research, project development, and more, Schubin has transformed the industry for the better. He received the Charles F. Jenkins Lifetime Achievement Award at the 77th Engineering, Science & Technology Emmy® Awards on October 14, 2025.

Schubin is a problem solver at heart and describes even his greatest accomplishments in such a way. For example, he was one of the first to patent stereo sound for television, and he established the first nationwide live stereo network. He also pioneered live subtitles, achieving this relatively early in his career, and multilingual live subtitles. These breakthroughs made media more accessible and of higher quality, opening doors for even more dynamic work to be done in the industry. When asked about these accomplishments, though, Schubin simply said, "To me, that was just engineering. I had problems to solve, and I solved them."

"I think I might still be in shock," said Schubin when asked about his Emmy® win. "And I definitely feel unworthy, but I'm delighted to be the recipient of an award named for SMPTE's founder and first president, Charles Francis Jenkins. He was the first to transmit live moving images wirelessly. He trained a woman as a television camera operator and his first television director. He listened to ideas from everyone, regardless of gender or age. He's a wonderful inspiration!"

Though humble, Schubin does take pride in his discoveries and educational initiatives. For example, the Polish television-engineering pioneer Julijan Ochorowicz (c. 1878) was someone who didn't appear in most television histories before Schubin uncovered his existence. He also curated an exhibit for the New York Public Library on advanced television technology, which involved getting NASA to reposition a satellite, and another for the Film



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Society of Lincoln Center on advanced cinema technology, such as glasses-free 3D. Of course, Schubin isn’t just thankful for what he’s accomplished, but also for the people who helped him along the way.

“The late Paul Klein and John Goberman came up with great ideas and challenged me to achieve them,” said Schubin when asked about his career influences. “I failed to do so, but I learned a lot by trying. Paul essentially came up with the concept of video-on-demand streaming. It was way ahead of its time, but we helped create the modern era of in-room movies in hotels as part of a proof of concept. John came up with television as a means of financing the performing arts. The business plan involved a Lincoln Center subscription channel. At that time, the proof of concept involved creating the *Live from Lincoln Center* series on PBS.”

At his core, though, Schubin is still a humble problem solver, an aspect perfectly encapsulated in this anecdote he shared, “A major manufacturer was introducing a new product in a coast-to-coast demo involving celebrities, including a famous audio mixer. The new technology all worked fine, but what should have been a simple aspect of the demo threatened to take everything down. I didn’t have time to create an elegant fix, so I just positioned my-

self where I could discreetly push a button at appropriate times. Only the mixer saw what was happening. During a break, he looked up at me in awe and said, ‘Now I know what you do!’ And he did.”

Schubin joined SMPTE early in his career, reading the Journal, attending meetings, and making connections. Over time, he didn’t just become influential in the world of SMPTE, but in the world of media technology. Along the way, he uplifted his communities via educational initiatives, mentorships, and innovation. Schubin doesn’t just solve problems in the media technology realm. He solves problems within the society he has built around him. That’s why he won the Charles F. Jenkins Lifetime Achievement Award and the respect of those around him.

“Even though this is a lifetime achievement award, I hope I have some more lifetime left,” said Schubin. “When I started in this business, there was still 1.4-volt video, and all video cameras and displays were vacuum-tube-based. New technologies have democratized television, and that trend will continue.”

DOI: 10.5594/JMI.2025/MANS3709

Date of publication: 15 November 2025