

THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER AMERICA

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OPERA AMERICA ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF THE OPERA FUND: AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

TEN OPERA COMPANIES RECEIVE A TOTAL OF \$160,000
TO ENGAGE AUDIENCES IN NEW AMERICAN OPERA

March 2, 2017 (New York) — OPERA America, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion for American opera, is pleased to announce it has awarded grants to 10 opera companies through **The Opera Fund: Audience Development** grant program, which promotes deep learning experiences about new or infrequently produced American operas and music-theater works. Each grant supports audience development activities associated with a specific work being produced by a Professional Company Member of OPERA America.

A total of \$160,000 has been awarded to the following 10 opera companies: **Ardea Arts** (New York, NY), **Des Moines Metro Opera**, **Fort Worth Opera**, **Long Beach Opera**, **North Carolina Opera** (Raleigh, NC), **Opera Omaha**, **Opera Roanoke**, **Pensacola Opera**, **Pittsburgh Festival Opera** (formerly Opera Theater of Pittsburgh) and **Pittsburgh Opera**.

“OPERA America is committed to expanding and diversifying audiences for American operas and to developing authentic connections between opera companies and the people they serve,” stated OPERA America President/CEO **Marc A. Scorca**. “The most recent grant awardees demonstrate the many ways companies are developing innovative strategies to not only attract audiences, but to increase the civic impact of new works — by engaging generative artists with local communities, developing partnerships with organizations outside the arts, and facilitating dialogue to connect storytelling with contemporary issues.”

Applications for The Opera Fund’s Audience Development grants were reviewed by an independent panel consisting of **Douglas J. Cuomo**, composer; **Ann Gregg**, director, social impact programs, Weill Music Institute, Carnegie Hall; **Kristen Jackson**, connectivity director, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company; **Jonathan Moscone**, chief of civic engagement, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; and **Julia Rhoads**, artistic director, Lucky Plush Productions.

OPERA America’s long tradition of encouraging the creation and production of new works led to the formation of The Opera Fund endowment. Since the inception of the Fund, OPERA America has made grants of more than \$13 million to assist companies with the expenses associated with the commissioning and development of new works, as well as related audience development initiatives.

The Opera Fund was launched by the National Endowment for the Arts, and it is funded by The Helen F. Whitaker Fund, Lee Day Gillespie, Lloyd and Mary Ann Gerlach, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation.

ABOUT THE RECIPIENTS

The Opera Fund: Audience Development grants were awarded to the following 10 companies for their projects described below.



ARDEA ARTS (in partnership with University of Kentucky Opera Theatre)
BOUNCE The Basketball Opera by composers Glen Roven, Tomás Doncker and Ansel Elgort and librettist Charles R. Smith Jr.

BOUNCE The Basketball Opera, directed by Grethe Barrett Holby, will synthesize the power of opera with the grittiness of street rhythms, electronic dance music, rap and gospel. The opera will bring a story focusing on issues of gun violence and cyclical poverty to a stage where an audience may already be found — the basketball court. Local basketball players, youth and community leaders will perform side by side with a diverse professional cast to bring this story of resilience to life in their own communities. Ardea Arts, partnering with UK Opera Theatre, will premiere *BOUNCE* this fall in Lexington, Kentucky, and surrounding counties, fostering relationships and collaborations among people who may not otherwise work together, with the aim of bridging divides within our society through art.



DES MOINES METRO OPERA
Soldier Songs by composer and librettist David T. Little

Des Moines Metro Opera partnered with Camp Dodge Joint Maneuver Training Center, Iowa's largest military installation, to present three onsite performances of David T. Little's one-act opera *Soldier Songs* in late January 2017. With the composer in attendance and in cooperation with Camp Dodge personnel, veterans of combat served as production consultants and attended a free performance. With the assistance of camp personnel, the opera company integrated military equipment and vehicles into the production design. Active duty and retired military personnel, as well as representatives from the office of U.S. Senator Joni Ernst and the VA Central Iowa Health Care System, led talkbacks following each performance.



FORT WORTH OPERA
Cruzar la Cara de la Luna by composer José "Pepe" Martínez and librettist Leonard Foglia

Fort Worth Opera will present Fiesta Fort Worth, a free public festival featuring a simulcast of the mariachi opera *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*. This is part of Noches de Ópera, the company's four-year initiative to present authentic and relevant Spanish-language stories, promote dialogue and inclusiveness, and give voice to the Latino experience. The festival, held at Sundance Square in downtown Fort Worth, will feature local performers and community speakers, and it will culminate in the simulcast of the opening-night performance of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*.

LONG BEACH OPERA

As One by composer Laura Kaminsky and librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed



Leading up to performances of *As One*, Long Beach Opera will collaborate with the LGBTQ community, including nonprofit, school-based and employee organizations, to present a series of "coincidences," educational panels, films, oral history and a trans youth art exhibition. The project will actively engage an audience of not just the LGBTQ community, but also the broader community throughout Southern California. Partner organizations include the GSA Network, Trevor Project and regional LGBTQ centers.

NORTH CAROLINA OPERA

Cold Mountain by composer Jennifer Higdon and librettist Gene Scheer



For its company premiere of *Cold Mountain*, North Carolina Opera will carry out two related programs in summer 2017: a panel session, open rehearsal and learning discussion in conjunction with rehearsals of the opera; and performances for military communities across the state, presented in coordination with the USO of North Carolina. The discussions, which will focus on the themes of returning home and post-combat relationship dynamics, will be coordinated with the USO of North Carolina's Resiliency Programs, which give service members, spouses and family members training and tools better to cope with the pressures and challenges associated with military life.

OPERA OMAHA

Proving Up by composer Missy Mazzoli and librettist Royce Vavrek



In honor of the company's 60th season, Opera Omaha, the only professional opera company in Nebraska, has commissioned *Proving Up*, a story set in Nebraska. Leading up to the work's premiere in April 2018, Opera Omaha will undertake a broad schedule of learning activities for students and adults that will deepen their understanding and engagement with contemporary opera. These activities will explore literary, poetic, compositional and historical aspects of the work and the creative process, with the aim of sparking a deeper interest in and appreciation of new operatic work among audiences.

OPERA ROANOKE

Susannah by composer and librettist Carlisle Floyd



Opera Roanoke will create a series of behind-the-scenes videos about Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*, giving audiences an inside look into how an opera is produced by a regional company. This project, believed to be the first of its kind by a nonprofit arts organization in the region, will begin with the planning process and continue through the three weeks of rehearsals leading up to opening night. The videos, which will be posted to social media, will feature the entire team of staff, artists and crew, as well as patrons, new audience members, students and colleagues.



PENSACOLA OPERA

Dead Man Walking by composer Jake Heggie and librettist Terrence McNally

Pensacola Opera will present 14 town-hall-style meetings leading up to and following the Florida premiere of *Dead Man Walking*, bringing together members of the religious, legal and social service sectors to discuss crime and its impact on the community. Included in the series is a conversation with composer Jake Heggie and Sister Helen Prejean. The company's artists in residence will also present musical excerpts from the opera, as well as a reader's theater version of the libretto.



PITTSBURGH FESTIVAL OPERA (formerly Opera Theater of Pittsburgh)

A Gathering of Sons by composer Dwayne Fulton and librettist Tameka Cage Conley

As part of its "Music that Matters" series, Pittsburgh Festival Opera commissioned *A Gathering of Sons*, a work that explores themes of race, social justice and the role of police in communities. The world premiere will be preceded by a series of performance workshops featuring excerpts and facilitated talkbacks with artists and community leaders. Discussions will take place at community partner spaces through June 2017, as well as through a dedicated web portal.



PITTSBURGH OPERA

The Summer King with music by Daniel Sonenberg, libretto by Daniel Sonenberg and Daniel Nester, and additional lyrics by Mark Campbell

In conjunction with the world premiere of [The Summer King](#) — an opera about the life and tragic death of Josh Gibson, the legendary Negro Leagues baseball player — Pittsburgh Opera will present a "Breaking Barriers" program to engage members of the local African-American community in direct learning and artistic experiences. The cast and creative team will visit religious congregations and other locations to discuss the upcoming production, share their personal experiences as African-American artists and offer the participants an opportunity to experience live opera in an intimate setting.

For more information about OPERA America, its many programs and the National Opera Center, visit operaamerica.org.



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About OPERA America

OPERA America (operaamerica.org) leads and serves the entire opera community, supporting the creation, presentation and enjoyment of opera.

- Artistic services help opera companies and creative and performing artists to improve the quality of productions and increase the creation and presentation of North American works.
- Information, technical and administrative services to opera companies reflect the need for strengthened leadership among staff, trustees and volunteers.
- Education, audience development and community services are designed to enhance all forms of opera appreciation.

Founded in 1970, OPERA America's worldwide membership network includes 150 Professional Company Members, 250 Associate, Business and Educational Members, 1,200 Individual Members, and 16,000 subscribers to the association's electronic news service. In response to the critical need for suitable audition, rehearsal and recording facilities, OPERA America opened the first-ever **NATIONAL OPERA CENTER** (operaamerica.org/OperaCenter) in September 2012 in New York City. With a wide range of artistic and administrative services in a purpose-built facility, OPERA America is dedicated to increasing the level of excellence, creativity and effectiveness across the field.