



THE NATIONAL **OPERA** CENTER
AMERICA

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OPERA AMERICA ANNOUNCES DETAILS FOR OPERA CONFERENCE 2018: LIFTING MANY VOICES

Taking Place June 20–23 in St. Louis, MO
conference.operaamerica.org

Hosted by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis
in association with Opera Volunteers International

Featuring Keynote Speaker John Adams

Three Sessions of Field-Wide Impact to be Streamed Live at
operaamerica.org/Live

June 11, 2018 (New York) — **OPERA America**, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion for American opera, is pleased to announce details of [Opera Conference 2018: Lifting Many Voices](http://conference.operaamerica.org), to be held in St. Louis, MO, from June 20–23. Hosted by **Opera Theatre of Saint Louis** (OTSL) in association with **Opera Volunteers International**, this annual gathering of opera professionals — the largest in North America — will convene at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at the Arch and venues throughout the St. Louis area. This is the second time in OPERA America's 48-year history and the first time since 2003 that the conference will be held in St. Louis.

With more than 700 opera administrators, trustees and artists in attendance, OPERA America's annual conference presents a unique opportunity to examine issues affecting the opera community from a variety of perspectives. With the theme of "Lifting Many Voices," Opera Conference 2018 will delve into the ways diverse artists, audiences, trustees and staff all bring powerful perspectives to the industry and make opera stronger. Attendees will explore some of the most crucial issues of the art form today — civic action, equity and inclusion, audience and patron engagement, artist careers, innovation in production, and sound governance — while also enjoying OTSL's festival offerings and networking opportunities.

OPERA CONFERENCE 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

Topics planned for opera conference attendees cover all facets of opera production and address the concerns of creators, administrators, trustees and supporters. Highlights of the many sessions, performances and showcases include:

- **General Sessions**

These conference-wide sessions bring together the broad constituency to explore topics that affect the entire opera field, and beyond:

- **Keynote: A Conversation with John Adams**

Following welcoming remarks, OTSL's general director, Timothy O'Leary, will lead John Adams in a conversation about the inspirations that have influenced his work and underpinned his commitment to bringing resonant stories to the opera stage.

- **Meeting Audience Expectations**

Recent research shows that today's arts audiences are seeking more than just a performance and that opera companies are competing against a much larger range of activities than ever before for audience attention. Leading experts will present their research findings as a prelude to an informative discussion about ways companies are responding to new audience expectations.

- **Recognizing and Undoing Racism**

Leading experts in equity, diversity and inclusion will reveal patterns of structural racism and provide guidance on how opera company staff and board members can dismantle these practices within their own institutions.

- **Reflections and Looking Forward**

Observers woven throughout the conference will offer reflections on their experiences and learning.

- **Learning Themes**

Threaded throughout the conference in sessions geared toward a range of networks are learning themes of great importance to the field: Artist Careers; Audience and Patron Engagement; Civic Action; Equity; Governance and Operations; and Innovation in Production.

- **New Works Forum**

OPERA America's long-standing commitment to supporting the creation and presentation of new works led to the establishment of the New Works Forum, which meets twice each year. Conference sessions will offer insight, practical knowledge and networking opportunities for creators and producers of new opera and music-theater works. Topics to be covered include "Building the 21st-Century Canon" and "American Opera as a New Art Form." New for 2018, the New Works Forum will feature dedicated breakout sessions for development, marketing and education staff to explore all aspects of producing, funding and promoting the expanding American repertoire.

- **Performances**

Conference attendees have the opportunity to attend OTSL's festival productions: a new full-length version of *An American Soldier*, by Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang; Gluck's *Orfeo & Euridice*, with Jennifer Johnson Cano and Andriana Chuchman in the title roles; and Blitzstein's rarely performed *Regina*, featuring Susan Graham in her long-awaited return to OTSL. Those wishing to remain in St. Louis after the conclusion of the conference may also take in a new production of *La traviata* staged by Patricia Racette in her directorial debut.

For the seventh straight year, the conference is presented in association with Opera Volunteers International. A special track of sessions for volunteers will address the important role that volunteerism plays in the success of opera companies.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Opera Conference 2018 attendees will hear from 150 leading experts in opera, the performing arts, and the cultural and business sectors. Among those who will be providing insight, knowledge and practical skills are:

John Adams, Composer

Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager, City of Oakland

Maria Bradford, Director of Community Engagement, St. Louis Community Foundation

Annie Burridge, General Director and CEO, Austin Opera

Adrienne D. Davis, Provost, Washington University in St. Louis

David Devan, General Director and President, Opera Philadelphia

Peggy Kriha Dye, General and Artistic Director, Opera Columbus

Julie Grady Heard, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Cincinnati Opera

Stuart Holt, Director of School Programs and Community Engagement, Metropolitan Opera Guild

Kayhan Irani, 2016 White House Champion of Change

Sunil Iyengar, Director, Office of Research and Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts

Andrew Jorgensen, General Director Designate, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

Laura Kaminsky, Composer

Mark Edward Kent, President, The Biome Foundation

Kim Kowalke, President and CEO, Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

Timothy O'Leary, General Director, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

Melanie Powell-Robinson, Executive Director, Diversity Awareness Partnership

Patricia Racette, Soprano and Stage Director

Michelle Ramos, Executive Director, AlternateROOTS

Huang Ruo, Composer and Conductor

Felicia Shaw, Executive Director, Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis

Sheila Silver, Composer

Diane Sullivan, CEO, President and Chairman of the Board, Caleres, Inc.

Tazewell Thompson, Director and Librettist

Christine Yoon, Senior Program Officer, The Wallace Foundation

The innovative thinking and valuable tools gained during Opera Conference 2018 are not limited to those able to travel to St. Louis. Select sessions will be streamed live on OPERA America's website at operaamerica.org/Live and later archived on the organization's YouTube channel (youtube.com/OPERAAmerica). Conference attendees and live stream viewers are encouraged to interact and share highlights on social media with #OperaConf.

Sessions streaming live from St. Louis at operaamerica.org/Live are:

- **Keynote: A Conversation with John Adams**, Thursday, June 21, 9:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. CDT
- **Meeting Audience Expectations**, Friday, June 22, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. CDT
- **Recognizing and Undoing Racism**, Saturday, June 23, 9:15 a.m. – 10:45 p.m. CDT

See the attached Program Details for additional Opera Conference 2018 session and event information.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Online registration is available through June 14 at conference.operaamerica.org. Registration is \$595 for Individuals and \$575 for Teams (three or more from a member company).

Beginning June 19, conference registration will be available on-site for \$695, and attendance is open to anyone interested in opera and the performing arts. To register on-site, please visit the Registration Desk, located on the second floor of the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at the Arch (315 Chestnut Street).

SPONSORS

OPERA America gratefully acknowledges the support of the following Opera Conference 2018 sponsors:

Act 1 Tours	The National Endowment for the Arts
ADA Artist Management	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis
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For more information about Opera Conference 2018, visit conference.operaamerica.org.

For press credentials or interviews, contact
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View the entire [conference schedule](#) and [program book](#).

Follow the conference conversation on social media with #OperaConf and [@OPERAAmerica](https://twitter.com/OPERAAmerica).

Watch live-streamed conference sessions at operaamerica.org/Live.

–more–



CONFERENCE PROGRAM DETAILS

*Below are additional details about highlights of Opera Conference 2018.
For more information, visit the [online schedule](#) or see the [program book](#).*

GENERAL SESSIONS

General Sessions bring together the broad constituency to explore topics that affect all aspects of the opera field:

- **Keynote: A Conversation with John Adams**
Opera Conference 2018 kicks off with words of welcome from Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Opera Volunteers International and OPERA America before **Timothy O’Leary** leads **John Adams** in a conversation about the inspirations that have influenced his work and underpinned his commitment to bringing resonant stories to the opera stage. Featuring **Peggy Kriha Dye**, general and artistic director, Opera Columbus; **Laura Kaminsky**, ambassador/composer; **Mark Edward Kent**, president, The Biome Foundation; **Anh Le**, publications and brand manager, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; **Susan Malott**, president, Opera Volunteers International; **Ruth Orth**, past president, Pensacola Opera; **Karen Quisenberry**, production director, Minnesota Opera; **Marc A. Scorca**, president/CEO, OPERA America; **Roger Weitz**, general director, Opera Omaha.
- **Meeting Audience Expectations**
Recent research shows that today’s arts audiences are seeking more than just a performance, and it confirms that opera companies are competing against a much larger range of activities than ever before for audience attention — important factors when working to increase customer loyalty and frequency of attendance. Leading experts will present their research findings as a prelude to an informative discussion about ways companies are responding to new audience expectations. Featuring **Tim Powers**, director of sales and marketing, Four Seasons Hotel St. Louis (moderator); **Annie Burrige**, general director and CEO, Austin Opera; **David Devan**, general director and president, Opera Philadelphia; **Sunil Iyengar**, director, Office of Research and Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts; **Marc A. Scorca**, president/CEO, OPERA America; **Christine Yoon**, senior program officer, the Wallace Foundation.
- **Recognizing and Undoing Racism**
Structural racism continues to influence decision-making at all levels, including choices made by and for opera companies. Structural racism plays a role in hiring practices, organizational funding, marketing and season planning, but can leave many unaware of its influence because of the unconscious nature of biases and inherited practices. In this session, community leaders will reveal patterns of racism and how opera company staff and board members can dismantle these practices within their own institutions. Featuring **Roberto Bedoya**, cultural affairs manager, City of Oakland; **Mark Edward Kent**, president, The Biome Foundation; **Timothy O’Leary**, general director, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; **Melanie Powell Robinson**, executive director, Diversity Awareness Partnership; **Marc A. Scorca**, president/CEO, OPERA America; **Felicia Shaw**, executive director, Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis.

- **Reflections and Looking Forward**

Observers woven throughout the conference will offer reflections on their experience of the conference. Attendees will join **Marc A. Scorca** in thanking Opera Theatre of Saint Louis for its service to the field and will extend an invitation to next year's annual gathering in San Francisco. Featuring **Andrew Jorgensen**, general director designate, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; **Susan Malott**, president, Opera Volunteers International; **Noémi Neidorff**, chairman, board of directors, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

OPEN SESSIONS

In addition to the general sessions, attendees will choose from more than 40 additional sessions over the course of Opera Conference 2018. Sessions address the needs of staff, trustees, volunteers and other industry professionals; some focus on specific areas of practice, such as artistic administration, artist training and management, development, finance, marketing, public relations, governance, volunteerism and technical/production, while others foster cross-network dialogue. These sessions are:

- Active Crisis Preparedness
- All-Conference Roundtable: Confronting Sexual Harassment, Abuse and Assault
- The Art of Asking
- Arts Integration: S.T.E.A.M.
- Beyond the Numbers: Engaging Your Patrons Through Patron Journeys
- Building Authentic Partnerships
- Career Transitions for Artists
- Community Engagement: Defining Success
- Comprehensive Campaigns
- Creative Youth Development
- Culturally Conscious Casting
- Don't Start, Stop!
- Equity Begins with Access to Training
- Four Essential Balances
- Giving Voice to Volunteers
- A Holistic Approach to Customer Service
- How to Talk Shop
- Identity in Storytelling
- Implication of Tax Code Revisions
- Innovation: Human-Centered Design Thinking
- Leading Community Conversations
- Lifestyle Entrepreneurship: Integrating Family Life with a Career in the Arts
- Long-Range New Works Planning
- Maintaining Board Member Engagement
- Managing Liquidity
- Merging Music Traditions
- Messaging Our Impact
- Moving Toward an Equitable Organizational Culture
- New Works Forum
- New Works Forum Breakout Sessions for Development, Education and Marketing/PR
- Opera Artists as Activists
- Opera on Broadway
- Podcasting at the Intersection of Opera, Race and Social Justice
- Patron Experience: Managing the Crossover Zone
- Program Evaluation for Grants
- Recruiting, Training and Retaining Development Officers
- Reinventing the Event
- Roundtable: All the World's a Stage
- Roundtable/Breakfast: People of Color in Opera
- Spotlight on Dynamic Pricing
- Training Teaching Artists
- Women's Opera Network: Taking Control of Our Narrative

NEW WORKS FORUM

OPERA America has long been an advocate in supporting the creation of new work, while helping to address challenges and opportunities associated with producing opera in the 21st century. This commitment has led to the establishment of the New Works Forum, one of the most popular events at the conference each year. The New Works Forum is a series of sessions that offers insight, practical knowledge and networking opportunities for creators and producers of new opera and music-theater works. Topics to be covered include “Building the 21st-Century Canon” and “American Opera as a New Art Form.” New for 2018, the New Works Forum will feature dedicated breakout sessions for development staff, marketing staff, trustees and other networks to explore all aspects of producing, funding and promoting the expanding American repertoire.

NETWORKS, FORUMS AND LEARNING THEMES

As part of its efforts to identify and respond to challenges facing opera professionals, OPERA America maintains a number of specialized networks and forums to advance understanding in specific areas of the field. Several of these groups will meet for roundtable discussions during the conference, including:

- Artistic Administration
- Artists
- Development and Fundraising
- Education and Community Engagement
- Finance, Administration and Human Resources
- General Directors and CEOs
- Marketing and Public Relations
- New Works Forum
- Singer Training Forum
- Technical/Production
- Trustees
- Volunteers
- Women’s Opera Network

In addition, threaded throughout the conference are sessions addressing the following learning themes:

- Artist Careers
- Audience and Patron Engagement
- Civic Action
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Governance
- Innovation in Production

WOMEN’S OPERA NETWORK

In 2015, OPERA America founded the Women’s Opera Network (WON), a group to support and advance women working in opera, as well as foster discussion about diversity and gender parity in the field. The group first convened at Opera Conference 2015, and they will come together again this year for a session on June 20.

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR WOMEN

OPERA America’s Mentorship Program for Women, currently in its inaugural year, is intended to provide a unique opportunity for promising female administrators (protégés) in the field to be paired with established leaders (mentors), to help the protégés identify advancement barriers and create a plan for professional growth. All three protégé-mentor pairs will be in attendance at Opera Conference 2018.

LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE

Generously supported by the American Express Foundation, the Leadership Intensive identifies the most promising emerging leaders in the field of opera administration and provides them with the skills and contacts needed to advance their careers. This year, Leadership Intensive alumni from 2012–2017 will convene at the conference for roundtable discussions.

PERFORMANCES

Conference attendees have the chance to experience all of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis' festival offerings:

- **Center Stage Concert (June 19):** This one-night-only event features members of OTSL's nationally acclaimed young artist programs. These exciting singers will perform some of opera's greatest hits and cherished rarities, accompanied onstage by members of the renowned St. Louis Symphony.
- **Regina (June 20):** Susan Graham returns to OTSL to portray one of the American stage's most fascinating characters in a production created by James Robinson. The stellar cast includes James Morris and Ron Raines, conducted by Stephen Lord.
- **Orfeo and Euridice (June 21):** Gluck's ravishing masterpiece is performed in a production created by Ron Daniels and conductor Pierre Vallet with a cast that includes Jennifer Johnson Cano and Andriana Chuchman.
- **An American Soldier (June 22):** Danny Chen is the son of Chinese immigrants, and a proud American. He enlists in the U.S. Army in 2011, eager to serve his country. In boot camp, Danny is welcomed by his band of brothers. But in Afghanistan, his own base becomes enemy territory as military hazing turns deadly. Based on a true story, this new opera by Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang asks powerful questions about what it means to be an American. Directed by Matthew Ozawa and conducted by Michael Christie.
- **La traviata (June 23):** Embrace the romance of this Verdi masterpiece, featuring the directing debut of star soprano Patricia Racette. Featuring Sydney Mancasola, Geoffrey Agpalo and Joo Wan Kang. Conducted by Christopher Allen.

Transportation to and from OTSL's theater at the Loretto-Hilton Center will be provided for the *Center Stage Concert*, *Orfeo and Euridice*, *Regina* and *An American Soldier*.

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

ST. LOUIS | JUNE 20-23
OPERA CONFERENCE 2018
LIFTING MANY VOICES



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#OperaConf

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 17,500 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.

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