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OPERA AMERICA CALLS FOR INNOVATION AT OPERA CONFERENCE 2019

June 12–16 in San Francisco, CA
conference.operaamerica.org

Hosted by San Francisco Opera
in association with Opera Volunteers International

June 3, 2019 (New York) — **OPERA America**, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion for American opera, will present the 49th annual **Opera Conference** from June 12–16 in San Francisco. Hosted by San Francisco Opera in association with Opera Volunteers International, this sold-out convening of opera professionals — the largest in North America — will meet at the Park Central San Francisco and venues throughout San Francisco. This is the fourth time in OPERA America's 49-year history that the conference will be held in the City by the Bay.

More than 700 opera administrators, trustees and artists will gather to discuss what's next for the opera industry by focusing on three central themes: **Examining Traditions**, **Exploring Business Innovation** and **Deepening Civic Practice**. Each theme will be introduced at a plenary session by a cohort of provocateurs drawn from leading institutions in and beyond the sector. The themes will be explored subsequently in concurrent sessions and roundtables focusing on the full spectrum of professional specialties, including artistic administration, performer development, fundraising, marketing and governance, among others.

"At a time when opera is faced with a combination of challenges and exciting opportunities, field leaders have to draw on innovative ideas from within and outside the performing arts to thrive," said Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. "A faculty of experts from San Francisco and across the country will be at the center of intense and stimulating discussion."

EXAMINING TRADITIONS

Traditions shape our canon, dictate our performance customs and define our art form. Is it time to reinterpret the repertoire, adjust our practices and introduce new ideas into the evolution of opera?

- Philip Kennicott, chief art and architecture critic of *The Washington Post*, moderates the general session (Thursday, June 13, 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.) with provocateurs Jake Heggie, composer; Susan Malott, managing director, San Francisco Opera Guild; Nicole Paiement, artistic director, Opera Parallèle; Matthew Shilvock, general director, San Francisco Opera; Elise Brunelle, managing director, Cape Town Opera; Daniel Kramer, artistic director, English National Opera; Beth Morrison, president and creative producer, Beth Morrison Projects; Timothy O'Leary, general director, Washington National Opera; and Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO, OPERA America.

EXPLORING BUSINESS INNOVATION

The Bay Area has changed the world with innovative technologies, entrepreneurial models and creative management strategies. Can new and disruptive practices transform the opera business, as well?

- Robert Marx, president of the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, moderates the general session (Friday, June 14, 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.) with provocateurs Alexis Gonzales-Black, organization design practice lead, August Public; Michael Gregor, senior organization transformation consultant, August Public; Matthew Shilvock, general director, San Francisco Opera; Annie Burrige, general director and CEO, Austin Opera; Sarah Lutman, principal, 8 Bridges Workshop; Lisa Middleton, vice president, marketing and communications, Lyric Opera of Chicago; and Roger Weitz, general director, Opera Omaha.

DEEPENING CIVIC PRACTICE

Opera has the potential to strengthen the civic fabric of our communities. How can building authentic partnerships bridge divisions and address shared priorities to improve our cities?

- Jane Chu, former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, moderates the general session (Saturday, June 15, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.) with provocateurs Cayenne Harris, vice president, Lyric Unlimited, Lyric Opera of Chicago; Carlos Hernandez, executive director, Puerto Rican Arts Alliance; Lauren Medici, director of engagement programs, Opera Omaha; Melissa Ngan, founding flutist and executive director, Fifth House Ensemble; Timothy O'Leary, general director, Washington National Opera; Mark Valdez, consultant, ArtsValdez; and Gwyn Williams, program director, Collective for Youth.

Additional Programming

Opera Conference 2019 will provide a variety of programming supplemental to the three central themes. A pre-conference workshop on supporting race equity in opera organizations, as well as meetings of OPERA America's Women's Opera Network and ALAANA Opera Network (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab and Native American) will advance discussion about diversity and equity in the field.

The conference also provides a platform for OPERA America to introduce the companies, artists and administrators who have received some of its \$2 million in annual grants and/or benefited from its professional development programming over the past year. These include:

- A showcase of projects funded by Innovation Grants, made possible by the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation (Thursday, June 13, 1:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.).
- Presentations by the finalists of the Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase, funded by the Tobin Theatre Arts Fund (Thursday, June 13, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.).
- An introduction of grantees of Opera Grants for Female Composers, funded by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation (Sunday, June 16, 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.).
- Ongoing programming for participants and alumni of the Leadership Intensive, funded by the American Express Foundation.
- Networking opportunities for participants of the Mentorship Program for Women, funded by OPERA America's annual Backstage Brunch.

The conference culminates in the spring meeting of the New Works Forum, the largest convening of producers, artists, publishers and other stakeholders dedicated to the development of new operatic repertoire (funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation). Among other topics, the New Works Forum will highlight OPERA America's newest grant program for composers and librettists of color: IDEA Opera Grants (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access), supported by the Charles and Cerise Jacobs Charitable Foundation.

Performances and Highlights of San Francisco

The city of San Francisco and its vibrant opera scene will be featured through a variety of special performances and conference sessions.

SAN FRANCISCO PERFORMANCES

- Private showcase of excerpts from *If I Were You* by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer, the Merola Opera Program's first-ever commissioned work, at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (Wednesday, June 12, 9:00 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.)
- San Francisco Opera performances at the War Memorial Opera House
 - *Carmen* — Friday, June 14, 7:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.
 - *Orlando* — Saturday, June 15, 7:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.
 - *Rusalka* — Sunday, June 16, 2:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

SAN FRANCISCO-AREA SPEAKERS (SAMPLE LIST)

- Aubrey Bergauer, executive director, California Symphony
- J'Nai Bridges, mezzo-soprano, San Francisco Opera
- David Cardona, director, shopper marketing, category advisory and multicultural capabilities, the Clorox Company
- Yuming Chiu, associate director of HIV marketing, Gilead Sciences
- James Cross, vice president of the board, Merola Opera Program
- Paul Drescher, founder, Paul Drescher Ensemble
- Adam Fong, program officer in the performing arts, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- David Gockley, retired general director, San Francisco Opera
- Jake Heggie, composer
- Tammy Johnson, dancer, writer and equity analyst
- Rachel Lev, commissioner, Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service
- Tamara Liu, administrator, Opera Cultura
- Bill Lueth, president, KDFC-SF
- Susan Malott, managing director, San Francisco Opera Guild
- Sarah Moore, director of brand strategy, Mission Minded
- Jonathan Moscone, chief producer, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
- Nicole Paiement, artistic director, Opera Parallèle
- Jennie Scholick, associate director of audience engagement, San Francisco Ballet
- Matthew Shilvock, general director, San Francisco Opera
- Matthew Spivey, director of artistic planning, San Francisco Symphony
- Brenda Way, founder/artistic director, ODC

Acknowledgments

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For more information about Opera Conference 2019, visit conference.operaamerica.org.

For press credentials or interviews, contact Rolando Reyes Mir, director of marketing and communications, at RReyesMir@operaamerica.org.

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



About OPERA America

OPERA America (operaamerica.org) leads and serves the entire opera community, supporting the creation, presentation and enjoyment of opera. The organization is committed to:

- Delivering professional development to artists, administrators and trustees.
- Increasing appreciation of opera through educational and audience development resources.
- Offering technical support and informational services that foster the creation and presentation of new works.
- Fostering equity, diversity and inclusion across all aspects of the opera industry.
- Undertaking national research and representing the field to policymakers and the media.
- Managing the National Opera Center, a custom-built facility that provides a centralized space for collaboration, rehearsal and performance.

Founded in 1970, OPERA America fulfills its mission through public programs, an annual conference, regional workshops, consultations, granting programs, publications and online resources. It is the only organization serving all constituents of opera: artists, administrators, trustees, educators and audience members. Membership includes 150 professional opera companies; 350 associate, business and education members; and 1,600 individuals. OPERA America extends its reach to 80,000 annual visitors to its National Opera Center and over 40,000 subscribers and followers on e-communications and social media. Representing over 90 percent of eligible professional companies, OPERA America is empowered to lead field-wide change.

OPERA America's long tradition of supporting and nurturing the creation and development of new works led to the formation of the Opera Fund, a growing endowment that allows OPERA America to make a direct impact on the ongoing creation and presentation of new opera and music-theater works. Currently, OPERA America awards more than \$2 million each year through its range of grant initiatives.