

THE NATIONAL **OPERA** CENTER **AMERICA**

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OPERA AMERICA TO LAUNCH NEW GRANT INITIATIVE FOR COMPOSERS AND LIBRETTISTS OF COLOR

IDEA Opera Grant Program (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access) Opens in 2019

Generously supported by the Charles and Cerise Jacobs Charitable Foundation

January 8, 2019 (New York) — **OPERA America**, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion for American opera, is pleased to announce the launch of its newest program: **IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access) Opera Grants**, made possible through the generosity of the Charles and Cerise Jacobs Charitable Foundation, a family foundation committed to promoting equal rights and social justice through education, music and the law. This program is designed to nurture the work of early-career composers and librettists of color by helping to advance their professional trajectories in opera.

The IDEA Opera Grant program is the first of OPERA America's funding initiatives designed to address racial inequity in the field. In recognition of the barriers to participation for creators of color in an historically white European art form, this program provides crucial support for the promotion and development of new works by creators who may be new to opera.

Beginning in 2019, two grants will be awarded annually to composer-librettist teams. Each team will receive up to \$12,500 to advance its work through workshops, readings or other developmental activities. OPERA America will also provide financial resources for each team to work with professional videographers and editors to create professional videos for promotional purposes. IDEA Opera Grant recipients will be introduced to leading opera producers through special presentations at OPERA America's New Works Forum and annual conference, via social media, and in *Opera America* magazine.

"OPERA America is uniquely positioned as the field's convener and connector to advance the careers of the most talented creative artists," declared Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. "IDEA Opera Grants enable us to identify and support the development of new works by emerging composers and librettists of color. By facilitating their work, we will help enrich the art form with new creative voices."

"We entrusted OPERA America with shepherding this grant because of its unique position in the opera world and its commitment to diversity," Cerise Jacobs, President of the Foundation, explained. "Creators of color have had little access to 'mainstream' opera companies and we are determined to rectify this. We hope the IDEA Grants will be a catalyst for exciting and different stories, soundscapes and perspectives." IDEA Opera Grants are the most recent addition to OPERA America's grant programs designed to increase the depth and breadth of the contemporary American opera repertoire. Launched in 2013, the organization's Opera

Grants for Female Composers program has awarded nearly \$1 million to composers and opera companies to promote the development of works by women and raise the visibility of women writing for the operatic medium. These programs extend OPERA America's commitment to new work more broadly. Over \$13 million has been awarded since 1985 through the Opera Fund to assist opera companies with the expenses associated with creating and developing new works, as well as related audience development initiatives.

IDEA Opera Grant guidelines will be available in spring 2019 at operaamerica.org/Grants. Letters of intent must be submitted by July 2019, with full applications due in late August 2019. Applications will be adjudicated in October 2019, and recipients will be notified later that month.

To be eligible to apply, both the librettist and the composer for each work must identify as African, Latinx, Arab, Asian or Native American (ALAANA) and have U.S. citizenship, permanent residence or DACA status.

As part of the lead up to the IDEA Opera Grants launch, OPERA America will host a special discussion forum entitled "[Ensuring a Diverse Field: Info Pod for Opera Creators](#)" on January 9, 2019, at 1:30 p.m. at its National Opera Center, located at 330 Seventh Avenue (at 29th Street) in New York City. This Info Pod discussion, open to all creators who identify as ALAANA and/or female, is designed to help address challenges specific to diverse creators and provide information about the IDEA Opera Grant program. There is no charge to attend the Info Pod, but advance registration is mandatory. To learn more and register, visit go.operaamerica.org/InfoPod.

More information about OPERA America's other grant programs is available at operaamerica.org/Grants.



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, 300 Associate, Business and Educational Members, 1,600 Individual Members, and 18,000 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.

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. Since the inception of its granting programs, OPERA America has awarded a total of nearly \$18 million to the opera field to support the work of opera creators, companies and administrators. Currently, OPERA America awards more than \$2 million each year through its range of grant initiatives.