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PARTICIPANTS SELECTED FOR THE WOMEN'S OPERA NETWORK MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Backstage Brunch (April 6) will benefit Mentorship Program and feature performances of new works by Laura Kaminsky

March 27, 2019 (New York) — **OPERA America**, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion for American opera, is pleased to announce that protégés and mentors have been selected for the organization's **Women's Opera Network Mentorship Program**, now in its second year.

The Mentorship Program is intended to provide a unique opportunity for promising female administrators (protégés) in the field to be paired with established leaders (mentors) who can help them identify advancement barriers and create plans for professional growth.

The following three protégé-mentor pairs have been selected for the 2019 Mentorship Program:

Protégé: **Rebekah Diaz** | Founder, KahLee Consulting: Community Engagement in the Creative Arts
Mentor: **Ana De Archuleta** | President and CEO, ADA Artist Management

Protégé: **Julia Noulin-Mérat** | Associate Producer, Boston Lyric Opera; and
Co-Artistic Director, Guerilla Opera
Mentor: **Cheryl Hickman** | General and Artistic Director, Opera on the Avalon

Protégé: **Tamara Vallejos** | Director of Marketing and Audience Development, Opera Colorado
Mentor: **Lisa Middleton** | Vice President, Marketing and Communications, Lyric Opera of Chicago

See below for biographies of the protégés and mentors.

The Mentorship Program was created in 2018 to help further the goals of OPERA America's [Women's Opera Network](#), a task force designed to address and advance gender parity in the opera field. The Women's Opera Network seeks to provide ongoing support for emerging female professionals in opera and to design programs that nurture and advance talented women.

The mentors and protégés will work together during 2019 through remote as well as in-person sessions, including site visits to the mentors' opera companies and meetings at Opera Conference 2019 this June in San Francisco.

“As it enters its second year, the Women’s Opera Network Mentorship Program is helping build deep relationships between promising administrators and established leaders,” stated Kathryn Smith, chair of the Women’s Opera Network Steering Committee and general director of Madison Opera. “The 2018 class of protégés and mentors have repeatedly said that the program strengthened their skills and connections, which by extension strengthens the opera field. I am grateful to everyone who supports the Backstage Brunch and makes the Mentorship Program possible, investing in the future of female opera leaders.”

BACKSTAGE BRUNCH: SATURDAY, APRIL 6

The third annual **Backstage Brunch**, a special morning in support of the Mentorship Program, will be held Saturday, April 6, 2019, 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at OPERA America’s National Opera Center in New York City. Co-chaired by composer **Laura Kaminsky** and philanthropist **Lynn Locker**, the Backstage Brunch will feature a showcase of works written by Kaminsky, including excerpts from her operas *As One*, *Some Light Emerges*, *Today It Rains* (recently premiered) and *Hometown to the World* (work in progress), to be performed by soprano **Cree Carrico**, mezzo-soprano **Heather Johnson**, baritone **Jorell Williams** and pianist **Margaret Kampmeier**.

The performance will be followed by an interview with a mentor-protégé pair from the inaugural Mentorship Program cohort — **Mitra Sadeghpour**, director of opera at University of Northern Iowa (protégé), and **Stacy Brightman**, vice president of education and community engagement at Los Angeles Opera (mentor) — led by **Astrid Baumgardner**, head of career strategies at Yale School of Music and president of Astrid Baumgardner Coaching + Training.

To make a donation to the Women’s Opera Network Mentorship Program, visit operaamerica.org/BackstageBrunch or call 646.699.5248.

New York City Meeting of Women’s Opera Network

Immediately following the Backstage Brunch, OPERA America will host the first-ever New York City convening of the Women’s Opera Network, bringing together female administrators, creators, business leaders and other industry stakeholders. The meeting will provide insights into various initiatives supporting the leadership of women in roles throughout the industry. The event includes a networking reception with attendees of the Backstage Brunch from 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m., followed by a presentation and discussion from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Registration is \$20 at operaamerica.org/WONNYC.

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Women's Opera Network Mentorship Program: 2019 Participants



REBEKAH DIAZ (protégé)
Founder, KahLee Consulting: Community Engagement in the Creative Arts

Rebekah Diaz is a dedicated and accomplished innovator, bringing a unique vision to what the future of opera looks like. She is currently working in Pittsburgh Opera's development department. Diaz was previously director of education and community engagement at Florida Grand Opera (FGO), where she initiated the Cadenza program, a nationally recognized collaboration with support groups for human trafficking victims that guides participants toward therapeutic betterment through opera. She developed strategic and meaningful connections with underserved populations, partnering with minority empowerment organizations, rehabilitation centers, institutions for the learning-impaired, civic offices, LGBTQIA+ groups, and public and private schools and foundations. Diaz also developed an unprecedented collaboration with Disney/Pixar to create custom opera animations for use in multimedia literacy-building experiences.

While at FGO, she was responsible for the creation of the inaugural regional adolescent opera academy in Southeast Florida, and she created the vocal/performing intensive "Teen Opera Intensive" in collaboration with the historic Olympia Theater. Her efforts at FGO earned a nomination in the Education and Outreach category at the 2018 International Opera Awards. She currently mentors numerous teaching artists and interns and has sponsored several Opera Teens programs. Diaz has also arranged, produced and directed five fully staged "choperas" and numerous showcases. Her original arrangement of *Carmen* is currently performed exclusively on the luxury cruise line Azamara Club Cruises.



ANA DE ARCHULETA (mentor)
President and CEO, ADA Artist Management

Ana De Archuleta has quickly established herself as one of the most sought-after managers in the operatic field, representing a thriving roster of vocalists, conductors and directors worldwide. ADA Artists can be seen at companies such as the Metropolitan Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, English National Opera, Grand Théâtre de Genève, the Salzburg Festival, the Aix-en-Provence Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera and Houston Grand Opera. De Archuleta's vast background in the arts — as an instrumentalist, dancer, operatic stage manager, assistant director, opera chorister and operatic soloist — has played a major role in her success as an artist manager.

She frequently offers her insights into the business aspect of the opera world via master classes and one-on-one consultations, and she has presented her seminar "The Business of Opera" at Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Westminster Choir College, Opera Saratoga, Opera New Jersey, Minnesota Opera and Wolf Trap Opera, among others. Additionally, she has judged multiple vocal competitions, including those held by Fort Worth Opera, Shreveport Opera and Florida Grand Opera. De Archuleta holds a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of the Sacred Heart in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and a Master of Music in vocal performance from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.



JULIA NOULIN-MÉRAT (protégé)
Associate Producer, Boston Lyric Opera
Co-Artistic Director, Guerilla Opera

Julia Noulin-Mérat is an American, Canadian and French citizen. In addition to her work as an associate producer for Boston Lyric Opera for the past seven years, Noulin-Mérat is the co-artistic director of Guerilla Opera, an international production designer and the founder of Noulin-Mérat Studio. She has worked on over 350 opera, theater and television productions, including 17 new operas and 22 new plays. Much of her work involves site-specific installations, including work at Boston Lyric Opera. Noulin-Mérat is an advocate for new audience development and has developed programs for social media engagement (such as final dress rehearsal tweet seats and live streaming of performances), tactile performances for visually impaired audiences, and community-specific performances and talkbacks, resulting in increased funding for new audiences. She has commissioned new operas from Lansing McLoskey, Hannah Lash, Anthony Green, Victoria Cheah, Andy Vores, Adam Roberts, Ken Ueno and many others.

Recent scenic design credits include *Rigoletto* with Minnesota Opera; *The Barber of Seville*, *Tosca* and *The Threepenny Opera* with Boston Lyric Opera; *Falstaff* with Opera Omaha; *Gallo* and *Beowulf* with Guerilla Opera; a TEDx talk about site-specific opera production; and *Neverland* with China Broadway, a \$40 million, 50,000-square-foot immersive theater piece in Beijing based on *Peter Pan*, which required collaboration with 650 people to create a theatrical space from the ground up. Noulin-Mérat holds a B.F.A. in design for the theater from Concordia University, Montreal; an M.S. in arts administration for performing arts from Boston University; and an M.F.A. in scenic design from Boston University. She is currently an adjunct professor at Pace University.



CHERYL HICKMAN (mentor)
General and Artistic Director, Opera on the Avalon

Cheryl Hickman founded Opera on the Avalon in St. John's, Newfoundland, in 2009. She has served as artistic director since the company's inception and as general director since 2014. Hickman led a \$3 million capital campaign to establish the company's Creation Investment Fund, which resulted in Atlantic Canada's first grand opera commission. She was also responsible for establishing the region's only comprehensive summer training program for emerging artists. During Hickman's tenure, Opera on the Avalon has increased its operating budget by 2,100 percent and achieved nine consecutive surplus seasons. The company's commissions have demonstrated their capacity to bring in new audiences, with the opera house reaching more than 85 percent capacity on average.

In 2017, Hickman was appointed to the Canada Council for the Arts for a four-year term. She has been chair of the board for Opera.ca since 2015, having previously served as vice chair. She was appointed to the City of St. John's Arts Advisory Board in 2015, leading the city's cultural strategy and helping to secure \$3.5 million toward increasing access to the arts. Hickman studied music and opera at the University of Toronto, followed by a Master of Music at The Juilliard School. In 2018, *Atlantic Business* named her one of Atlantic Canada's Top 50 CEOs.



TAMARA VALLEJOS (protégé)
Director of Marketing and Audience Development, Opera Colorado

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Tamara Vallejos grew up surrounded by world-class cultural offerings, fueling what has become an omnivorous passion for the arts. Her curiosity originally led her to arts journalism, before she ultimately made the transition to public relations and marketing for the arts. Before joining the Opera Colorado staff, she served as director of PR and publications at the Aspen Music Festival and School, and she also spent several years in Seattle working in PR at Seattle Opera, as well as at a boutique marketing agency. She earned her B.A. in English from Washington State University and her M.A. in arts journalism from Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. She began her career writing about music and culture for NPR, *SPIN* and *Los Angeles* magazines, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the *Charleston Post and Courier*, and other regional and national outlets. In her personal time, she indulges in all the requisite passions of any proper Angeleno: rooting for the Dodgers, leaning into her Disney fandom and daydreaming about her next beach vacation.



LISA MIDDLETON (mentor)
Vice President, Marketing and Communications, Lyric Opera of Chicago

Lisa Middleton, vice president of marketing and communications at Lyric Opera of Chicago, is a nonprofit marketing executive with more than 25 years of experience in all aspects of marketing and development. She manages pricing, revenue management, direct marketing, advertising, communications and PR, and social and digital media for Lyric. Middleton loves data analytics and statistics, and she uses information gleaned from analysis to guide the development of strategic directions for database segmentation, pricing analysis and model building, all with an eye to maximize revenue and increase patron engagement. She previously held roles in marketing and development at the Stratford Festival of Canada, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Sunnybrook Hospital, the Kidney Foundation and the Canadian Diabetes Association. Middleton holds a B.S. from York University in Toronto.

Learn more about the Women's Opera Network at operaamerica.org/WON.

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



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.