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THREE PROTÉGÉ-MENTOR TEAMS SELECTED FOR OPERA AMERICA'S 2020 MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR WOMEN

February 13, 2020 (New York) — **OPERA America** is pleased to announce the three pairs of protégés and mentors selected for the organization's **Mentorship Program for Women**, now in its third year. The Mentorship Program for Women provides a unique opportunity for promising opera company administrators to be paired with established industry leaders who can help them identify barriers to advancement and develop plans for professional growth.

This year's participants are:

Protégé: Adriane Fink, Director of Institutional Partnerships, Lyric Opera of Chicago

Mentor: Ashley Magnus, Edlis Neeson General Director, Chicago Opera Theater

Protégé: Aliana de la Guardia, Co-Artistic Director, Guerilla Opera (Boston, MA)

Mentor: Lee Anne Myslewski, Vice President of Opera and Classical Programming, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts (Vienna, VA)

Protégé: Karina Kacala, Director of Advertising and Promotions, Opera Philadelphia

Mentor: Peggy Kriha Dye, General and Artistic Director, Opera Columbus

See below for profiles of the participants.

The Mentorship Program was created in 2018 to help advance the goals of OPERA America's Women's Opera Network, an action-oriented affinity group dedicated to addressing and advancing 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.

"We are committed to increasing representation and gender equity through initiatives like the Mentorship Program for female administrators," noted Laura Lee Everett, chief programs officer at OPERA America. "Our efforts in this area were fueled by the success of our Opera Grants for Female Composers, and we strive to extend our impact to women in all roles across our entire field."

Female leadership at professional opera companies has increased noticeably within the past five years. Women occupied 46 percent of leadership positions in 2019, up from just 36 percent in 2015. A large part of

this growth was driven by small companies, those with operating budgets under \$250,000, 65 percent of which were led by women in 2019. Mid-sized companies also saw a large increase in the gender ratio during that period, from 13 percent to 50 percent, while the larger companies saw more modest gains.

Each protégé-mentor pair will develop a personalized plan for professional development based on the goals of the protégé. They will work together during 2020 through remote and in-person sessions, including meetings at Opera Conference 2020 this May in Seattle. Each protégé also will make a site visit to her mentor's opera company.

The pairings were announced on January 25, 2020, at OPERA America's fourth annual Backstage Brunch, a social fundraiser at the National Opera Center in New York City that raises support for the Mentorship Program. The event was co-chaired by Astrid Baumgardner, president of Astrid Baumgardner Coaching+Training and head of the Office of Career Strategies at the Yale School of Music, and Jill Steinberg, photographer, board president of National Sawdust and board member of Heartbeat Opera and OPERA America.

The brunch began with a performance of excerpts from Lisa De Spain's *No Ladies in the Lady's Book* (Rachel J. Peters, librettist) and *That Hell-Bound Train* (David Simpatico, librettist) and Kamala Sankaram's *Taking Up Serpents* (Jerre Dye, librettist), *Looking at You* (Rob Handel, librettist) and *Thumbprint* (Susan Yankowitz, librettist); both composers are recipients of OPERA America's Opera Grants for Female Composers. A panel of leading women in the industry, including protégé-mentor pair Aliana de la Guardia and Lee Anne Myslewski, and composer Paola Prestini, co-founder and artistic director of National Sawdust, discussed their experiences as women in the opera industry. The event concluded with remarks from renowned director Francesca Zambello, artistic and general director of The Glimmerglass Festival and artistic director of Washington National Opera.

"The Backstage Brunch granted me such a great opportunity to connect with people in the opera industry that I had not met before, and this kind of networking is one of the most important aspects of moving women forward into leadership roles," said Piper Gunnarson, executive director of On Site Opera and a protégé in the 2018 Mentorship Program for Women. "This program had such an impact on me and continues to benefit women in the opera industry."

Women's Opera Network Mentorship Program: 2020 Participants



Adriane Fink (protégé), Director of Institutional Partnerships, Lyric Opera of Chicago

Adriane Fink joined Lyric Opera of Chicago as director of institutional partnerships in 2018. In this role, Fink is an integral part of the institutional team, building a pipeline of corporate and foundation prospects. She is responsible for the creation and execution of fundraising strategies for select projects and works in collaboration with the full development team to reach its goal of more than \$32 million in annual support.

Fink's career includes more than 15 years of work in fundraising, and before joining Lyric, she served as the director of institutional giving at the Curtis Institute of Music. She previously held positions at Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Americans for the Arts and Indianapolis Opera. She holds a B.M. and M.M. in flute performance and a B.S. in arts administration from Butler University. Fink performs as a freelance flutist in the Chicago area.



Ashley Magnus (mentor), Edlis Neeson General Director, Chicago Opera Theater

Ashley Magnus began her career as a production coordinator for the opera department at Utah Symphony | Utah Opera. She went on to hold leadership positions in events and development with the company, while also singing professionally as a mezzo-soprano. Magnus joined Chicago Opera Theater in 2015 and became the Edlis Neeson general director in 2019. Under her leadership, COT executed the largest production in its history, grew core annual fundraising by 28 percent, received a major grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support the new Vanguard Emerging Opera Composer Program, and implemented a robust strategic plan.

Magnus was named one of 2019's Top 30 Professionals in the Performing Arts by Musical America. She is a graduate of OPERA America's Leadership Intensive and serves on the steering committee of OPERA America's Women's Opera Network. Magnus holds an M.B.A. from the David Eccles School of Business at the University of Utah.



Aliana de la Guardia (protégé), Co-Artistic Director, Guerilla Opera

Aliana de la Guardia is a Cuban-American artist who enjoys a multifaceted career as a vocalist, actor, educator and entrepreneur. As a soprano, she has garnered acclaim for her "dazzling flights of virtuosity" (*Gramophone*) in performances that are "fizzing with theatrical commitment" (*The Boston Globe*). She has enjoyed many collaborations with today's most eminent composers, and has worked with American Lyric Theater, Beth Morrison Projects, Boston Conservatory's New Music Festival, Boston Modern Orchestra Project and the Center for Contemporary, among other organizations. As a co-founder of the Boston-based Guerilla Opera, she has produced 15 world-premiere operas with lead roles tailor-made for her ferocious

stage presence.

As an educator, she has been a featured guest artist at Harvard University, Lawrence Conservatory, Vermont College of Fine Arts and University of Memphis, and she served on the performance faculty at Hubbard Hall Opera Theater. She also maintains an active private studio in Haverhill, Massachusetts.



Lee Anne Myslewski (mentor), Vice President of Opera and Classical Programming, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts

Lee Anne Myslewski was recently appointed vice president of opera and classical programming at Wolf Trap Foundation, a role in which she oversees all aspects of Wolf Trap Opera, an artist-centric training program whose alumni are singing in prestigious houses around the world. In addition, she serves as the executive producer and co-host of *Center Stage from Wolf Trap*, a nationally syndicated radio program.

Myslewski joined Wolf Trap Opera in 2006, and during her tenure, she established the Untrapped series of programming, which has featured partnerships with the Shakespeare Theatre, Taffety Punk, Children's National Medical Center, The Phillips Collection and the National Orchestral

Institute. She also created the artistic advisor position for Chamber Music at the Barns and has participated in the casting and programming of operatic productions for over a decade. She holds degrees in opera performance from Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Maryland and is an alumna of OPERA America's Leadership Intensive.



Karina Kacala (protégé), Director of Advertising and Promotions, Opera Philadelphia

Karina Kacala is the director of advertising and promotions at Opera Philadelphia, where she oversees marketing efforts for the company's annual fall event, Festival O, and spring *stagione* season, with an eye toward attracting new audiences and boosting retention. Her primary responsibilities include crafting multi-channel marketing plans, directing the company's email program, spearheading advertising buys, and managing special audience-engagement initiatives, such as VIVACE, a community for young professionals, and Opera on the Mall, a free outdoor opera broadcast. Recent speaking engagements include presenting on Opera Philadelphia's email program at Capacity Interactive's Digital Marketing Boot Camp

for the Arts.

Before joining Opera Philadelphia, Kacala directed marketing and communications for a diverse array of organizations, including First Person Arts, the Center City Jazz Festival and Shakespeare in Clark Park. Her background as an opera singer and assistant stage director enables her to tell Opera Philadelphia's story with first-hand knowledge of the genre and a personal passion.



Peggy Kriha Dye (mentor), General and Artistic Director, Opera Columbus

Peggy Kriha Dye, general and artistic director of Opera Columbus, has led a complete artistic transformation, supporting emerging operatic talent, innovative collaborations and original productions that engage diverse audiences and push the boundaries of traditional opera. In 2018, Musical America named Dye one of its Professionals of the Year as a part of its "Movers and Shapers" special edition. She is a graduate of OPERA America's Leadership Intensive program and serves on the OPERA America board.

Dye is an accomplished artist who has performed with major opera companies and orchestras throughout the world. She originated the role of Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, written and conducted by André Previn at San Francisco Opera, and reprised the role with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Washington National Opera.

Previous Mentorship Program for Women Participants

2019

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

2018

Protégé: Piper Gunnarson | Executive Director, On Site Opera (New York, NY)
Mentor: Annie Burrige | General Director and CEO, Austin Opera

Protégé: Katie Preissner | Director of Production, Opera Colorado
Mentor: Clare Burovac | Director of Artistic Operations, Portland Opera

Protégé: Mitra Sadeghpour | Director of Opera, University of Northern Iowa
Mentor: Stacy Brightman | Vice President, Education and Community Engagement, LA Opera

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



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 1,700 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.