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OPERA AMERICA AWARDS TOTAL OF \$980,000 IN INNOVATION GRANTS TO 13 MEMBER COMPANIES

Generously Funded by the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation

September 1, 2020 (New York) — **OPERA America** is pleased to announce the 13 Professional Company Members receiving a total of \$980,000 as part of the fourth cycle of the **Innovation Grants** program. These grants enable organizations of all sizes to increase their commitment to experimentation and innovation, as well as contribute to field-wide learning. The grants are generously funded by the **Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation**.

Launched in 2016, Innovation Grants support Professional Company Members in implementing innovative projects in opera's most important areas of practice, including artistic vitality, audience experience, organizational effectiveness, and community connections. Since its inception, the program has awarded almost \$6 million to help OPERA America company members move opera forward.

The 13 companies receiving awards are:

- **American Lyric Theater*** (New York, NY)
- **Center for Contemporary Opera*** (New York, NY)
- **Eugene Opera** (Eugene, OR)
- **The Glimmerglass Festival*** (Cooperstown, NY)
- **IN Series*** (Washington, D.C.)
- **Michigan Opera Theatre*** (Detroit, MI)
- **Nashville Opera** (Nashville, TN)
- **Opera Cultura** (San Jose, CA)
- **Opera Memphis** (Memphis, TN)
- **Opera Omaha*** (Omaha, NE)
- **Opera Saratoga*** (Saratoga Springs, NY)
- **Portland Opera*** (Portland, OR)
- **San Diego Opera*** (San Diego, CA)

*Denotes a two-year grant. See below for details about all the funded initiatives.

The grantees were selected from a pool of 30 applications, which were adjudicated by an independent panel consisting of **Patrick Castillo**, composer, performer, writer, and educator; **Ed Harsh**, director of strategic initiatives, the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music; **Jessica Jahn**, costume designer; **Jeanne LeSage**, principal, LeSage Arts Management; and **Koven Smith**, principal, Koven J. Smith Consulting.

In addition to providing direct financial support to these companies, the Innovation Grants program includes infrastructure to capture and assess outcomes of funded projects. OPERA America provides administrative and technical support that helps companies to document successes and learn from one another. Outcomes are shared at OPERA America meetings and conferences, as well as through publications and other learning tools.

“At a time of such uncertainty, we’re excited to see so many opera companies looking toward the future and actively seeking ways to enrich the art form and benefit their communities,” stated Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. “Thanks to the generosity of the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, our member companies can explore new creative ideas, business practices, and civic practice initiatives that will help them grow beyond their current capabilities and allow them to adapt to an ever-changing field and environment.”

Visit operaamerica.org/Grants to learn more about Innovation Grants and other OPERA America grant programs.

ABOUT THE RECIPIENTS



AMERICAN LYRIC THEATER Opera Writers Diversity and Representation Initiatives (OWDARI)

American Lyric Theater is launching the Opera Writers Diversity and Representation Initiative (OWDARI) to increase recruitment of gifted BIPOC artists to the company's nationally acclaimed Composer Librettist Development Program (CLDP); to identify and remove barriers for BIPOC artists to participate in the CLDP; and to make changes to the program and organizational structure to ensure that ALT can meaningfully address diversity and equity in the mentorship of composers and librettists and in the development of new operas.



CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY OPERA Carbon Neutral Opera

Following the example of several European opera companies, the Center for Contemporary Opera will lead by example in tackling the climate crisis through not only its programming onstage, but also its business practices behind the scenes. In an industry where conductors' and artists' status is linked to how many flights they take, CCO will be at the forefront of changing the conversation to reflect the realities of a world that is burning.



EUGENE OPERA
Animated Digital Set Projection Collaboration with University of Oregon Design Students

Eugene Opera will embark on an experiential education process with the University of Oregon's School of Art + Design in the creation of an animated set painting project. This project will revitalize an existing *Magic Flute* set with surfaces for projected animations created by a group of students in conjunction with the opera company's creative team.



GLIMMERGLASS FESTIVAL
Breaking Glass 2: Embracing Inclusion

The Glimmerglass Festival will undertake a project to advance its plan to embed a 360-degree approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion within all areas of operations — from artistic to administrative, written policies to board leadership. Led by a task force composed of staff, artists, board members, and consultants, the company will develop tools and procedures to evaluate and implement an effective EDI policy that can be shared with the field.



IN SERIES
Cardwell-Dawson Resident Artist Program

IN Series' new Cardwell-Dawson Resident Artist Program is the nation's first emerging artist program exclusively for singers of color. Young artists of exceptional potential are given a two-year platform to grow in their craft and experience, and are provided a platform for professional exploration and development. Named for Mary Cardwell-Dawson, the founder of the National Negro Opera Company, this program will transform IN Series' opera productions into a welcoming, multi-colored space.



MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE
Lead Storyteller and Digital Media Specialist

Michigan Opera Theatre announces the creation of a new position: lead storyteller and digital media specialist. Charged with curating and communicating stories of mission-driven impact to the broader community, this position acts as an embedded journalist, covering all MOT programs and capturing the experiences of the company's patrons, musicians, guest artists, and program participants to effectively support growth in audiences, partnerships, and contributions — all critical to MOT's strategic plan.



NASHVILLE OPERA
HBCU: Opera Bound!

Nashville Opera and Tennessee State University are joining forces to present HBCU: Opera Bound! — a collaboration aimed at increasing the presence of Black artists and administrators in the opera industry. An eight-month series of online master classes, featuring some of the foremost Black artists in the opera world, will offer training tailored to the needs of HBCU students. The project will promote inclusion, provide performance opportunities, and expand career pathways for African Americans.



Opera Cultura

OPERA CULTURA
Mi Camino: The Pandemic Story of Farmworkers and Day Laborers

Opera Cultura will commission composer/librettist Héctor Armienta to create a new song-cycle opera *Mi Camino*, inspired by stories of immigrant farmworkers and day laborers. Through song and video multimedia, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this community will be shared. The project is intended to create dialogue and exchange about the pandemic, through the lens of immigration, across the multicultural tapestry of Santa Clara County — one of the hardest-hit regions in the United States.



OPERA MEMPHIS
Project Zauberverse

Project Zauberverse is a multi-platform framework for operatic experiences inspired by Mozart's *Magic Flute*, featuring both digital and live events. Using elements drawn from video games, alternate reality games, and entertainment ecosystems like the Marvel Cinematic Universe, participants will be sorted into one of three factions: Sun, Moon, or Earth. Every action they take, live or online, will influence the standing of their faction, and open new opportunities. It's time for Opera to level up.



OPERA OMAHA
Holland Community Opera Fellowship — Impact on Organization

Opera Omaha will partner with industry professionals to assess the methodology used to evaluate its Holland Community Opera Fellowship, review findings, and write a case study on the process and findings alongside continued developmental evaluation and analysis. Opera Omaha will utilize these findings to refine program assessment tools that can be shared with and implemented in the broader field.



OPERA SARATOGA
Opera Saratoga Memory Center Residency Initiative

Opera Saratoga is launching an engagement-centered music therapy program for patients with Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia, serving memory centers across seven counties in Upstate New York. Facilitated in partnership with Songs by Heart, this program will be the first of its kind at any opera company in the United States.



PORTLAND OPERA
Eastside Arts Hub Project

Portland Opera will explore and establish best practices for providing its artistic and administrative home, the Hampton Opera Center, as a performance, rehearsal, and event space for local arts companies and nonprofits, especially in light of the realities arts companies face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting policies and procedures will become a resource for others in the opera field wishing to explore similar program options.



SAN DIEGO OPERA
Opera Hack 2.0

San Diego Opera will host Opera Hack 2.0, an online-based hackathon for experts from the theater and technology sectors. An industry-wide survey will identify relevant challenges facing the industry, and participants will collaborate and discover new ways for technology to help create solutions. A total of \$15,000 will be awarded to three winning groups. All participating groups will be invited to share their solutions on operahack.org to encourage further opportunities for collaboration.

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 1,700 individuals. OPERA America extends its reach to 80,000 annual visitors to its National Opera Center and over 70,000 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.