

# THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER AMERICA

## Media Contact:

Patricia Kiernan Johnson

212.796.8628 (office) | 856.419.7083 (mobile)

[PKJohnson@operaamerica.org](mailto:PKJohnson@operaamerica.org)

## OPERA AMERICA ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF REPERTOIRE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

### Eleven Opera Companies Receive a Total of \$225,000 To Develop New American Operas

December 13, 2017 (New York) — **OPERA America**, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion for American opera, is pleased to announce that it has awarded grants to 11 opera companies through the **Repertoire Development Grants** program, supported by The Opera Fund. These grants provide vital financial support to opera companies developing new American opera and music-theater works.

Repertoire Development Grants allow creators and producers to assess and refine works-in-progress. The grants may be used to offset creative fees and other costs associated with the development of a new opera or music-theater work, including lab productions, workshops, readings and revisions.

A total of \$225,000 has been awarded to the following 11 opera companies: **American Opera Projects** (New York, NY) in partnership with **Opera Parallèle** (San Francisco, CA); **Beth Morrison Projects** (New York, NY); **Boston Lyric Opera**; **The Glimmerglass Festival** (Cooperstown, NY); **Houston Grand Opera**; **Long Beach Opera**; **The Metropolitan Opera** (New York, NY); **Minnesota Opera** (Minneapolis, MN); **Opera Columbus**; and **Opera Theatre of Saint Louis**.

OPERA America's long tradition of supporting the creation and development of new works led to the formation of The Opera Fund endowment, which allows OPERA America to sustain a number of grant programs. Since the inception of its granting programs, OPERA America has awarded nearly \$13 million to assist companies with the expenses associated with creating and developing new works, as well as related audience initiatives.

The Opera Fund has supported such works as *Akhmaten* (Philip Glass), *Bel Canto* (Jimmy López/Nilo Cruz), *Cold Sassy Tree* (Carlisle Floyd), *Elmer Gantry* (Robert Aldridge/Herschel Garfein), *Fellow Travelers* (Gregory Spears/Greg Pierce), *JFK* (David T. Little/Royce Vavrek), *The Grapes of Wrath* (Ricky Ian Gordon/Michael Korie), *Little Women* (Mark Adamo), *Moby-Dick* (Jake Heggie/Gene Scheer), *Nixon in China* (John Adams/Alice Goodman), *Silent Night* (Kevin Puts/Mark Campbell) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (André Previn/Philip Littell).

"Fostering the creation of new works is a cornerstone of OPERA America's mission, and we've seen a remarkable flowering of new American opera over the past two decades," stated Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. "Through the generosity of Opera Fund donors, Repertoire Development Grants continue to support creativity and innovation across the field."

Recipients of the Repertoire Development Grants were selected by a panel of industry leaders consisting of director and visual artist **Laine Rettmer**, conductor and coach **Stephanie Rhodes**, composer and conductor **Huang Ruo**, librettist **Joan Ross Sorkin**, and soprano **Talise Trevigne**.

The Opera Fund was launched by the National Endowment for the Arts, and it is funded by the Helen F. Whitaker Fund, Lee Day Gillespie, Lloyd and Mary Ann Gerlach, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Repertoire Development Grants were awarded to the projects of these 11 opera companies:

### AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS with OPERA PARALLÈLE

*Today It Rains* by composer Laura Kaminsky and librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed



*Today It Rains* is set on the transformative train ride that Georgia O’Keeffe took from New York to Santa Fe in 1929, during which she began to redefine herself as an artist and confront certain aspects of her marriage to Alfred Stieglitz. Based on an original concept by Mark Campbell, with a projection design by Kimberly Reed, the production will be conducted by Nicole Paiement and directed by Brian Staufenbiel.

*For this same work, Opera Parallèle previously received two grants: a 2016 Repertoire Development Grant and a 2017 Commissioning Grant, part of the Opera Grants for Female Composers Program.*



### BETH MORRISON PROJECTS

*Magda/Max* by composer Garrett Fisher and librettist Amy Schrader



*Magda/Max* is inspired by the dramatic life and death of Magda Goebbels, unofficial first lady of the Third Reich. The story unfolds through the experiences of Max, a gay Jewish prisoner in a concentration camp who is beaten close to death for “deviant” behavior. In a fever-dream, he imagines himself as Madga Goebbels, lamenting a society that refuses to accept the new world order. As the war comes to a close, Max’s fate becomes intertwined with the Nazi leaders trapped in Hitler’s bunker, and freedom is only attainable through the ultimate sacrifice.

**BOSTON LYRIC OPERA**

*Schoenberg in Hollywood* by composer Tod Machover and librettist Simon Robson  
Based on a scenario by Braham Murray



*Schoenberg in Hollywood* centers on influential composer Arnold Schoenberg and his late-career effort to assimilate into the culture of 1930s Los Angeles. The opera will explore the humor, heroism and pathos of Schoenberg's struggle, as it imagines his complex life in Hollywood and uncovers its relevance for future generations. It will premiere at Boston Lyric Opera in fall 2018.

**THE GLIMMERGLASS FESTIVAL**

*Blue* by composer Jeanine Tesori and librettist Tazewell Thompson



*Blue* dives into the emotional epicenter of an African-American couple who lose their teenage son when he is killed by a police officer. *Blue* will premiere during the 2019 festival season and will be one of the subjects of "Breaking Glass," a podcast and series of national forums hyperlinking opera and topical issues.

*For this same work, The Glimmerglass Festival previously received a 2016 Commissioning Grant, part of the Opera Grants for Female Composers program.*

**HOUSTON GRAND OPERA**

*The Phoenix* by composer Tarik O'Regan and librettist John Caird



*The Phoenix* examines the life of Mozart's friend and librettist, Lorenzo Da Ponte. After the composer's death, Da Ponte flees Europe for America. Pursued by tax collectors and wronged women, Da Ponte reinvents himself countless times as a priest, a poet, a father, a political exile, a grocer and a teacher. *The Phoenix* will premiere in March 2019 as part of HGO's multidisciplinary initiative "Seeking the Human Spirit."

**LONG BEACH OPERA**

*Five* by composer Anthony Davis and librettist Richard Wesley



Long Beach Opera will facilitate the revision and new premiere of the opera *Five*. The opera follows five African-American and Latino teenage boys who were wrongly convicted for the 1989 rape and beating of a white jogger in Central Park. The "Central Park Five" spent between 6 and 13 years in prison until they were exonerated by DNA evidence, following the confession of the true assailant.

**THE METROPOLITAN OPERA**

*Eurydice* by composer Matthew Aucoin and librettist Sarah Ruhl

The Met  
ropolitan  
Opera

*Eurydice*, based on the play by Sarah Ruhl, tells the Orpheus story from the perspective of Eurydice, using contemporary language to present the young lovers as quirky and conflicted. Eurydice meets her father in the Underworld, her memory erased, and they must re-establish their bond. When Orpheus arrives to bring her back to the land of the living, will she return with him? *Eurydice* was commissioned in 2015 by the Met Opera/Lincoln Center Theater New Works Program.

**MINNESOTA OPERA**

*The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* by composer Paola Prestini and librettist Mark Campbell

MN  
OPERA

*The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* is a family-friendly opera based on the young adult novel of the same name by Kate DiCamillo. It follows the adventures of an aloof toy rabbit named Edward whose comfortable life abruptly ends when he is thrown into the sea. His adventures take him far and wide until he finally opens his heart and finds his way back home.

For this same work, Minnesota Opera previously received a 2017 Commissioning Grant, part of the Opera Grants for Female Composers program.

**OPERA COLUMBUS**

*The Flood* by composer Korine Fujiwara and librettist Stephen Wadsworth

  
OPERA  
Columbus

A collaboration between Opera Columbus and ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, *The Flood* tells a story of human connection through loss and shared tragedy across multiple generations of one family, centered on the devastation caused by the Great Flood of 1913 in the Franklinton neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio. *The Flood* will receive its world premiere in Columbus in February 2019.

For this same work, Opera Columbus previously received a 2016 Commissioning Grant, part of the Opera Grants for Female Composers program.

**OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS**

*Fire Shut Up in My Bones* by composer Terence Blanchard and librettist Kasi Lemmons

OTSL

*Fire Shut Up in My Bones* is based on the moving memoir by journalist Charles Blow, chronicling his coming of age in small-town Gibsland, Louisiana, formerly the site of a plantation. Blow learns to break the cycles of violence that ignite this community, which is tied together by deep bonds and the spirit of resilience.

For more information about OPERA America, its many programs and the National Opera Center, visit [operaamerica.org](http://operaamerica.org).



### **About OPERA America**

OPERA America ([operaamerica.org](http://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, 250 Associate, Business and Educational Members, 1,200 Individual Members, and 17,500 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](http://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 its inception of its granting programs, OPERA America has awarded \$13 million to assist companies with the expenses associated with the creation and development of new works.