



THE NATIONAL **OPERA** CENTER
AMERICA

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OPERA AMERICA ANNOUNCES DETAILS FOR OPERA CONFERENCE 2017: CREATING COLLABORATIVE CHANGE

Taking Place May 4–8 in Dallas, TX
conference.operaamerica.org

Hosted by The Dallas Opera
In Association with Opera Volunteers International

Four Sessions of Field-Wide Impact to be Streamed Live at
conference.operaamerica.org/Live

Day Passes Available to Local Residents

April 28, 2017 (New York) — **OPERA America**, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion for American opera, is pleased to announce details of **Opera Conference 2017: Creating Collaborative Change**, to be held in Dallas, TX, from May 4–8. Hosted by **The Dallas Opera** in association with **Opera Volunteers International**, this annual gathering of opera professionals — the largest in North America — will convene at the Sheraton Dallas Hotel and venues throughout the Dallas/Fort Worth area. This is the third time in OPERA America's 47-year history and the first time since 1987 that the conference will be held in Dallas.

With nearly 500 industry leaders in attendance, OPERA America's annual conference presents a unique opportunity to examine issues affecting the opera community from a variety of perspectives. At Opera Conference 2017, attendees will work to ensure the future health and vitality of the opera industry by learning to increase collaboration among opera companies, as well as with other community organizations and stakeholders.

At the core of the opera industry are artists: singers, composers, librettists, designers, directors and conductors. Opera Conference 2017 places artists at the center of the discussion, providing a platform to express their visions for the field and creating opportunities for collaborative planning between artists and producers. The Opening Session features a panel of some of the most innovative and compelling creators in the field today: Mark Campbell, librettist; Jake Heggie, composer; Elaine McCarthy, projection designer; Nicole Paiement, principal guest conductor, The Dallas Opera; Kamala Sankaram, composer; Gene Scheer, librettist; Yuval Sharon, stage director; and Lidiya Yankovskaya, conductor. At the Closing Session, bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green will speak about the people who intervened early in his life, helping him overcome obstacles to become a celebrated opera singer.

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"We're delighted to bring our annual conference back to the great city of Dallas for the first time in 30 years, and we are profoundly grateful to our hosts at The Dallas Opera for their partnership," stated Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. "We are eager for our members to experience Dallas' Arts District, the Winspear Opera House and a tremendous variety of Dallas Opera productions. Together with leaders of many of Dallas' cultural institutions, we'll consider how the arts strengthen communities — not only through inspirational programming in theaters, but also in relation to school partnerships, public programs, economic development and civic identity."

OPERA CONFERENCE 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

Topics planned for opera conference attendees cover all facets of opera production and address the concerns of creators, administrators, trustees and supporters. Highlights of the many sessions, performances and showcases include:

- **General Sessions**
These conference-wide sessions bring together the broad constituency to explore topics that affect the entire opera field, and beyond:
 - **Opening Session**
Following welcome remarks, attendees will hear from artists who are at the center of our current and future work: Mark Campbell, librettist; Jake Heggie, composer; Elaine McCarthy, projection designer; Nicole Paiement, principal guest conductor, The Dallas Opera, and artistic director, Opera Parallèle; Kamala Sankaram, composer; Gene Scheer, librettist; Yuval Sharon, stage director, and artistic director, The Industry; and Lidiya Yankovskaya, conductor.
 - **Partnership in Play: The Dallas Arts District**
Home to the largest contiguous urban arts district in the U.S., Dallas is an example of the power of partnership to elevate a city's creative and educational life. Attendees will hear from the leaders of The Dallas Opera, AT&T Performing Arts Center, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Theater Center, Nasher Sculpture Center and Dallas Black Dance Theatre.
 - **Creating Change: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**
Attendees will hear presentations from experts in other arts disciplines and sectors who have made strides to improve equity within organizations and their communities; and learn from opera leaders about the steps the field can take on these vital issues.
 - **Closing Session**
Bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green, whose life was chronicled in the recent book *Sing for Your Life*, will share his experiences in overcoming obstacles to become an acclaimed opera singer.
- **Think Tank, Toolbox and Spotlight Sessions**
More than 30 sessions, designed to provide in-depth discussion and develop practical skills, are planned for attendees in areas of marketing, fundraising, governance, artistic planning, education and audience engagement.
- **Seminars**
Four intensive, half-day, skill-building workshops are offered on topics such as planning and preparing for large-scale fundraising initiatives; working to change societal injustices; increasing fluency in opera and communicating about opera; and exploring tactics for creating compelling video content.
- **Learning Themes**
Threaded throughout the conference in sessions geared toward a range of networks are learning themes of great importance to the field: Connecting Traditional and New Repertoire to Today's Audiences; Effective Collaborations and Partnerships; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and Leadership by Experimentation and Learning.

- **New Works Forum**
OPERA America's long-standing commitment to supporting the creation and presentation of new works led to the establishment of the New Works Forum, which meets twice each year. Conference sessions will offer insight, practical knowledge and networking opportunities for creators and producers of new opera and music-theater works. Topics to be covered include the role of dramaturgs, family opera and repertoire that addresses contemporary issues.
- **Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase**
Finalists of OPERA America's biennial competition for emerging director-designer teams will present their winning production concepts.
- **Performances**
Conference attendees will attend a wide array of performances in both Dallas and Fort Worth. The Dallas Opera productions include *Arjuna's Dilemma* (Douglas J. Cuomo), *Everest* (Joby Talbot/Gene Scheer), preceded by the world premiere of Talbot's *Everest Prelude*, *Norma* (Bellini) and *The Magic Piano*, an animated film featuring a live piano performance by Derek Wang.

Fort Worth Opera presents its annual *Frontiers* showcase of excerpts from eight new works, *Voir Dire* (Matthew Peterson/Jason Zencka), *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* (José "Pepe" Martínez/Leonard Foglia) and *Carmen* (Bizet).

For the sixth straight year, the conference is presented in association with Opera Volunteers International. A special track of sessions for volunteers will address the important role that volunteerism plays in success of opera companies.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Opera Conference 2017 attendees will hear from over 100 leading experts in opera, the performing arts and the cultural and business sectors. Among those who will be providing insight, knowledge and practical skills are:

Ann Meier Baker, Director of Music and Opera,
National Endowment for the Arts

Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager, City
of Oakland

LeAnn Binford, Director, Big Thought Institute

Mark Campbell, librettist

Tassio Carvalho, Senior Manager, Operations
Research and Advanced Analytics, American
Airlines

Keith Cerny, Kern Wildenthal General Director
& CEO, The Dallas Opera

Doug Curtis, President & CEO,
AT&T Performing Arts Center

Zenetta Drew, Executive Director, Dallas Black
Dance Theatre

Elisabeth Galley, Vice President, Arts
Consulting Group

Erik Gensler, Founder, Capacity Interactive

Ryan Speedo Green, bass-baritone

Jake Heggie, composer

Gregory Sullivan Isaacs, Senior Music Critic,
theaterjones.com

Jonathan Martin, President and CEO,
Dallas Symphony Orchestra

Elaine McCarthy, projection designer

Keryl McCord, Founder and CEO, The Equity
Quotient

David McIntosh, Founder and President,
Creative Business Breakthroughs

Kevin Moriarty, Artistic Director, Dallas Theater
Center

Nkeiru Okoye, composer

Timothy O'Leary, General Director, Opera
Theatre of Saint Louis

Nicole Paiement, principal guest conductor,
The Dallas Opera; artistic director, Opera
Parallèle

Michelle Ramos, Project Director, Vera Institute
of Justice

Kamala Sankaram, composer

Gene Scheer, librettist

Marc A. Scorca, President/CEO,
OPERA America

Yuval Sharon, stage director, and artistic director, The Industry

L. Michelle Smith, Director, AT&T Global Marketing Organization

Jeremy Strick, Director, Nasher Sculpture Center

Zannie Voss, Director, National Center for Arts Research

Ann M. Williams, Founder and Artistic Advisor, Dallas Black Dance Theatre

Lidiya Yankovskaya, conductor

"Everyone at The Dallas Opera — myself included — is thrilled to be hosting next week's Opera Conference 2017, and we are tremendously grateful to Marc Scorca and OPERA America for this marvelous opportunity," stated Dallas Opera General Director and CEO Keith Cerny. "In addition to directing the opera world's attention to the extraordinary Dallas Arts District, including the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House, this year's theme seems especially fitting in a city where change and experimentation are the norm."

"Hosting the conference has also given me the enjoyable opportunity of adding special programming that demonstrates TDO's ability to perform a wide range of musical styles at a very high standard," Cerny added, "even as it showcases our continuing commitment to incorporating state-of-the-art technologies — especially projections — into our productions, simulcasts and commissions."

LIVE STREAMING

The innovative thinking and valuable tools gained during Opera Conference 2017 are not limited to those able to travel to Dallas. Select sessions will be streamed live on OPERA America's website at conference.operaamerica.org/Live and later archived on the organization's YouTube channel (youtube.com/OPERAAmerica). Conference attendees and live stream viewers are encouraged to interact and share highlights on social media with #OperaConf.

Sessions streaming live from Dallas at conference.operaamerica.org/Live are:

Opening Session

Friday, May 5

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. CDT

Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase

Saturday, May 6

6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. CDT

Creating Change: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Saturday, May 6

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. CDT

Closing Session

Monday, May 8

12:45 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. CDT

See the attached Program Details for additional Opera Conference 2017 session and event information.

FULL CONFERENCE AND LOCAL PASS REGISTRATION

Full conference registration will be available on-site, and attendance is open to anyone interested in opera and the performing arts.

Those in the Dallas area who would like to experience select session highlights at Opera Conference 2017 can take advantage of the **Local Pass** (\$65 per day). The Local Pass provides entry to an array of sessions taking place each day on Friday, May 5 and Saturday, May 6.

To register on-site for the full conference or the Local Pass, please visit the Registration Desk in the Live Oak room of the Sheraton Dallas Hotel, located at 400 North Olive Street.

SPONSORS

OPERA America gratefully acknowledges the support of the following Opera Conference 2017 sponsors:

Act 1 Tours	National Endowment for the Arts
ADA Artist Management	Patron Technology
American Express Foundation	Robert Swaney Consulting
Arts Consulting Group	Schuler Shook
Bank of America	SD&A Teleservices Inc.
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Fisher Dachs Associates	Stingray Classica
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The Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation	The Tobin Theatre Arts Fund
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation	The Wallace Foundation
Music Publishers Association	

For more information about Opera Conference 2017, visit conference.operaamerica.org.

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View the entire [conference schedule](#) and [program book](#).

Follow the conference conversation on social media with #OperaConf and [@OPERAmerica](https://twitter.com/OPERAmerica).

Watch live-streamed conference sessions at conference.operaamerica.org/Live.

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CONFERENCE PROGRAM DETAILS

Below are additional details about highlights of Opera Conference 2017. For more information, visit the [online schedule](#) or see the [program book](#).



GENERAL SESSIONS

General Sessions bring together the broad constituency to explore topics that affect all aspects of the opera field:

- Opening Session**
 Opera Conference 2017 will kick off with opening remarks from **Marc A. Scorca**, president/CEO of OPERA America, along with warm welcomes from **Ann Meier Baker**, director of music and opera at the National Endowment for the Arts; **Keith Cerny**, general director and CEO of The Dallas Opera; **Timothy O'Leary**, general director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; and **Rhonda Sweeney**, president of Opera Volunteers International. Hear from artists who are shaping our art form through their cooperative work: **Mark Campbell**, librettist; **Jake Heggie**, composer; **Elaine McCarthy**, projection designer; **Nicole Paiement**, principal guest conductor, The Dallas Opera, and artistic director, Opera Parallèle; **Kamala Sankaram**, composer; **Gene Scheer**, librettist; **Yuval Sharon**, stage director, and artistic director, The Industry; **Lidiya Yankovskaya**, conductor.
- Partnership in Play: The Dallas Arts District**
 The Dallas Arts District, as the largest contiguous urban arts district in the U.S., is a prime example of the power of partnership to elevate a city's creative and educational life. Hear from Dallas' arts leaders about how the partnership influences their organizational impact, while exploring benefits and realities of coordinated efforts for community development. Featuring **Keith Cerny**, general director and CEO, The Dallas Opera; **Doug Curtis**, president & CEO, AT&T Performing Arts Center; **Jonathan Martin**, president and CEO, Dallas Symphony Orchestra; **Kevin Moriarty**, artistic director, Dallas Theater Center; **Jeremy Strick**, director, Nasher Sculpture Center; **Ann M. Williams**, founder and artistic advisor, Dallas Black Dance Theatre.
- Creating Change: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**
 With humble curiosity, the opera field will gather in this session to hear presentations from experts in other arts disciplines and sectors who have made strides to improve equity within their organizations and their communities. Following these lightning talks, opera practitioners who have demonstrated leadership in equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) respond and give voice to the steps that the opera field can take. Featuring **Roberto Bedoya**, cultural affairs manager, City of Oakland; **Zenetta S. Drew**, executive director, Dallas Black Dance Theatre; **Brandon Gryde**, director of government affairs, OPERA America; **Cayenne Harris**, Lyric Unlimited director, Lyric Opera of Chicago; **Anh Le**, publications and brand manager, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; **David Lomeli**, assistant artistic administrator and special projects, The Dallas Opera; **Keryl McCord**, founder and CEO, The Equity Quotient; **Kevin Moriarty**, artistic director, Dallas Theater Center; **L. Michelle Smith**, director, AT&T Global Marketing Organization.
- Closing Session**
 Bass-baritone **Ryan Speedo Green**, whose life was chronicled in the recent book *Sing for Your Life*, will share his experiences in overcoming obstacles to become an acclaimed opera singer. **Timothy O'Leary**, board chairman of OPERA America, will offer reflections on Opera Conference 2017 and will extend an invitation to next year's annual gathering in Saint Louis. Attendees will join O'Leary and **Marc A. Scorca**, president/CEO of OPERA America, in thanking The Dallas Opera for their service to the field.

OPEN SESSIONS

In addition to the general sessions, attendees will choose from more than 30 additional sessions over the course of Opera Conference 2017. Sessions address the needs of staff, trustees, volunteers and other industry professionals; some focus on specific areas of practice, such as artistic administration, artist training and management, development, finance, marketing, public relations, volunteerism and technical/production, while others foster cross-network dialogue.

This year's sessions fall into three categories: **Spotlights**, which highlight specific company practices and other programs; **Think Tanks**, which explore issues of field-wide importance in depth; and **Toolboxes**, which are designed to develop practical skills for opera practitioners. These sessions are:

- 30 Ideas in 90 Minutes: How to Get More Money from Individuals
- Achieving Liquidity
- Arts Policy and Effective Advocacy
- Board Committees Designed for Success
- Case Studies: Independent Artists Developing New Works
- Change Management for Opera Companies
- Collaborative Singer Training: Voice Teachers
- Collective Impact
- Composition in the Board Room, Too
- Co-Production Marketplace
- Creating the Training Through-Line: Singers and Pianists as Citizen Artists
- Culturally Sensitive Producing
- Cut a Print Ad, Create a Video
- Data to Assess and Advance Your Organization
- Design Thinking at San Francisco Opera
- Development Consulting for Sustainable Results
- Fundraising vs. Sales
- Granting for Individuals
- Innovation and Ideas: Becoming a Learning Organization
- Lifelong Learning in Opera: Adult Education Programs
- Long-Range New Works Planning
- Mind the GAAP: Preparing for Changes in Financial Reporting
- New Works 101 Meetup
- Opera's Paradox: Mission and Business Model
- Opera San Luis Obispo's Countywide Arts Collaboration
- The Power of Dynamic Pricing
- Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase
- Shared Values for Production and Operations
- Succeeding Together: Marketing and Development
- Technical Training for Opera
- Volunteers for Vocalists
- Where are They Now? The Building Opera Audiences Legacy
- Women's Opera Network: Update and Discussion

SEMINARS

Conference seminars offer the opportunity for attendees to delve into a specific topic in a hands-on workshop environment (additional \$75 fee, unless otherwise noted). The seminar topics are:

- Campaign Readiness: Planning and Preparing for a Large-Scale Fundraising Initiative (\$20; sponsored by Arts Consulting Group)
- How to Be an Ally
- Opera 101 for Administrators
- Plugging In: Arts Marketing and Video in a Digital Age

NEW WORKS FORUM

OPERA America has long been an advocate in supporting the creation of new work, while helping to address challenges and opportunities associated with producing opera in the 21st century. This commitment has led to the establishment of the New Works Forum, one of the most popular events at the conference each year. The New Works Forum is a series of sessions that offers insight, practical knowledge and networking opportunities for creators and producers of new opera and music-theater works. Topics to be covered include the role of dramaturgs, family opera and repertoire that addresses contemporary issues.

DIRECTOR-DESIGNER SHOWCASE

The Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase, made possible by a generous grant from the Tobin Theatre Arts Fund, is a biennial competition that identifies emerging director-designer teams, each of which has developed a production proposal for an opera. Both in person and through the live stream, attendees will see the three winning production presentations and meet the artists who created them. The three featured production teams are:

Glory Denied (Tom Cipullo)

Ashley Tata, director*
Stephan Moravski, scenic designer
Liene Dobraja, costume designer
Abigail Hoke-Brady, lighting designer*
Brad Peterson, projection and video designer

Der fliegende Holländer (Richard Wagner)

Shannon Knox, director and scenographer*
Becky Heisler, lighting designer*
Gabrielle Heerschap, technical director*
Micaela Tobin, sound designer and composer*

Der fliegende Holländer (Richard Wagner)

Luke Harlan, director*
Alexander Woodward, scenic designer*
Fabian Fidel Aguilar, costume designer*
Andrew F. Griffin, lighting designer
Rasean Davonte Johnson, projection designer*

*Attending the conference

The Director-Designer Showcase will be live streamed at conference.operaamerica.org/Live on Saturday, May 6 from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. CDT and will be archived for later viewing at youtube.com/OPERAAmerica.

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SIX OPERAS IN TWO CITIES

Conference attendees will have the chance to attend six operas:

- The Dallas Opera will present Douglas J. Cuomo's *Arjuna's Dilemma* on May 4; a semi-staged performance of Joby Talbot and Gene Scheer's *Everest* on May 5, preceded by the world premiere of Talbot's *Everest Prelude*; and Bellini's *Norma* on May 7. The company will also present the animated film *The Magic Piano*, an animated film featuring a live piano performance by Derek Wang, on May 6.
- Fort Worth Opera will present Bizet's *Carmen* on May 5; Matthew Peterson and Jason Zencka's *Voir Dire* on May 6; and José "Pepe" Martínez and Leonard Foglia's *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* by on May 7. On May 3 and 4, the company will also present its annual *Frontiers* showcase, which features excerpts from eight new works.

NETWORKS, FORUMS AND LEARNING THEMES

As part of its efforts to identify and respond to challenges facing opera professionals, OPERA America maintains a number of specialized networks and forums to advance understanding in specific areas of the field. Several of these groups will meet during the conference, including:

- Artistic Administration
- Artists
- Development and Fundraising
- Education and Community Engagement
- Finance, Administration and Human Resources
- General Directors and CEOs
- Marketing and Public Relations
- New Works Forum
- Singer Training Forum
- Technical/Production
- Trustees
- Volunteers
- Women's Opera Network

In addition, threaded throughout the conference are a number of sessions addressing the following learning themes:

- Connecting Traditional and New Repertoire to Today's Audiences
- Effective Collaborations and Partnerships
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Leadership by Experimentation and Learning

WOMEN'S OPERA NETWORK

In 2015, OPERA America founded the Women's Opera Network (WON), a group to support and advance women working in opera, as well as foster discussion about diversity and gender parity in the field. The group first convened at Opera Conference 2015, and they will come together again this year for a Spotlight Session on May 6.

LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE

Generously supported by the American Express Foundation, the Leadership Intensive identifies the most promising emerging leaders in the field of opera administration and provides them with the skills and contacts needed to advance their careers. This year, Leadership Intensive alumni from 2012–2016 will convene at conference for roundtable discussions.

NEW GENERAL DIRECTORS ROUNDTABLE

The New General Directors Roundtable is a peer learning group consisting of recent appointees to their first general director or chief staff officer positions at companies with budgets between \$1 million and \$5 million. Through facilitated discussion and formal presentations, OPERA America responds to the needs articulated by participants, including strategy formulation, staff management, board relations and work/life balance.

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



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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, 250 Associate, Business and Educational Members, 1,200 Individual Members, and 16,000 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.

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