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## **OPERA AMERICA ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF INNOVATION GRANTS**

**Generously Funded by the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation**

**A TOTAL OF \$1.2 MILLION AWARDED TO 20 COMPANIES TO FOSTER INNOVATION AND FIELD-WIDE LEARNING**

April 10, 2018 (New York) — **OPERA America**, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion of American opera, is pleased to announce the recipients of the second cycle of **Innovation Grants**, generously funded by the **Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation**.

Launched in fall 2016, Innovation Grants support exceptional projects that have the capacity to strengthen the field's most important areas of practice, including artistic vitality, audience experience, organizational effectiveness and community connections. These grants invest up to \$1.5 million annually in OPERA America's Professional Company Members, enabling organizations of all sizes to increase their commitment to experimentation and innovation, as well as contribute to field-wide learning.

Twenty companies received awards in this granting cycle:

**American Opera Projects** (New York, NY)  
**Anchorage Opera**  
**The Dallas Opera**  
**Haymarket Opera Company** (Chicago, IL)  
**Nashville Opera**  
**Nautilus Music-Theater** (St. Paul, MN)  
**New Orleans Opera**  
**On Site Opera** (New York, NY)  
**Opera Columbus** (Columbus, OH)  
**Opéra de Montréal**

**Opera in the Heights** and **Pacific Opera Project** (Houston, TX, and Los Angeles, CA)  
**Opera Memphis**  
**Opera North** (Lebanon, NH)  
**Opera on Tap** (New York, NY)  
**Opera Philadelphia**  
**Opera San Luis Obispo**  
**Opera Theatre of Saint Louis**  
**Pittsburgh Opera**  
**San Diego Opera**

These grants will fund a wide range of initiatives, including the production of socially relevant works with civic resonance; projects designed to make opera inclusive and accessible; the fusion of technology with live performance; partnerships among arts and non-arts organizations; research into the audience experience; and career-development programs for opera creators and artists. (See below for details about all the funded initiatives.)

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 will provide administrative and technical support that will enable companies to document successes and learn from one another. Outcomes will be shared at future OPERA America meetings and conferences, as well as through publications and other learning tools.

“Thanks to the profound generosity of the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, our member companies have received support to explore new strategies and experiments — to expand the boundaries of their current practices and nimbly adapt to an ever-changing field,” stated Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. “These grants benefit more than just the recipients; through the lessons learned from the funded initiatives, companies throughout North America will be able to replicate and adopt good ideas, and ultimately contribute to a stronger art form.”

Submitted by 48 American and Canadian companies, grant applications were adjudicated by an independent panel consisting of **Snehal Desai**, producing artistic director, East West Players; **Sue Elliott**, director of teacher certification, The Royal Conservatory of Music; **Seena Hodges**, associate vice president of strategy and communications, The Saint Paul and Minnesota Community Foundations; **Barry Joseph**, associate director for digital learning, American Museum of Natural History; **Margaret M. Lioi**, chief executive officer, Chamber Music America; **Michael Rohd**, founding artistic director, Sojourn Theater, and executive director, Center for Performance and Civic Practice; and **Jane Weaver-Sobel**, field consultant, and former interim general director, Fort Worth Opera and Austin Opera.

Applications for the next cycle of Innovation Grants will open this fall. Visit [operaamerica.org/Grants](http://operaamerica.org/Grants) to learn more about Innovation Grants, as well as OPERA America's complete grant offerings.

## **ABOUT THE RECIPIENTS**

Innovation Grants were awarded to the following 20 companies for the projects described below:

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|    | <p><b>American Opera Projects (AOP)</b> is one of the leading developers of contemporary operas, currently developing more than 20 new operas, with recent performances in 40 cities across the U.S. AOP will expand its training program, launched in 2002 for emerging composers and librettists, into conservatories and universities to teach students the mechanics and artistry of creating new operas.</p> |
| <p><i>AOP previously received a 2017 Innovation Grant for this same project, which will be refined further with this newly awarded grant.</i></p> |   |

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|    | <p><b>Anchorage Opera</b> will present the Alaskan premiere of Jack Perla and Jessica Murphy Moo's <i>An American Dream</i>, which chronicles the WWII internment of a Japanese family. In Alaska, there was only one internment camp for Japanese Americans, but six for Alaska Natives, who were removed from their homes in the Aleutian Islands. Anchorage Opera seeks to attract new audiences by using the underlying theme of this opera to spark community discussions about discrimination and marginalization, as well as the current treatment of refugees and immigrants.</p> |
| <p><i>Anchorage Opera previously received a 2017 Innovation Grant for similar projects in conjunction with the Alaskan premiere of <i>As One</i>, composed by Laura Kaminsky, with a libretto by Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed.</i></p> |   |



**The Dallas Opera** will continue to evaluate the sustainability and growth of its Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Women Conductors, which is designed to combat gender disparity on the podium and to build a network of talented leaders. The institute's curriculum covers topics such as the role of the board, leadership development, personal branding, PR training and effective artist management.

*The Dallas Opera previously received a 2017 Innovation Grant for the American premiere of Sunken Garden, an opera that celebrates art and technology, featuring 3-D film, projections and spoken word.*



**Haymarket Opera Company** will develop a new program, Opera and Oratorio for Persons with Low Vision, that provides low-vision patrons with special services, including pre-concert lectures by members of the artistic team, touch boards of production elements (such as costume fabrics), audio versions of program book articles, and real-time descriptions of stage action and supertitles. Low-vision patrons will also receive assistance with transportation to and from events.



**Nashville Opera** will implement a revolutionary program, All-Access Opera Education, to make opera inclusive for all students — providing special, modified performances and evidence-based toolkits to bolster accessibility for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other disabilities. This collaboration will create exciting new learning opportunities and audience experiences for Middle Tennessee students through opera. It will be the first program of its kind in the country to be documented for replication in other communities.



**Nautilus Music-Theater** will develop The Nautilus Genome Project: Preparing for the Next Iteration. This project will archive and catalog all of Nautilus' production materials, create a participant database, survey Nautilus artists and analyze the data to "map the Nautilus Genome." The goal of the project is to create a deeper model for leadership transition at smaller, founder-led organizations.



**New Orleans Opera** will work with local arts partners, including OperaCréole, to bring opera to the diverse communities of New Orleans through a new program, Creative Connections. The partnership will leverage the unique power of opera — particularly through historic contributions of composers of color — to refresh understandings of the artistic legacy of New Orleans. In the city's 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, Creative Connections will establish a new, inclusive engagement of all residents in the city's cultural heritage and demonstrate the value of embracing the history of a city to shape programming and partnerships.



**On Site Opera** will present a site-specific production of Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* that will highlight the prevalent issue of homelessness in New York City. For this production, On Site Opera will partner with Breaking Ground, New York City's largest provider of housing for the homeless, to create a chorus of singers and dancers from their community. Performances will be presented in the Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen in December 2018 and will demonstrate the potential of partnerships with social service providers.



The Poppea Project is an immersive opera and visual art experience, co-produced by **Opera Columbus** and The Pizzuti Collection, one of the world's most important collections of contemporary art. Audiences will experience Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* as they move through the collection's galleries, with art curated in collaboration with the opera. The experience will be unprecedented, with audiences interacting with the artists and determining their own experience of the performance.



**Opéra de Montréal** aims to build sustainable capacity for research, measurement and improvement in the area of the patron experience by partnering with the vibrant community of Montreal's universities and technological sector. This approach builds on Opéra de Montréal's focus on continuous improvement to the patron experience, and includes a two day-long creative marathon led by some of the most renowned experts in that field.



**Opera in the Heights (OH)** and **Pacific Opera Project (POP)** will present a bilingual production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. A new libretto created by the artistic directors of both companies assigns Japanese text to the Japanese characters and English text to the American characters. The cast will feature singers of Japanese descent, as well as singers proficient in both English and Japanese for certain characters that switch between languages. The co-production will premiere in Los Angeles as part of POP's mainstage season in April 2019, followed by a run in Houston as OH's season-closing production.



**Opera Memphis** will undertake additional initiatives organized around the legacy of African-American soprano Florence Cole Talbert-McCleave. Working with Latino Memphis, Opera Memphis will create a Spanish version of *The Telephone*. Through facilitated community conversations with the African-American and Latino communities of Memphis — as well as the creation of a McCleave Fellowship for singers, directors and coaches of color — Opera Memphis seeks to move beyond inherited opera traditions in partnership with the community.

*Opera Memphis previously received a 2017 Innovation Grant for this same project, which will be refined further with this newly awarded grant.*



**Opera North**, in partnership with the National Park Service, will develop a new summer venue for arts and culture at the historic Blow-Me-Down Farm in Cornish, NH. The farm was central to the Cornish Colony, and during its heyday in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, residents included sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens and other figures of note. In July 2018, Opera North's resident artists and orchestra will be joined by professional circus artists, led by Big Apple Circus Director Mark Lonergan, for four performances at Blow-Me-Down Farm.



Inspired by *The Parksville Murders* VR opera series, the Immersive Opera Project (IOP) is a collaborative effort of **Opera on Tap**, Austin Opera and Tapestry Opera to develop, showcase and produce new works of opera designed for immersive environments. Projects will utilize immersive technologies, including virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), mixed reality (MR) and XR (a combination of VR, AR and MR). Immersive opera's definition will also include immersive live performance.



As part of its O18 Festival, **Opera Philadelphia** will stage an intimate, immersive new production of Poulenc's *La Voix humaine*, starring Patricia Racette, that will invite audiences to experience the live performance of opera while simultaneously participating in the creation of an art film for digital distribution. James Darrah will collaborate with interdisciplinary artists to stage and film the site-specific production that will transform the iconic TLA concert venue into the world of French cabaret.

*Opera Philadelphia previously received a 2017 Innovation Grant for its O17 festival.*



**Opera San Luis Obispo** will create a Mobile Opera House: a miniature stage transported within a 22-foot truck that is designed to be assembled by a two-man crew, to acoustically project performances in a variety of outdoor settings and to effectively resist various outdoor conditions. The Mobile Opera House will allow Opera San Luis Obispo to participate in significant outdoor events, such as the Mid-State Fair, weekly farmers markets and other widely attended outdoor events.



**Opera Theatre of Saint Louis'** Opera Equity Initiative will build a sustainable equity plan, with a focus on African-American artists, audiences and staff. By looking beyond the limitations of main-season productions, the initiative will deepen existing relationships and create consistent, intentional programs to discuss issues of race, representation and inclusion beyond the company's annual May/June festival. The initiative will also address hiring inequities, seeking to support the field-wide need to build a better future pipeline, particularly within the company's production and administrative staff.

## PITTSBURGH OPERA

**Pittsburgh Opera** will oversee the development and implementation of an Inside Track mobile app to provide unique simultaneous engagement experiences for its audiences in the theater. Through a mix of live and pre-recorded narration and other types of streamed content, Inside Track will create a user-centered experience that offers interpretive assistance to help patrons explore the themes of an opera production intellectually and connect with it emotionally.

## SD OPERA

In partnership with local tech companies and university engineering programs, **San Diego Opera's** Opera Hack project will pair opera creators with technology experts to explore how recent innovations can enhance the production and performance of opera. Opera Hack will be a two-day innovation challenge for carefully selected experts in various creative and technology disciplines, to be held in July 2019. Resulting concepts will be developed and presented in summer 2020.

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



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### **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 the 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.