



NATIONAL OPERA TRUSTEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

2026 GUIDELINES &
NOMINATION PROCEDURES

operaamerica.org/Grants | Grants@operaamerica.org

OPERA America
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Important Links

[OPERA America Website](#)
[OPERA America Grants Portal](#)

The OPERA America website and Grants Portal require different usernames and passwords.

If you need to reset your password for OPERA America's website, go [here](#).

For Grants Portal information, contact Jenny Fornoff, senior manager for grants, at Grants@operaamerica.org or 646.699.5258.

About the National Opera Trustee Recognition Awards

The National Opera Trustee Recognition Awards, now in their 18th year, were established to honor opera company trustees for exemplary leadership, support, and service on behalf of their respective opera companies across the country.

OPERA America's commitment to recognizing excellence in governance stems from a core belief that the strength of an opera company is directly linked to the quality of governance demonstrated by its board members. The National Opera Trustee Recognition Awards strive to:

- Highlight the tenets of good governance.
- Provide models of trustee and volunteer excellence.
- Amplify the efforts of distinguished trustees to a national audience.
- Strengthen the relationships between trustees and the companies and communities they serve.

The National Opera Trustee Recognition Awards offer OPERA America's Professional Company Members an opportunity to demonstrate their gratitude and bring national attention to the leaders who play a pivotal role in charting the future of opera in America.

Eligibility

Every U.S. Professional Company Member is invited to submit one nomination per award cycle. The nominated trustee must currently be serving on your board of directors. Companies may choose to re-nominate a previous nominee who was not selected for an award in a previous year. With special permission, a company may be permitted to nominate a recent trustee emeritus or a couple who both serve as trustees.

Applications will only be advanced for consideration if the Professional Company Member of OPERA America is a member in good standing — current in membership dues, the submission of required surveys (including the Professional Opera Survey), and the submission of reports from open grants. Applicants must have OPERA America's logo, including a hyperlink to the OPERA America website, in a prominent location on their website.

Nomination Process

A list of all nomination fields and questions can be found below. Nominations must be submitted online by **Thursday, February 26, 2026, 5:00 p.m. PT**.

- Read the guidelines carefully before completing any application materials.
- All materials must be submitted online via the [Grants Dashboard](#).
- Applications that are incomplete, late, or sent via mail, fax, or email will not be accepted.

For questions, contact Jenny Fornoff, senior manager for grants, at 646.699.5258 or Grants@operaamerica.org.

Nomination Form Questions

Nominations must be submitted online via the [Grants Dashboard](#).

You may save your trustee nomination draft in the online form and return to it later.

1. Nominating Company

COMPANY INFORMATION

- Budget Category (1–5)*
 - Budget 1 (\$15 million or more)
 - Budget 2 (\$3 to 15 million)
 - Budget 3 (\$1 to 3 million)
 - Budget 4 (\$250,000 to \$1 million)
 - Budget 5 (Under \$250,000)
- To the best of your knowledge, is your company in good standing with OPERA America? (Yes/No) (A company is in good standing if it has completed the 2024 Professional Opera Survey and is current with dues payments, grant reports, and other invoices.)*

GENERAL DIRECTOR

- Title (Mrs./Ms./Mr./Mx./Dr./Prof.)
- First Name*
- Last Name*
- Professional Title*
- Email*
- Phone*

2. Nominator

- Did someone other than the general director or a staff member at the opera company prepare the nomination? (Yes/No)*

IF YES:

- Title (Mrs./Ms./Mr./Mx./Dr./Prof.)
- First Name*
- Last Name*
- Relationship of the Nominator to the Nominee*
- Board Position (if applicable)
- Mailing Address*
- Address 2
- City*
- State*
- ZIP Code*
- Email*
- Phone*

3. Nomination

NOMINEE

- Title (Mrs./Ms./Mr./Mx./Dr./Prof.)
- First Name*
- Last Name*
- Professional Title and Employer/Affiliation*
- Board Position(s)*
- Mailing Address*
- Address 2
- City*
- State*
- ZIP Code*
- Email*
- Phone*

**indicates a required field*

BOARD HISTORY AND ROLE

- In what year did the nominee first join the board?*
- How many years total has the nominee served on the board? (Do not include years of rotation off the board.)*
- In a short list, please provide the nominee's current and recent board/committee roles, including duration of service. (max. 1,250 char.)*
- If available, please provide a short, professional biography of the nominee. (max. 1,250 char.)
- OPERA America encourages companies to re-nominate strong nominees who were not selected in previous years. Has the nominee been nominated previously? (Yes/No)*

NOMINATION QUESTIONS

In responding to the following questions, demonstrate how your nominee has excelled in advancing the work of your company, the strength of your board, your relationship with your community, and your company's long-term sustainability.

- **How has your nominee contributed to the success of the company?** (max. 2,500 char.)*
You might consider ways your nominee has supported staff, contributed to projects, recruited audiences, offered expertise, etc.
- **How has your nominee advanced the effectiveness of the board?** (max. 2,500 char.)*
You might consider ways your nominee has fostered learning, led special initiatives, promoted collaboration, encouraged teamwork, mobilized peers, etc.
- **How has your nominee participated in the company's commitment to its community?** (max. 2,500 char.)*
You might consider ways your nominee has forged partnerships, made introductions, participated in advocacy, served as an ambassador, etc.
- **How has your nominee worked to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of your company?** (max. 2,500 char.)*
You might consider ways your nominee has negotiated long-term contracts, helped build an endowment, secured multi-year funding, led strategic planning initiatives, etc.

**indicates a required field*

Considerations When Preparing Your Nomination

- The selection committee can only consider what they receive in your written nomination. Your nominee likely excels in all evaluation areas. Make sure your nomination makes that clear.
- Be specific. Provide concrete examples to illustrate how your nominee has impacted the company.
- The selection committee will look for evidence that your nominee has played an active role in the advancement of the company beyond their financial generosity, however significant. The accomplishments of your company under your nominee's board tenure are less important than how your nominee helped achieve them.
- Help the committee understand the magnitude of your nominee's impact by qualifying any numerical data; for instance: "Jane tripled the endowment when she raised \$8 million in the campaign" or "Fred recruited nearly half of the 150 people who attended our free community performance."

Selection Process & Criteria

Honorees will be chosen by a selection committee comprising past recipients of National Opera Trustee Recognition Awards. Five honorees will be selected, representing Budget 1, Budget 2, Budget 3, Budget 4, and Budget 5 companies. Notification of winners will be sent to companies and honorees in late April and early May.

The selection committee will review each nomination and assign scores in respect to four criteria:

1. The impact of the nominee on the company's success
2. The impact of the nominee on the board's effectiveness
3. The impact of the nominee on the community
4. The impact of the nominee on the company's long-term health and sustainability

Honoree Recognition

OPERA America will work closely with the opera companies of the selected honorees to highlight their achievements and contributions to the field in a national press release. Awardees will be featured in *Opera America Magazine* and on the OPERA America website. All honorees will receive a one-year membership to OPERA America, including a subscription to *Opera America Magazine* and access to online resources.

Awards Dinner

Honorees are invited to attend the OPERA America Salutes awards dinner in the winter of 2027 in New York City (date to be announced). The event, which includes a reception, dinner, awards presentation, and musical program, brings together company leaders and trustees from across the country.

Each honoree will receive two complimentary tickets to the evening; their general director will also receive two complimentary tickets. Additional tickets may be purchased for colleagues, family, and friends. (Please note: OPERA America Salutes is not black tie, and dress for the event is business attire. All additional tickets are priced at cost.)

OPERA America Salutes is a centerpiece of OPERA America's annual National Trustee Week (winter 2027), which includes the National Trustee Forum and additional special events, outings, and performances. Honorees and their guests are invited to participate in other events throughout the weekend; additional costs apply.

Staff Contact

For questions, contact Jenny Fornoff, senior manager for grants, at 646.699.5258 or Grants@operaamerica.org.

Past Honorees *Listed alphabetically by year*

2025

Jeffrey Cunard, Washington National Opera
Janet Farrell, IN Series
Erin Flannery, Experiments in Opera
Liz Kathman Grubow, Cincinnati Opera
Mel Weingart, OPERA San Antonio

2024

Maria Lagios, Chicago Opera Theater
Claire Liu, Houston Grand Opera
William Miller, Opera Columbus
Leah Solat, Annapolis Opera
Jennifer Suh Whitfield, HERE Arts Center

2023

Sarah Moulton Faux,
The American Opera Project
Keith Geeslin, San Francisco Opera
Anne Kline,
Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts
Rusell McColman, BARNOPEA
Nadege Souvenir, Minnesota Opera

2022

Gary Casagrande, MassOpera
Arlene Ferebee, Opera Carolina
John Fitzgerald, IN Series
Susan G. Marineau, The Santa Fe Opera
Ranney Mize, New Orleans Opera

2020

Robert Ellis, San Francisco Opera
Linda Koehn, Des Moines Metro Opera
Phil Meyer, Pacific Opera Project
Chris and Anita Murray, Opera Las Vegas
H. Bernt von Ohlen, Minnesota Opera

2019

Elizabeth Hernandez, Opera Cultura
Charlie Schaffler, Opera Memphis
Stacey Hunt Spier, El Paso Opera
Maryanne Tagney, Seattle Opera
Robert Tancer, Arizona Opera

2018

Henry Fogel, Chicago Opera Theater
Carol F. Henry, Los Angeles Opera
John Serrage, Opera Maine
R. Jamison Williams, Michigan Opera Theatre

2017

Jerry Clack, Pittsburgh Festival Opera
R. Marsh Gibson, Opera Memphis
Carol Lazier, San Diego Opera
Holly Mayer, The Dallas Opera

2016

Michele S. Fabrizi, Pittsburgh Opera
Martha Rivers Ingram, Nashville Opera
Jeanette Lerman-Neubauer,
The Metropolitan Opera
Jacqueline Badger Mars,
Washington National Opera
Cynthia du Pont Tobias, Opera Delaware

2015

Susan Bienkowski, Long Beach Opera
Frank Kuehn, Opera Southwest
Capt. James H. McCoy, Hawaii Opera Theatre
John Nesholm, Seattle Opera

2014

Michael and Noémi Neidorff,
Opera Theatre of Saint Louis
Ruth W. Harper, M.D., Pensacola Opera
Kenneth G. Pigott, Lyric Opera of Chicago
Robert L. Roschel, M.D., Opera Lancaster

2013

Lisa Erdberg, San Francisco Opera
Patricia A. Richards,
Utah Symphony | Utah Opera
Chérie Shreck, Des Moines Metro Opera
Timothy J. Wagg, Opera North

2012

Elizabeth Eveillard, The Glimmerglass Festival
Joseph and Judy Liff-Barker, Nashville Opera
Susan F. Morris, The Santa Fe Opera
William C. Morris, The Metropolitan Opera
Dr. George R. White,
Opera Theater of Pittsburgh

2011

Eleanor “Ellie” Caulkins, Opera Colorado
Jackie Lockwood, Dayton Opera
John I. (Jack) Riddle, PORTopera
Lynn Wyatt, Houston Grand Opera

2010

Jeffrey A. Evershed, Portland Opera
Benjamin Keaton, Long Leaf Opera Company
Fred and Eve Simon, Opera Omaha
Marc I. Stern, Los Angeles Opera

2009

James T. Cody Jr., The Dallas Opera
Richard Holland, Opera Omaha
Beth Ingram, Lyric Opera of Kansas City
C. Guy Rudisill III, Piedmont Opera

2008

Betty W. Healey, Opera Birmingham
Sally S. Levy, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis
Jane A. Robinson, Florida Grand Opera
G. Whitney Smith, Fort Worth Opera