



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

09 MAY 2018

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OPERA FOR ALL VOICES STORIES OF OUR TIME

COMMISSIONED BY A CONSORTIUM LED BY SANTA FE OPERA
IN ASSOCIATION WITH SAN FRANCISCO OPERA:

LYRIC OPERA OF KANSAS CITY • MINNESOTA OPERA • OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS
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SANTA FE, NM — Santa Fe Opera announced two additional commissions and a podcast for **Opera for All Voices: Stories of our Time**, which was introduced in 2017. The initiative was established to create works to attract audiences of all ages who may not have had an exposure to opera. The seven companies currently in the consortium — Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Minnesota Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Sarasota Opera, and Seattle Opera — are working together to create new works flexible in both scope and scale which can be performed in a variety of venues off the main stage. The operas focus on storytelling in imaginative and compelling new ways. The teams behind these commissions were selected through an invitational process and adjudicated by a jury of 12 distinguished individuals in the field of opera. Kip Cranna, San Francisco Opera dramaturg, guided the process.

The first commission, **The Pigeon Fancier**, is to be composed by **David Hanlon** with a libretto by **Stephanie Fleischmann**. The second will be **This Little Light of Mine** by composer **Chandler Carter** and librettist **Diana Solomon-Glover**. Both projects will be mentored by the creative teams who previously received commissions.

The first two episodes of the podcast **Key Change**, produced by Andrea Klunder with theme music by Rene Orth and graphic design by David Tousley, will be available Friday, June 29, 2018. Six more weekly episodes of the first season will follow beginning Wednesday, July 11. Listen in as we explore the creation of new operas and their connection to our industry, our communities, and our future.

Of the previously two commissioned works, **Sweet Potato Kicks the Sun** by composer **Augusta Read Thomas** and librettist **Leslie Dunton-Downer** will receive its premiere by The Santa Fe Opera in October of 2019.

In the spirit of all voices, **Nicole Paris**, acclaimed beat box artist, joins *Sweet Potato Kicks the Sun* as lead artist. Of Miss Paris, Augusta Read Thomas has remarked “I see opera as embracing diverse musical traditions, artists, and audience members. My collaboration with Nicole Paris has been and will continue to be one of the most important partnerships in my life.” And from Miss Paris, “After meeting Augusta Read Thomas, I knew we would awaken the Universe with new music.”

The second commission, **Postville: Hometown to the World** by composer **Laura Kaminsky** and librettist **Kimberly Reed**, is slated to premiere at San Francisco Opera in 2020.

Opera for All Voices came from a recognized need for works with outstanding artistic quality that can still reach broad-ranging audiences through accessibility of subject material and a range of budgets. The goal of the project is to bring new audiences to opera. It will accomplish this by commissioning important works that speak to all voices — designed with modern attention spans in mind and the objective to break down pre-conceived notions about opera.

Grammy Award-winning **Augusta Read Thomas**, composer of the first commission, boasts a prolific collection of orchestral, chamber, choral, and vocal works. Recent and upcoming commissions include those from the Boston Symphony, Wigmore Hall in London, Tanglewood, Chicago Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Danish Chamber Players, Lorelei Vocal Ensemble, and the Fromm Foundation. In addition to composing, Thomas is an influential teacher at Eastman, Northwestern, Tanglewood, and Aspen Music Festival. Designated University Professor at the University of Chicago, she was the longest-serving Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1997 through 2006.

The librettist for *Sweet Potato Kicks the Sun* **Leslie Dunton-Downer** holds a PhD with Distinction in Comparative Literature from Harvard University, where she was a Lecturer and remains a member of the Society of Fellows. She received her BA from Harvard College. Her most recent book, *The English Is Coming!: How One Language is Sweeping the World* (Touchstone, 2011), examines the global roots and reach of the English language. Additional publications include two books co-authored with former New York Times cultural correspondent Alan Riding: *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* (2004, 2013) and *Opera* (2006). Dunton-Downer has written extensively for composer Augusta Read Thomas since 1992; libretti for other composers include *Belladonna*, a chamber opera by Bernard Rands that premiered in 1999 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Aspen Music Festival; and most recently for composers Maciej Sledziecki and Marion Wörle, *This Is Not A Swan Song*.

Nicole Paris, Beatbox Artist, Composer, Chef, Actress, and public figure, gained notoriety and millions of fans when a YouTube battle against her mentor and father, Edward Cage, went viral within hours of its release. With her unique mix of vibrant, energetic beats, she is recognized among a new crop of artist revitalizing and changing the face of Hip Hop. Having sparred live on ABC's *Good Morning America* and CBS' *Late Late Show with James Corden*, she was crowned the new face of beatbox by popular vote with Doug E. Fresh, Rahzel, and other well-known beatboxers all hailing her natural talent. Nicole's revitalizing beats landed her a spot in the first ever Beat-Box cypher for the BET 2015 Hip Hop Awards, a starring role in *Dance Camp*, a musical composer for various commercials, and the new rebrand face for TV One. Upcoming projects include the publication of her first children's book and the release of the 1st ever Beatbox album.

The music behind the second commission comes from **Laura Kaminsky**. A composer of opera, orchestra, chamber, vocal, and choral music, her scores often address social and political issues such as sustainability, war, and human rights. She recently made waves in the realm of stories previously untold with her opera *As One*, which premiered at BAM in 2014 and has since been performed across the country. Additional premieres and commissions include *Some Light Emerges* at Houston Grand Opera, *Today It Rains* at Opera Parallèle, a piano quintet for Ursula Oppens and the Cassatt String Quartet, and a new work for flute and piano for the University of Minnesota/Duluth. She is head of composition at Purchase College Conservatory of Music/SUNY and composer-in-residence at American Opera Projects. Librettist **Kimberly Reed** is a frequent collaborator with Kaminsky, including *As One* and *Some Light Emerges* (both co-written with Mark Campbell). Her text for *Fierce Grace: Jeannette Rankin*, was commissioned by OPERA America and received its premiere at the United States Library of Congress.

Devoted to themes of social justice and the artist's vision, **Chandler Carter's** staged work focuses on historical stories that cross over boundaries of race and power. He wrote the words and music for *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, based on the life of Nelson Mandela, which premiered at The Riverside Church in New York City in 2001. *Strange Fruit*, based on the novel by Lillian Smith and libretto by Joan Ross Sorkin, was showcased in New York City Opera's Vox series and opened Long Leaf Opera's inaugural 2007 summer festival in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The Center for Contemporary Opera showcased his most recent opera, *Bobby*, based on the life of Robert Kennedy with libretto by Stephen Molton in 2014. Carter is Professor of Music and the head of composition at Hofstra University, where he produced and curated along with Diana Solomon-Glover, Hofstra's annual Black History Month concerts from 2013-2016. Also a respected scholar, his forthcoming book, *The Last Opera: The Progress of The Rake, Stravinsky and Sung Drama*, will be published by Indiana University Press in 2019.

Librettist and soprano **Diana Solomon-Glover** has been the featured soloist and producer for The Innocence Project Annual Gala, and helped Project People Foundation raise over \$250,000 for their programs benefiting South African children orphaned by AIDS. In 2016, Ms. Solomon-Glover became co-owner with singer/composer Kristin Norderval

of *Reduta Deux*, a not-for-profit dedicated to producing theatrical works that represent an unusual integration of vision and techniques whose subject matter reflects a broad human consciousness. Ms. Solomon-Glover is also a collaborator on *The Darkest Light in the Heart*, a new opera based on the events of the 2015 Charleston massacre — libretto by celebrated playwright, Steven Fechter, and score by renowned composer, Anthony Davis — which is being developed by the Spoleto Festival under Nigel Redden.

David Hanlon has written and conducted many works for Houston Grand Opera, including his chamber opera with librettist Stephanie Fleischmann *After the Storm, Past the Checkpoints*, and the chamber vocal pieces *The Ninth November I Was Hiding* and *Power*. His children's opera *Listen, Wilhelmina!* returns to Wolf Trap Opera this summer. Other recent vocal works have included *Texanische Liebeslieder* written with *Wilhelmina* librettist Kathleen Kelly, based on the Texas-German dialect archives at UT-Austin and *Poems and Other Sentimental Bullshit* for soprano Melody Moore's Carnegie Hall debut. David is also a conductor and this spring he conducts *Cruzar la cara de la luna* in its return to HGO. Next season he will conduct *The Scarlet Ibis* at Chicago Opera Theatre and *El Pasado Nunca se Termina* at Fort Worth Opera, a work whose world premiere he led at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Stephanie Fleischmann, playwright and librettist, has been called a "neo Emily Dickinson" (*Backstage*) and "a writer who can conjure something between a dreamy road movie and a theatrical coming-of-age tale, and who can piece these elements together in the style of a jagged ballad for guitar" (*Chicago Sun Times*). Libretti include: *The Long Walk* with music by Jeremy Howard Beck and commissioned by American Lyric Theater; *After the Storm* with music by David Hanlon and commissioned by Houston Grand Opera's HGOco; *In a Grove* with composer Christopher Cerrone and Mahogany Opera Group Various Stages Festival, ICA London; *The Property*, with music by Wlad Marhulets, and commissioned by Lyric Opera of Chicago's Lyric Unlimited. Fleischmann is a recipient of a 2017 Venturous Capital Fund grant, a 2017 NYSICA Individual Artist Commission, a 2014–15 Howard Foundation Fellowship in Playwriting, a grant from Arts Council England, an NEA Opera/Music-Theater commission, New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowships, and a Tennessee Williams Fellowship, among others. She received her MFA from Brooklyn College and has taught at Sewanee, Bard, and Skidmore Colleges.

OPERA FOR ALL VOICES is made possible by generous funding from the Melville Hankins Family Foundation and The Andrew Mellon Foundation, and an OPERA America Innovation Grant, supported by the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation.



The mission of The Santa Fe Opera is to advance the operatic art form by presenting ensemble performances of the highest quality in a unique setting with a varied repertory of new, rarely performed, and standard works; to ensure the excellence of opera's future through apprentice programs for singers, technicians, and arts administrators; and to foster and enrich an understanding and appreciation of opera among a diverse public.

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