



Nov 2018

Under the Freedom of Information Act, agencies are required to proactively disclose frequently requested records. Often the National Endowment for the Arts receives requests for examples of funded grant proposals for various disciplines. In response, the NEA is providing examples of the “Project Information” also called the ”narrative” for a successful Opera project that received NEA funding.

The selected examples is not the entire funded grant proposal and only contain the grant narrative and selected portions. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

The following narratives have been selected as example because it represents a diversity of project type and is well written. Although the project was funded by the NEA, please note that nothing should be inferred about the ranking of each application within its respective applicant pool.

We hope that you will find these records useful as an example of a well written narrative. However please keep in mind that because each project is unique, these narrative should be used as *reference*, rather than templates. If you are preparing your own application and have any questions, please contact the appropriate program office. You may also find additional information regarding the grant application process on our website at [Apply for a Grant | NEA](#).

### ***Opera***

***Opera for the Young (Opera for the Young)***

***Beth Morrison Project (Commissioning)***

***Utah Symphony & Opera (Repeat Productions of Newly Premiered Works)***

***Glimmerglass Opera (Opera Festival)***

***Patrick G. and Shirley Ryan Opera Center (Young Artist Program)***

***Opera Omaha (World Premiere)***

## Opera for the Young, Inc. Opera for the Young Project Information

### Major Project Activities:

Opera for the Young (OFTY) will present our original version of *Rusalka* to schoolchildren during our 2017/18 season. The production will be designed to showcase opera's musical storytelling in a way that is accessible and appealing to young audiences. Each performance will feature professionally designed sets, costumes, and props, as well as professional musicians (soprano, mezzo, tenor, baritone, pianist) joined on stage by children from each host school who act roles and sing in the chorus. OFTY performs throughout the upper Midwest in communities of all sizes and brings the same high production values and hands-on experience to all schools, regardless of their size, location, or student demographics.

Dvorák's ninth opera, *Rusalka*, is a highly dramatic setting of a familiar fairy tale for children, "The Little Mermaid". OFTY artistic staff selected *Rusalka* to provide elementary students exposure to varied styles of opera; in this case, a through-composed work featuring the use of leitmotifs for specific ideas, characters, and environments. This masterwork is also considered by many to be the culmination of Dvorák's varied dramatic composition techniques. OFTY moves the setting from forest glen to coral reef, where **Rusalka** yearns to become human because she's in love with the **Prince**. Rusalka's father, the **Sea King**, warns her about people, but the mermaid goes to the **Sea Witch** for a magic spell. Rusalka exchanges her fish tail for legs at a price: she won't be understood by humans. This proves to be a challenging barrier for the Prince who, after bringing Rusalka to his castle, is pursued by a **Foreign Princess** (the Sea Witch in disguise). Complications abound, aided and untangled by **Creatures of the Reef**, portrayed by the elementary student chorus. Understanding and accepting difference is a powerful subject highlighted in this tale of magical romance, loss, and the redemptive power of love.

Hands-on participation by students is integral to our program and ensures our audiences become invested in the experience. We include the student chorus in speaking and singing roles that are essential to the plot. At many schools, all children have learned the chorus music so they can sing from the audience. In addition, schools use our programming as a schoolwide community-building experience by turning the opera into a focal point: children create and display thematic artwork and dress in costume. This collaboration requires engagement from teachers, and we give them the necessary tools. Teaching materials (available both electronically and hard copy) will include: a Student Preparation Handbook (\*new\* now available in Spanish translation); a newly recorded Cast Recording and Tutorial CD (\*new\* now with supplemental tracks in Spanish); a Teacher's Guide containing an adapters' statement, details on the composer, plot, characters, and music; a full Libretto; and suggested pre/post show activities that encourage children to think creatively and critically as they prepare for and

respond to the opera. Our new Spanish supplement offers schools the option of a dual-language experience – teachers can elect to perform the student portions of the show in Spanish, but all Spanish-speaking children and families can access the new materials online. The ways OFTY’s curriculum-ready materials meet National/ Wisconsin School Music Association standards are highlighted for teachers. Our materials also include activities for classroom teachers to integrate the opera’s themes with academic subjects in areas such as reading, science, and social studies, as well as ESL programs.

### **Schedule of key project dates:**

\*Spring 2017: The Cast Recording and Tutorial CD will be recorded (English). Student supplementary materials will be completed, then translated into Spanish. Auditions and casting will take place. Once selected, performers will begin learning and rehearsing music on their own. A more robust electronic marketing system will be further implemented and those schools where we have performed within the past three years will be contacted first. The Operations Manager will then target schools in specific locations to fill performances in a given service area. Booking for 2017/18 will begin.

Summer 2017: OFTY will record the Spanish version of the Tutorial CD in June. Teaching materials, libretto and score will be finalized in August and sent to Fall 2017 host schools. Production designs will be finalized and built.

Fall 2017-Spring 2018: The in-school "Be a Designer" contest will be launched to gain publicity and generate student excitement. Schools will incorporate children's creativity into audience costumes and art displays in school hallways and classrooms. Rehearsals will take place and the tour will begin. Children at each school will learn music and dialogue with their music teacher. OFTY’s *Rusalka* will be performed at over 180 schools for over 200 performances.

\*activities prior to funding period

### **Intended Audience/Participants/Community: Who will benefit from the project and how?**

OFTY’s *Rusalka* will reach over 76,000 children throughout the upper Midwest. *Rusalka* will be designed to allow the broadest spectrum of schoolchildren to participate—including public, private and parochial schools located in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Part of OFTY artistic vision is the priority of working with underserved communities, and at a time when school arts budgets are being cut, OFTY fills a vital role in keeping quality arts programming accessible. Programming is provided at no cost to individual students.

In addition to our annual fundraising (underwriting 60% of each performance), OFTY seeks school funding to provide subsidized and free performances to underprivileged schools unable to afford our school fees. In 2015/16, OFTY provided nearly \$19,000 in

discounts to schools above and beyond our 60/40 ratio of underwriting.

There are mounting success stories of students with disabilities who connect deeply with and benefit from our programming. The following is an excerpt taken from a speech to community members by OFTY partner and nationally recognized music teacher Margaret Jenks:

“I assess the students in a variety of ways. Beyond the beautiful letters written, vocabulary correctly used and learned, huge volume of parents at conferences talking about the OFTY experience and sudden demand for the Met Magic Flute DVD experience, I can share this. On a scale of 1 to 5, Van Hise students gave the overall OFTY experience a 5.7. Yes, some decided that they needed to add numbers to the scale. Every student knew and could sing every word. Kindergarteners explained the story to their teachers and parents. ██████ mom remarked at conferences how amazed she was that her son knew every character, could sing all the way through every song and could tell the entire story of *Magic Flute* in a way that others could understand him. ██████ is a 5 year old with Down’s Syndrome who has had some language difficulty.”

**Selection of Key Organizational Partners: An organization partner is an outside entity that will provide resources (other than money) to support the project.**

The ways OFTY works with teachers, schools and school districts have been highlighted earlier in the application. Especially noteworthy has been our coordination with the Madison Metropolitan School District.

As a culmination of our season tour, each year OFTY produces a children's arts festival at the Overture Center for the Arts in Madison, WI called Family Opera Day. The goal for the event is to engage our community with participatory arts programming at no cost. Our key organizational partners include Madison Children's Museum and Madison Youth Choirs. Both groups were selected for their artistic excellence and their like-minded approach to engaging children in the arts. The groups provide complementary workshops in theater, music, and design. In addition, the world-class Overture Center provides production support with theatrical space and technicians at low to no cost. This enables us to reduce barriers to high quality arts programming with this free community event.

**Description of Key Organizational Partners:**

**Organization Name:**Madison Metropolitan School District

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Description of Organization:**

MMSD is the 2nd largest school district in Wisconsin. MMSD's mission is "to assure that every student has the knowledge and skills needed for academic achievement and a successful life." MMSD's Fine Arts Task Force prioritizes district needs in the arts. An Equitable Arts Access Model allows all K5 schools the opportunity to have arts residencies. MMSD also has Dual Language Immersion programs in ten elementary schools - programs that inspired OFTY's Spanish-language supplementary materials.

**Organization Name:**Overture Center for the Arts

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Description of Organization:**

Overture Center exists to engage the community with innovative programming and performing arts. Through the Community Arts Access program, Overture supports area nonprofit organizations that present community performances and events. By providing rental and equipment subsidies as well as guidance from professional staff, we aim to develop the quality of programming, increase audience engagement, and improve outreach and program offering to arts audiences throughout Madison.

**Organization Name:**Madison Youth Choirs

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Description of Organization:**

Recognized as an innovator in youth choral music education, Madison Youth Choirs inspires enjoyment, learning, and social development through the study and performance of high-quality and diverse choral literature. Their mission is: to create a community of young musicians dedicated to musical excellence through which we inspire enjoyment, enhance education, and nurture personal, musical, and social development.

**Organization Name:**Madison Children's Museum

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Description of Organization:**

Madison Children's Museum's mission is to connect children with their families, communities, and the world beyond through discovery learning and creative play. They engage, challenge, and inspire every visitor. The staff creates custom-crafted, award winning exhibits and provides programming that brings all ages together while focusing on sustainability. They are committed to assistance programs that allow all children to enjoy the museum as a learning playground.

**Selection of Key Individuals: Briefly describe the process and criteria for the selection of the key individuals that will be involved in this project.**

Adaptors, designers, and directors have been selected and are committed to the

project. OFTY staff (Artistic Director Diane Garton Edie, Music Director Clinton Smith) and resident designers (Production Designer Tina Yager, Costume Designer Karen Brown-Larimore) are confirmed for the project; their selection was based on previous success with OFTY. Auditions for professional musicians will take place in Spring 2017. OFTY teaching artists are selected annually through a competitive auditions process and are required to show impressive musical credentials and skill as well as the ability to engage creatively with children. Cast members are early- to mid-career musicians who are serious about their craft and are committed to OFTY's educational ethos. They perform with such opera companies as Boston Lyric, Central City, Des Moines Metro, Florida Grand Opera, Opera Cleveland, Michigan Opera Theater, and the choruses of The Metropolitan Opera and Chicago Lyric Opera.

### Bios of Key Individuals:

**First Name:**Diane  
**Last Name:**Garton Edie  
**Proposed or Committed:**Committed  
**Bio:**

Diane Garton Edie has worked with Opera for the Young (OFTY) since 1992 in various capacities: singer, board member, librettist, stage director, company manager and, since 1996, Artistic Director. Her work as director, librettist and primary artistic outreach/education coordinator has been recognized and supported locally, regionally, and on the national level. Diane has adapted/created libretti for *The Barber of Seville*, *Cinderella*, *The Elixir of Love*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Orpheus Returns*, *The Magic Flute*, *Rusalka*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. With degrees in theatre and drama from Smith College and Indiana University, her special province is out-of-the-mainstream cultural arts programming for participants and audiences from a broad age, geographic and socio-economic range. During her time at OFTY, more than 1.5 million children have been introduced to opera through her work.

**First Name:**Clinton  
**Last Name:**Smith  
**Proposed or Committed:**Committed  
**Bio:**

Now in his fourth season as music director of Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers, Clinton Smith also maintains a position on the music staff of Santa Fe Opera, where he most recently served as cover conductor for Leonard Slatkin on a production of Barber's *Vanessa*. This season, he joins the music staff of Atlanta Opera, conducts *Alcina* at Penn State, and *Mikado* at Kentucky Opera. This past May, Clinton concluded a four-year tenure as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the St. Cloud Symphony. Other recent posts include assistant conductor and chorus master for San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program and assistant conductor for

Glimmerglass Opera. For four seasons, Minnesota Opera engaged Clinton as cover conductor and chorus master. During 2011, Clinton conducted a workshop and prepared the world premiere of Kevin Puts' opera *Silent Night*, which subsequently won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

**First Name:**Karen

**Last Name:**Brown-Larimore

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Karen Brown Larimore returned as resident costumer for Opera for the Young in 2008, and is a favorite with Madison arts organizations including Madison Opera, Madison Ballet, Madison Savoyards, Madison Repertory Theatre, University Opera, University Theatre, Children's Theatre of Madison. She has created the designs for two world premier operas, *Tight Rope* and *Esperanza*. You might even see her work in your home as she is the designer of the original Molly, Samantha, and Kirsten doll clothes for American Girl Collection. Ms. Brown-Larimore toured with Broadway shows as star dresser, wardrobe and wig coordinator. She holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Costume Design from the University of Wisconsin and ran the UW Theater costume shop. She is currently costume and make-up coordinator at Mallat's in Madison.

**First Name:**Tina

**Last Name:**Yager

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Tina Yager joined the OFTY team in 2016 as the set and prop designer. She has been working as a theater artist for fifteen years and has extensive experience in scenic painting. Tina has a degree from University of Minnesota, and since then she has worked as a freelance artist at many world class organizations including: Guthrie Theatre, Children's Theatre Company, Sesame Street Live and Spoleto Festival. She also enjoys working as an educator and had staff position at The University of Iowa as the scenic charge artist and now works as a lecturer and artist in residence at University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee.

**Promotion & Publicity: Briefly describe your plans for promoting and/or publicizing the project.**

Opera for the Young actively works to expand visibility in the communities we serve. Last year, OFTY appeared in numerous news features on television and internet, as well as in print. OFTY also continues to promote its work via print/web/social media materials. More in-depth information, including the entire season touring schedule, can be found on our website at [www.operafortheyoung.org](http://www.operafortheyoung.org), and we regularly send updates and stories via our eNewsletter (OFTY FYI).

Next season OFTY will implement a new system to market more efficiently our booking information to schools. There is also a digital marketing plan in development to focus on regions where we currently do not perform. For example, though we have strong ties to Chicago's western suburban communities, we do not regularly perform north of Chicago. This focused marketing will be a goal for the 2017/18 *Rusalka* season.

**Performance Measurement:**

**How will you measure the success of your project? Describe any plans you have for program evaluation, for working collaboratively with researchers, strategic consultants, program evaluator and/or any other performance measurement related to the project.**

OFTY collects thousands of evaluations from teachers and students to determine both their increased awareness of and enthusiasm for opera as well as the impact the preparation process and performance have on the children and school music programs. Specific feedback on the performers, story, and production is valuable for improving the current show and in preparing the upcoming production. OFTY artists report back to staff with comments, questions, and requests from audiences. OFTY personnel make site visits throughout the year to observe interaction among students, teachers, and OFTY artists, listen to comments made during post show question-and-answer sessions, and have informal conversations with audience members. This season OFTY's Board of Directors includes Madison Metropolitan School District's Fine Arts Coordinator, and our newly formed Education Committee will work with her to ensure our teaching materials and evaluation methods are in line with those used at district level.



**Opera for the Young, Inc.**  
**Opera for the Young**  
**Special Items**

**Special Items: Submit any items specified for your discipline that are relevant to your particular project.**

**ARTISTIC STATEMENT:**

In 2017/18, we will proudly re-mount our adaptation of a Slavic masterpiece, Dvorák's greatest opera, *Rusalka*. We originally selected this opera (based on Hans Christian Andersen's famous fairy tale, "The Little Mermaid") due to its vibrant, melodic music and well-known story. Some observers initially thought this opera would be a gamble for OFTY due to its 20th century harmonies and highly dramatic content, but, in part for those very reasons, *Rusalka* has become a revered piece in our repertoire. Music and classroom teachers, choristers and young audience members -- all responded enthusiastically to this glorious lyrical storytelling over two previous tours (2003, 2010).

Our original libretto for *Rusalka* differs in certain key aspects from Andersen's story which is, in itself, quite different from recent popular treatments. We carefully combined and transformed the plot and themes of the fairy tale and the original libretto in order to make them interesting, familiar, and appropriate for children. Our story transports the opera's initial setting of a dark forest lake to a sunny coral reef. This mermaid's tale depicts how, with the support of her undersea creature friends (the children's chorus) and the assistance of a witch, love-struck *Rusalka* renounces her undersea heritage and family in order to become human. In addition to leaving all she knows and loves behind, *Rusalka* gives up an essential part of herself to the witch as the price for joining her prince on land: she surrenders her voice. Furthermore, *Rusalka* pledges to serve the witch if she ever chooses to return to the sea. For a time, the prince and silent *Rusalka* are **happy**. But the prince falls under the spell of a conniving princess, and *Rusalka* sorrowfully returns to the sea as a 'kelp maiden' servant. The prince realizes his mistake and returns to the seashore to beseech the mermaid to reconsider. Swayed by melodic suggestions from the children's chorus, the witch grants one solution only: a sacrifice. And it is the Prince who makes it - he leaves his earthly world to join *Rusalka*.

The music is Dvorák at his finest. Although fundamentally Czech in origin, the score of *Rusalka* features rhythmic energy, stylized folk elements and adventurous harmony that was influenced by Dvorák's American travels (in a way similar to "The New World Symphony"). This opera includes what many consider to be the most beautiful aria ever written, *Rusalka*'s "Song to the Moon." There are few early 20th century operas that are suitable for adaptation for children, and Dvorák has written music that is not only engaging and accessible, but uniquely illustrative of natural elements (water, earth) as well as emotions (sorrow, joy). These musical qualities are enhanced by the design and production of the opera as well as in its cast of characters: a mermaid and other, fantastic – but, real - undersea creatures.

We have a new scenic designer who comes to us particularly recommended for her painting skills and we anticipate beautiful updates and additions to our visual realization of the undersea world. This relates directly to another feature that recommends Rusalka as repertoire for OFTY: the multiple possibilities for cross-curricular use. Not only will students learn about music both as performers and listeners, but they will explore a subject matter (undersea life) which lends itself to scientific discovery. Our teaching materials provide information and source recommendations for learning about underwater ecology and current-day challenges. Visually-artistic kids will have design opportunities for decorating classrooms and hallways in anticipation of opera day and for dressing up as oceanic audience members.

Students learn in the classroom and experience firsthand in their gymnasium that Dvorák's lovely tunes and vividly characteristic writing help singers tell a story with poignancy and sincerity. The music gives life and immediacy to a story that has several themes valuable for consideration by, and conversation with, elementary school students. Most notable of these are the redemptive power of love, how the ability to communicate is essential to who we are, and the importance of the choices we make in relationships with our loved ones. Another very important topic of conversation with youngsters is that of body image: feeling good about ourselves is vital to a happy and healthy life.

Our tour of Rusalka will be the second annual offering of our enrichment program "Ópera para los jóvenes." We will offer Spanish translations of the children's choruses for students' (and families') increased understanding and ownership of the OFTY experience as well as potential in-school performances. The adult OFTY cast will learn the Spanish choruses and have them ready-to-go at any school. This new program gives rich meaning to our efforts of keeping our work accessible to all members of school communities.

We are delighted to continue our work in igniting enthusiasm for opera among the tens of thousands of children who will share in the experience of Rusalka in 2017/18.

---

#### EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM PLAN:

Opera for the Young trains excellent musicians to become exceptional teaching artists.

*OFTY is best known in the schools for these three salient characteristics:*

1. Excellent, accessible performances by skilled and well-trained professional artists
2. Repertoire that has been specifically adapted for children in their various capacities as audience members, onstage choristers, and cameo performers.
3. Sensitive and encouraging leadership of young performers by OFTY cast members

OFTY has a tremendous word-of-mouth reputation within the young artist community concerning what it means to be a performer in this company. Our considerable focus on

careful work with children - #3 above - is high on the list of qualities that make an OFTY contract special.

This focus begins during the audition process. Singers and pianists are screened not only for their performance skills, but for their impromptu ability to field a wide variety of questions asked by OFTY audience members. During auditions, staff members ask the questions and listen for straight-forward answers that reflect a grounded knowledge of opera and singing as well as a respectful ability to make explanations easy to understand. This is the first experience many young artists have to translate and express their sophisticated training and knowledge into introductory-level descriptions (and it's a skill that is honed throughout an OFTY tour).

The next phase in the education of cast members as outreach artists happens shortly after they are hired. Along with the piano/vocal score to the opera, artists are given a tutorial CD recording that contains a very specific step-by-step process for teaching children. As they work on their own music, adult cast members become familiar with what children are hearing and learning regarding their preparation of the choruses and spoken dialogue.

*Rehearsal week is our primary outreach training ground.*

- The triple cast begins work with the Music Director on all of the chorus music in order to have a unified, mutually agreed-upon approach to working with young children. Artists receive the packet of Teaching Materials that elementary school music teachers use in their preparation of choristers. Significant time is spent on finding a balance between encouraging and enabling students do their very best (musically and vocally), and recognizing when that particular level is achieved. Helping kids feel good about their work during performance is a proud hallmark of OFTY.
- Staging rehearsals feature very specific blocking and choreography for the onstage choristers taught by the Artistic Director and learned by all adult artists whether or not they are going to be in that scene with the children. Everyone in the cast (including pianists) will work with the kids during the critical hour-long rehearsal before each school show.
- Singers are instructed to relate to audience members throughout the opera in ways that encourage attention, understanding and participation.
- Led by the Artistic Director and Music Director, the full cast works together for several hours to come up with a unified plan for 'Kid Prep' which is an established yet flexible approach to training the children for performance. It is clear to all the artists how important this is to our company, and great care is taken in this collaborative effort. A detailed document is created.

The final and most impressive phase of OFTY's outreach training comes on-the-road. Over the course of a season, each OFTY cast member performs at least 60 times. They are able to test their instrument, take calculated performance risks, and incorporate their best into future performances.

Performers also have 60 opportunities to become great teaching artists. The first few in-school performances (and student rehearsals) are observed by the full company (second and third casts as well as all directors). The primary focus is on the efficacy of the 'Kid Prep' plan. Cast members who perform early during the tour encounter situations that necessitate tweaks and changes to the plan, and this experiential knowledge is passed along to other company members. The Artistic and Music Directors make frequent visits to schools to observe the student chorus rehearsal process and communicate their own observations and 'Kid Prep' edits. In addition, the Q & A process is scrutinized for clarity, educational messaging, sensitivity and good humor.

OFTY artists receive a lot of input from the Artistic Director throughout their tenure with the company. Artistic excellence is an understood expectation, and they understand the need to become equally great teaching artists, mentors and onstage colleagues for the young children at every school. It is one skill to be an exceptional, professional musician, and it's a different skill to teach and inspire children about opera as a craft and an art form. At Opera for the Young, we strive for our cast members to become both – excellent musicians *and* exceptional teaching artists.

---

REPRESENTATIVE LIST:

**Megan Brunning, soprano** - MM, BM (Univ of GA), Opera del West, Asheville Lyric Opera, Opera for the Young, Sugar Creek Opera, Scenic City Opera, Capitol City Opera, Atlanta Opera, Greensboro Light Opera and Song, Songfest, Harrower Opera Workshop, Greek Opera Studio

**Saira Frank, soprano** - MM (UW), BA/BMus (NU) Opera for the Young, Madison Opera, Fresco Opera, Florentine Opera, Opera San Luis Obispo, Elgin Opera, Pacific Opera Project, Grant Park Chorus, Madison Bach Musicians, Regional Finalist (MONC LA), UW Opera

**Gillian Hollis, soprano** - MM (Northwestern), BM (Univ of MD), Opera Grand Rapids, Opera for the Young, Madison Opera, Ash Lawn, Chicago Folks Operetta, Maryland Opera Studio, Young Patronesses of the Opera, FGO In-school Opera, Main Street Opera, Gold Coast Opera, NU Opera

**Marie McManama, soprano** - MM (CCM), Madison Choral Project, Madison Opera, Cincinnati Opera, St. Louis Symphony, San Francisco Festival Chorus, SongFest, Grand Teton Music Festival

**Leah Rockweit, soprano** - MM (UW), Chorus of the Chicago Chorale and Chicago Symph Orch, UW Opera, UW-Oshkosh Opera Theatre, NATS semifinalist

**Rebecca Sorensen, soprano** - MM (Rice), BM (DePaul Univ), Franklin P. Johnson Fellow (Songfest), MONC Encouragement Award, Mississippi Opera, Mississippi

Opera Competition Winner, Opera for the Young, Rice University Opera

**Alison Wahl, soprano** - DMA, ABD (Northwestern), MM (NU), BA (Amherst College), Tanglewood, Ravinia Steans Institute, Opera North, Farwell Award (Musicians Club of Women), Second Place (Madison Handel Aria Competition)

**Katherine Weber, soprano** - MM (Indiana Univ), BA (Viterbo), IU Opera, Central City Opera, Intermediate and Advanced Winner (Schubert Club), Winner (National Society of Arts and Letters)

**Sara Litchfield, mezzo-soprano** - MM (Roosevelt Univ - CCPA), Opera for the Young, Lyric Opera of Chicago outreach teaching artist, Chicago Symph Chorus, Cedar Rapids Opera Theater, New Orleans Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Opera Southwest, Chicago Opera Playhouse, Petite Opera

**Kristin Newbegin, mezzo-soprano** - MM (Univ of KS), Seagle Music Colony, Kansas City Metro, Dead Composers Society, Minneapolis Arts Institute, Univ of KS, Univ of MN

**Margaret Stoltz, mezzo-soprano** - MM (DePaul Univ), G&S Opera Company, DePaul Opera Theater, Grant Park Chorus, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia

**Anthony Heinemann, tenor** - MM (Washington Univ), St. Louis Symphony, Union Avenue Opera, Winter Opera, The Bach Society of St. Louis, Muddy River Opera, Gateway Opera, Opera for the Young, Dance St. Louis

**Daniel O'Dea, tenor** - DMA (ABD) (Univ of WI) , AD, MM (CCM), BM (Westminster Choir College), Chicago Lyric Opera Chorus, Chicago Bach Project, Grant Park Symphony Chorus, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Rockford Symphony Orchestra, Madison Choral Project, The Crossing

**Nick Pulikowski, tenor** - MM (Indiana Univ), BM (NU), Opera for the Young, Main Street Opera, Chicago Folks Operetta, DuPage Opera New Philharmonic, Pine Mountain Music Fest, Apollo Chorus of Chicago, VOX 3 Music Collective, Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chorus

**J. Adam Shelton, tenor** - DMA, ABD (UW), Opera for the Young, Madison Opera, Des Moines Metro, Madison Savoyards, Candid Concert Opera, La Musica Lirica, Lake Placid Vocal Institute, Scottsdale Symphony, Tuscon Chamber Orch, Southern AZ Symph Orch, UW Opera

**Clark Sturdevant, tenor** - MM (Washington Univ), Opera for the Young, Kentucky Opera, Dayton Opera, Ohio Light Opera, Union Avenue, Natchez Festival of Music, Opera Seabrook, Katydid Productions, Pacific Opera Project, St Louis City Opera

**David Walton, tenor** - MM (Univ of MS), Cantus Vocal Ensemble, Minnesota Opera, Met Council Encouragement Award, Atlantic Music Festival, Oxford Shakespeare Festival, BRAVO Vail Music Fest, UM Opera

**Pedro Willis-Barbosa, tenor** - MM (LSU), BA (NIU), Tulsa Opera, Opera Louisiane, Cedar Rapids Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera Western Reserve, Opera for the Young, Da Corneto Opera

**Jeffrey Goble, baritone** - PGD (San Francisco Conservatory), OTSL, HGO-Go, Carnegie Hall Foundation, Music Academy of the West, Pacific Opera Project, DC Public Opera, Israeli Chamber Orchestra, IVAI, Moores Opera Center, Eastman Symphony, Halifax Summer Opera, Opera North, Chautauqua Institute

**Nathaniel Hill, baritone** - MM (Northwestern), BM (Indiana Univ), Madison Opera, Bay View Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, NU Opera

**Timothy Rebers, baritone** - MA (Truman State), BA (Wisconsin Lutheran College), Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theater, Music by the Lake, Florentine Opera, Light Opera Works

**Kyle Sackett, baritone** - MM (Northwestern), BM (SUNY Fredonia), Hillman Opera Company, Western New York Chamber Orch, Chicago Opera Theater, Berkshire Choral Festival, NU Opera

**Nicholas Ward, baritone** - MM (Univ of Cincinnati, CCM), Central City Opera, Toledo Opera on Wheels, Cincinnati Opera Outreach, Metropolitan Opera National Council Ohio Dist Winner, Opera Saratoga, Seagle Music Colony, CCM Opera, Univ of Michigan Opera Theater

**Erin Crabb, piano** - BA (Illinois Wesleyan Univ), Opera for the Young, Rocky Mountain Repertory Theatre, UW Madison Theatre, IWU Theatre Dept and School of Music

---

## **Beth Morrison Projects**

### **BMP**

### **Project Information**

#### **Major Project Activities:**

She was a warrior. She was a politician. She was a mother. She was a daughter. She was an exile. She was a Prime Minister of Pakistan and the first modern female leader of a Muslim nation. She was a traditionalist. She was a force of nature. By the very definition of her name, she was without comparison.

Born into a political dynasty, Benazir Bhutto never sought a life in politics. As the eldest child of charismatic leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, she became heir to his Pakistan Peoples Party following her father's execution in 1979 by his hand-picked Chief of Army, which many call a judicial assassination.

BHUTTO is a new opera by composer Mohammed Fairouz with libretto by Mohammed Hanif & Fairouz that traces Benazir's political awakening at the side of her groundbreaking yet ill-fated father. It follows the heroine as she comes into her own both as a woman and a politician. We witness Benazir's ascent to power, her tragic downfall by assassination, and her lasting legacy. It is a story of a father and daughter, of dynasty and party, of East and West, of separation and reconciliation.

BMP is commissioning BHUTTO from composer Mohammed Fairouz, who is co-authoring the libretto with Mohammed Hanif. We premiered Fairouz's first opera, SUMEIDA'S SONG, in 2013. It was the first fully-produced opera by an Arab-American on an American stage and was well received by critics and audiences alike. Following SUMEIDA, BMP committed to invest in Fairouz's talent; he brought the idea of BHUTTO to BMP in 2013. Hanif joined the project in early 2015 as a co-librettist. An award-winning author and journalist, Hanif heads the BBC's Urdu Service in Pakistan. He is a poet/writer who is immersed in the culture of the story that this opera tells. He lived through the rise and fall of Benazir and his experiences contribute to the depth of the libretto. BHUTTO is Hanif's first foray into writing for the operatic stage.

BHUTTO is scheduled to have its world premiere at Pittsburgh Opera in 2018. It will star baritone Nathan Gunn as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey as Benazir Bhutto. The work includes four principal performers, full chorus, and full orchestra. Gunn is also the General Director of Lyric Theatre @ Illinois, an undergraduate and graduate music school at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Gunn's students will be active participants in BHUTTO's vocal and orchestral workshops, which will provide them with professional experience in the creation of a major new opera. Director Kevin Newbury is a frequent BMP collaborator who brings extensive expertise in developing new work to this project. Dramaturg Cori Ellison is also an integral part of the creative team.

An NEA award will support commissioning and development expenses for BHUTTO. During the 2014-15 season, BMP formalized a commissioning program whereby we aim to commission nearly all new work that we will develop and produce. BMP presently has fifteen active commissions with larger scale works assisted through co-commissioning agreements with peer companies. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In November 2013, BMP presented a work-in-progress excerpt from BHUTTO as part of its 21c LIEDERABEND, OP. 3 at Brooklyn Academy of Music. The New York Times noted, "In selections from BHUTTO, an opera by Mohammed Fairouz..., you could imagine Kurt Weill anticipating 'Evita,' reimagined in Pakistan. BHUTTO's story of strong legacy, fragile power, the struggle for democracy, and a commitment to reconciliation in an unreconciled world resonates strongly today."

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the project budget; the activities are included here to demonstrate the work plan.

**Intended Audience/Participants/Community: Who will benefit from the project and how?**

The commissioning and development of BHUTTO will primarily benefit composer/co-librettist Mohammed Fairouz and co-librettist Mohammed Hanif, as well as the production's director, dramaturg, and designers. BHUTTO is an investment in the artistry of this creative team and is intended to provide them with the time, space, and resources needed to fully develop an idea into an opera. It will also result in a world premiere production that will be enjoyed by audiences at Pittsburgh Opera as well as audiences at touring venues.

BHUTTO will be an important addition to the opera canon. At a moment when the stability of Pakistan has enormous global consequences, the story of how this moment came to pass can lend an important voice to the conversation. The Bhutto family has outsized importance in the history of Pakistan and the opera stage is the perfect way to bring this story to audiences around the world.

**Selection of Key Organizational Partners: An organization partner is an outside entity that will provide resources (other than money) to support the project.**



For the development of BHUTTO, BMP established partnerships with organizations that can provide substantial developmental resources to our creative team. Krannert Center for the Performing Arts has collaborated with BMP on several projects. Located on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Krannert offers world-class facilities and expertise in the resources needed to develop new opera and music-theatre work. Undergraduate and graduate students in the University's program Lyric Theatre @ Illinois, led by Nathan and Julie Gunn, will be active participants in the vocal and orchestral workshops of this project. This will provide them with professional experience in the development of a significant new work. Pittsburgh Opera has committed to producing BHUTTO's world premiere; during the developmental process, their artistic leadership will provide integral guidance to the creative team and BMP.

### Description of Key Organizational Partners:

**Organization Name:**Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (KCPA)

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Description of Organization:**

KCPA is dedicated to the advancement of education, research, and public engagement through the pursuit of excellence and innovation in the performing arts. Embracing the art of the past and the art of our time, it supports the belief that creativity is a core human characteristic and that the arts hold uniquely transformative potential. Through its multiple, integrated roles as classroom, laboratory, and public square, KCPA is a touchstone for the exploration and expansion of human experience.

**Organization Name:**Lyric Theatre @ Illinois (LT@I)

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Description of Organization:**

LT@I is a comprehensive program embracing a broad continuum of opera and musical theatre to reflect the artistic demands of the 21st century musical stage on which performers must exhibit the highest standards of singing, acting and movement. A component of the School of Music at University of Illinois, LT@I's undergraduate and graduate programs provide performance opportunities in a wide range of styles with an emphasis on using the body and voice in a healthy manner.

**Organization Name:**Pittsburgh Opera

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Description of Organization:**

Pittsburgh Opera is dedicated to creating live opera at the highest standards of artistic excellence; making opera accessible to a diverse audience; developing young singers into tomorrow's artists; and ensuring the future through responsible fiscal management. Led by GM Christopher Hahn, the company's repertoire has expanded to include

Baroque and many contemporary works. Music Dir. Antony Walker brings an engaged and highly informed leadership to the Opera's musical forces.

**Selection of Key Individuals: Briefly describe the process and criteria for the selection of the key individuals that will be involved in this project.**

BMP champions talented composers, librettists, and their collaborators and provides them with artist-specific structures to develop the future operatic canon. We have a history of supporting emerging and established composers and librettists as they mature their talents for the operatic stage. This includes an investment in the work of artists who have no track record of writing for opera yet demonstrate artistic capacities in their respective fields of composition and writing.

Fairouz and Hanif are prime examples of BMP's mission-driven investment in artists. We are commissioning and developing BHUTTO because of the paramount artistry of its two creators. Their partnership has resulted in the beginnings of a compelling operatic work, which has attracted the talents of director Kevin Newbury as well as performers Nathan Gunn and Kate Lindsey. The selection of the remaining cast and design team will be made in consultation with Fairouz, Hanif, Newbury, and Pittsburgh Opera.

**Bios of Key Individuals:**

**First Name:**Mohammed  
**Last Name:**Fairouz  
**Proposed or Committed:**Committed  
**Bio:**

██████████, Fairouz is one of the most frequently performed, commissioned, and recorded composers of his generation. He integrates Middle Eastern modes into Western structures to deeply expressive effect. His large scale works, including four symphonies and an opera, engage major geopolitical and philosophical themes with persuasive craft and a marked sense of purpose. His music has been performed at Carnegie Hall (all three auditoriums), Lincoln Center, Boston's Symphony Hall, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and throughout the United States, the Middle East, Europe and Australia. Commissions include the Detroit and Alabama Symphony Orchestras, Da Capo Chamber Players, New Juilliard Ensemble, and more. Fairouz's principal teachers in composition include Gyorgy Ligeti, Gunther Schuller, and Richard Danielpour with studies at the Curtis Institute and New England Conservatory of Music. ██████████ [mohammedfairouz.com](http://mohammedfairouz.com)

**First Name:**Mohammed  
**Last Name:**Hanif  
**Proposed or Committed:**Committed  
**Bio:**

Hanif is a Pakistani writer and journalist who is the author of the critically acclaimed *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (longlisted, Booker Prize; shortlisted, Guardian First Book Award; winner, Commonwealth Prize for Best Book). His second book, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, won the Wellcome Book Prize. At the age of 16, he entered the Pakistani Air Force Academy. After realizing he had a terrible sense of direction, Hanif left the Air Force to pursue a career in journalism. He has written for *Newsline*, *India Today*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *Counter Punch*. His play, *The Dictator's Wife*, was staged at London's Hampstead Theatre. Hanif is a graduate of University of East Anglia's creative writing program. He resides in Pakistan & is the head of the BBC's Urdu Service.

**First Name:**Nathan

**Last Name:**Gunn

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Gunn has made a reputation as one of the most exciting and in-demand baritones today. He has appeared at Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera House, Paris Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper and Glyndebourne Opera Festival, among others. His many title roles BILLY BUDD, EUGENE ONEGIN, IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA, and HAMLET. A noted supporter of new works, Gunn created the roles of Yeshua in Mark Adamo's *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE* (SF Opera), Paul in Daron Hagen's *AMELIA* (Seattle Opera) and Alec Harvey in Andre Previn's *BRIEF ENCOUNTER* (Houston Grand Opera). Concert appearances include NY Philharmonic; Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, London Symphony Orchestras; and Cleveland, Minnesota and San Francisco Orchestras. He received the first annual Beverly Sills Artist Award & the Pittsburgh Opera Renaissance Award. Gunn is a professor of voice at University of Illinois, where he is also General Director of Lyric Theatre @ Illinois. [nathangunn.com](http://nathangunn.com)

**First Name:**Kevin

**Last Name:**Newbury

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Newbury is an opera, theatre, and film director based in NYC. His productions have been presented at Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Barcelona Liceu, Opera Philadelphia, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Glimmerglass Opera, and more. He is especially committed to developing new work & has directed more than a dozen world premiere operas and plays, including Jimmy Lopez's *BEL CANTO* (Chicago Lyric Opera), Gregory Spears' *O COLUMBIA* (Houston Grand Opera) and Heidi Rodewald's *THE GOOD SWIMMER* (PROTOTYPE Festival, NYC), and Gregory Spears' *FELLOW TRAVELERS* (Cincinnati Opera). Upcoming premieres include Mason Bates' *THE (R)EVOLUTION OF STEVE JOBS* (Santa Fe Opera). He was nominated for a 2009 Grammy (Bernstein's *MASS* with Marin Alsop;

also named “one of the best events of the year” by The New York Times & The Washington Post. Newbury is a graduate of Bowdoin College and Oxford University. [kevinnewbury.com](http://kevinnewbury.com)

**First Name:**Beth

**Last Name:**Morrison

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Morrison founded BMP in 2006. She is an opera and theatre producer, singer, and voice teacher with many years of experience in the development of new opera and theatre works. She began working in arts administration at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute where she served as administrative director for four years. Morrison served a founding tenure as the Producer for the Yale Institute for Music Theatre (2009-2011), as well as Producer for New York City Opera’s VOX: Contemporary American Opera Lab (2010-2011). BMP is the realization of Morrison’s vision, which stems from a deep commitment to nurturing composers and other artists and fostering the development of new opera and other new music-theatre works. Through Morrison’s vision, BMP has established itself as a composers’ producer. She holds BM and MM degrees from Boston University and Arizona State University, respectively, and received her MFA in Theater Management/Producing from Yale School of Drama. [bethmorrisonprojects.org](http://bethmorrisonprojects.org)

**Promotion & Publicity: Briefly describe your plans for promoting and/or publicizing the project.**

BMP serves as a commissioner, developer, and producer of new work. Without our own venue, we conduct significant outreach to presenters and venues to make them aware of our projects, and seek partners for the development, premiere, and touring of our works. Workshops and productions are produced in partnership with established theatres, opera houses and festivals that are appropriate to the artistic needs of each project. Venues take primary responsibility for the creation and execution of a project’s marketing plan, which typically includes a listing in their season brochure and on their website; posters, postcards, radio advertising, email, and social media. BMP promotes projects on its own website, [bethmorrisonprojects.org](http://bethmorrisonprojects.org), and through e-blasts to its own e-mail subscribers and those of other organizations, including Carnegie Hall, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the New York Philharmonic, through list exchanges. We also post up-to-date information on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

**Performance Measurement:**

**How will you measure the success of your project? Describe any plans you have for program evaluation, for working collaboratively with researchers, strategic consultants, program evaluator and/or any other performance measurement related to the project.**

For the development of BHUTTO, BMP will first and foremost look to see if the artists found the process to be nurturing and supportive of their artistic process. Through this developmental process, we have adjusted workshop plans to help Fairouz and Hanif follow the process that most closely aligns with their needs. Second, BMP will conduct post-workshop and post-premiere reviews with its partners to learn from the accomplishments of, and obstacles in, the partnerships. At KCPA, a measure of success will be the experiences of the vocal and instrumental students. As young performers, it is an invaluable experience to work closely with a composer and librettist in the process of creating a new work. KCPA will receive feedback from students on the process, which they will share with BMP. These reviews will allow BMP to learn from the BHUTTO development/production process so we may improve our support of composers and artists as well as our relationships with presenting venues.

**Beth Morrison Projects**  
**BMP**  
**Special Items**

**Special Items: Submit any items specified for your discipline that are relevant to your particular project.**

Mohammed Fairouz is an artist that BMP has invested in for several years. A young Arab-American composer, he brings a sensibility and perspective to his writing that is unique among the writers we work with but also in the world of classical music in general. BMP developed and premiered Mohammed's first opera, SUMEIDA'S SONG, at its 2013 PROTOTYPE Festival. The piece landed powerfully with our audience and Mohammed and I began to talk about other projects together. He mentioned that he was interested in writing a work about the Bhutto family of Pakistan. I immediately thought this would be compelling and encouraged him to write a scene for premiere at our 21C LIEDERABEND song festival, which that we produced at the BAM Next Wave Festival in fall 2013. What he created was highly compelling, deeply theatrical, and begged for a larger format to tell the story. I decided then that BMP would commission the work.

Benazir Bhutto, while a controversial character and often charged with being corrupt, is someone that I admired personally. To become the first woman prime minister of Pakistan, a society where women are continually oppressed, seemed like defying all possible odds. We need to tell the stories of women who defy the odds, and who better to do that than a company led by female producers.

The librettist, Mohammed Hanif, is a major literary voice from Pakistan. His book "Case of Exploding Mangoes" was a *New York Times* best seller and has informed the creation of the libretto for BHUTTO, as it tells the story of General Zia, who is the villain of the opera as the general who overthrew Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto and subsequently had him executed. In *The New Yorker* feature on Mr. Hanif, it is said, "As a novelist and a journalist, he has become perhaps the foremost observer of Pakistan's contradictions and absurdities."

BMP does not stick its toe into grand opera very often, because the costs are prohibitive to a company of our size. However, we decided to take the project on and seek out the partners that would be needed to achieve the world premiere. To that end, we brought in a developmental partner in Lyric Theater at University of Illinois (Nathan Gunn, General Director) that is giving the work its libretto workshop and two orchestral workshops, as well as the Pittsburgh Opera (Christopher Hahn, General Director) that will give the world premiere production. I am working as Creative Producer through the entire developmental phase, and am assembling the creative team to take us through the premiere.

In addition to Mohammed Fairouz's gifts as a composer, he is also a prolific journalist who writes primarily about political issues of the Middle East. He is highly articulate and a deep thinker. As a young composer ( [REDACTED] ), it's thrilling to see his development from the one-act chamber opera of SUMEIDA'S SONG to a full-scale grand opera. It's part of BMP's mission to be an integral part of that maturation.

*Beth Morrison, Artistic and Executive Director, Beth Morrison Projects*

---

Benazir Bhutto's message of reconciliation may seem far away from the world we inhabit today. But it is in this environment when so many young people—from Europe to the Middle East to Southeast Asia to North America—are turning to extremism that her call to reconciliation must be heard most urgently. This is why her story must be told today.

The story of the Bhuttos and of Pakistan is patently larger than life. That's why we chose to use opera as the medium to tell this story. Only through the combination of all the basic universal forms of human expression (song, poetry, narrative, movement, visuals, etc.) can the story of Pakistan's fabled political dynasty be properly told. Opera forces us to paint on the largest possible canvas. That is what I and my collaborator, the esteemed Pakistani author Mohammed Hanif, needed in order to tell this tale.

But the story of the Bhuttos is also immediately intimate and human. This is the story of a girl who has her beloved father taken from her. It is a story of the Faustian military dictator, Zia ul-Haq, who betrays the Coriolanus-like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto only to have his daughter, almost resembling Antigone, return from exile to avenge the death of her father. The Bhuttos' story encompasses hubris and passion; compassion for the poor and the all-corrupting greed of wealth. It allows us to draw from the wellspring of the richest traditions of storytelling.

My score, too, gives me the opportunity to revisit iconic historical figures, reimagining them in a brand new image: taking figures who are larger than life and scaling them down so that they become distinctly human entities—flesh and blood on stage. The musical idioms of Sindh, Pakistan in general, and Southeast Asia give me the opportunity to mine one of the most extensive and fascinatingly sophisticated musical traditions on our planet.

Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright once said that we cannot begin to understand the modern world without understanding Pakistan. She's right. Our opera aims to be a work of art that helps us contend with the realities that we are living in today and understand them better.

BHUTTO is an opera that is a distinctly rich experience for me to compose as it functions on so many levels—from the most intimately human to the mythic to the socially relevant. At its heart is an ensemble representing the people of Pakistan and, perhaps, the aspirations of a deeply confounded global community.

*Mohammed Fairouz, Composer*

---

On the final day of my high school exam, Pakistan's first elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was hanged. The man who first deposed and later executed Bhutto after a sham trial, General Zia ul Haq went on to rule the country for eleven years. He was killed in a mysterious plane crash soon after I graduated as a pilot officer from Pakistan Air Force Academy. Later I changed careers and became a journalist and covered Benazir Bhutto's rise to power and then exile. I was the editor of the BBC's Urdu Service when she was assassinated while on the campaign trail in Pakistan.

Years later, composer Mohammed Fairouz called me from New York to suggest that we

collaborate on an opera called BHUTTO. I was stunned to realize that the period he wanted to cover in this new work was my entire grown up life; the characters he wanted to bring to life were the ones I had obsessed about all during my writing career. It was uncanny that a composer, a generation apart from me and who had grown up a world away, was fascinated by the same subject. I was reluctant at first because I had always believed that lives of the Bhuttos were so dramatic, so tragic that a fiction writer couldn't do them justice. Although I had written two internationally acclaimed novels and dabbled in theatre, I had always resisted the temptation to fictionalize the Bhuttos. Also, I knew very little about opera.

To find out more about my potential collaborator, I started listening to Momo's music and I knew that opera was probably the only medium that could capture the grand tragedy of the Bhuttos. Because of the time difference between Karachi and New York, I spoke to Momo at odd hours; we talked early in the morning and late into the night and a structure began to emerge. Momo's music always played in the background while I tried to give some shape to thirty years of the Bhuttos'—and my own—life. I have spent my entire adult life telling stories, first as a journalist and then as a novelist. I think I am tough enough to keep my distance from my characters and their emotional struggles. But while writing the last lines of the libretto, I was surprised to find tears in my eyes. I hope the audience will share some of the emotional intensity that we Mohammeds have gone through while working on BHUTTO.

*Mohammed Hanif, Librettist*

---



## Utah Symphony & Opera Utah Symphony | Utah Opera Project Information

### Major Project Activities:

A new production of *Moby-Dick* by Jake Heggie, with libretto by Gene Scheer, has been commissioned by Utah Opera to make this major contemporary American work accessible to mid-sized opera companies and their audiences. Scenic design by Erhard Rom has already been drafted, and costume design by Jessica Jahn is currently underway. Building of the set is scheduled to begin in February 2017 at the Utah Opera Production Studios in Salt Lake City, and costume construction will commence during summer 2017 in Utah Opera's costume shop.

The new production will premiere as the highlight of Utah Opera's 40th anniversary season, with five performances at the Janet Quinney Lawson Capitol Theatre on January 20, 22, 24, 26, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. and a matinee on January 28, 2018 at 2:00 p.m. The final dress rehearsal on January 18 at the Capitol Theatre will be open to high school students, their teachers, and chaperones for \$5 each.

Principal singers will be selected through national auditions held in New York. Confirmed so far for this production are Roger Honeywell as Ahab and David Adam Moore as Starbuck. Under the direction of conductor Joseph Mechavich, Utah Symphony will play for each of the performances. Staging this production is Kristine McIntyre. Artistic Director of Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company, Daniel Charon, will choreograph four professional dancers in dance scenes. Members of the Utah Opera Chorus will portray the crew of the Pequod.

Major themes of *Moby-Dick* - the opera and the novel – will be explored during Utah Symphony | Utah Opera's (USUO) cultural festival in the winter and spring of 2018. The festival is an annual series presented by USUO in collaboration with other local organizations, featuring events that further appreciation of the season's opera and/or symphony presentations, and reach new audiences. In addition to the mainstage opera production, and possible associated orchestral programming during Utah Symphony's main season, further USUO performances may include chamber and vocal concerts presented by our resident artists. Frequent collaborative partners during these festivals in past years have included the Salt Lake Film Society; Utah Museum of Fine Arts; Brigham Young Museum of Art; Salt Lake Public Library and local bookstores; faculty members and departments of University of Utah, Westminster College, Utah Valley University, and Brigham Young University.

USUO's Education Department has already engaged Dr. Ross Hagan, Lecturer in Musicology at Utah Valley University, to write the online learning modules for *Moby-Dick*, and has also begun discussing chamber music and art song repertoire with Utah Opera's principal coach/accompanist in preparation for an evening entitled "Songs of

the Sea.” Further arrangements for the cultural festival in January through March 2018 surrounding *Moby-Dick* are still in the planning stages, but based on previous festivals, will likely include film, food, lectures, visual arts, and literary events.

### **Schedule of key project dates:**

January 2015	Stage Director Kristine McIntyre contracted
June 2015	Set Designer Erhard Rom & Costume Designer Jessica Jahn contracted
January 2016	Set renderings completed
February 2017	Set construction begins
June 2017	Costume construction begins
December 2017	Rehearsals begin
January 20-28, 2018	Five performances of <i>Moby-Dick</i> at the Janet Quinney Lawson Capitol Theatre
January-March 2018	Cultural festival events celebrating <i>Moby-Dick</i> and its themes.
Starting Feb. 2018	New <i>Moby-Dick</i> production available for rent to other opera companies

### **Intended Audience/Participants/Community: Who will benefit from the project and how?**

Utah Opera has cultivated a committed following over the past 38 seasons, with audiences totaling over 32,000 during the 2015-16 season. Of these, over one-half were subscribers. Discounted tickets for youth, including \$10 tickets for those under 30 and the \$48 student All-Access pass for both opera and symphony performances, serve to nurture young audience members. Utah Opera’s repertoire seeks to appeal to a broad sweep of the public by balancing the iconic works with contemporary and lesser known operas. The presentation of *Moby-Dick* will bring one of the most acclaimed operas of recent years to our local audiences. The creation of a production that can be mounted by regional opera companies will also make the work more accessible to audiences throughout North America.

### **Selection of Key Organizational Partners: An organization partner is an outside entity that will provide resources (other than money) to support the project.**

Utah Opera is currently in discussion with other American opera companies as co-producers for this new production of *Moby-Dick*. The goal is to secure at least four partners at a level of \$50,000 each, with Utah Opera retaining overall ownership. This kind of collaboration on a major new production for mid-size companies will ensure that *Moby-Dick* achieves the exposure this modern masterpiece merits outside the largest metropolitan areas.

Other local organizations will participate in the *Moby-Dick* cultural festival during January through March 2018. They will be selected based on their potential to expand understanding of the opera and its themes from different perspectives and in different media. Partners will be expected to coordinate with Utah Opera in planning and hosting events, and publicizing them to their constituents and the general public.

### Description of Key Organizational Partners:

**Organization Name:**Utah Symphony  
**Proposed or Committed:**Committed  
**Description of Organization:**

Utah Symphony has accompanied Utah Opera's productions since the latter's founding in 1978. As one of only fifteen full-time professional orchestras in the country, the symphony draws first-rate musicians to apply for its open positions and currently employs 85 players.

**Organization Name:**Salt Lake County Center for the Arts  
**Proposed or Committed:**Committed  
**Description of Organization:**

The Salt Lake County Center for the Arts maintains the Janet Quinney Lawson Capitol Theatre, performance home of Utah Opera and several other performing groups. Recent renovations to this historic landmark, which dates back to 1913, include improved configuration of audience seating and the orchestra pit, new intermission space, and a remodeled lobby. The County Center for the Arts also maintains the ticketing and donor base system, Tessitura, for the use of USUO and other arts groups.

### Selection of Key Individuals: Briefly describe the process and criteria for the selection of the key individuals that will be involved in this project.

In selecting a creative team for this new production of *Moby-Dick*, Utah Opera Artistic Director Christopher McBeth sought individuals who are personally committed to advancing the American operatic tradition, and who have had prior experience and success in producing American operas. Each should also have experience working collaboratively and constructively with others in an opera production environment, and be compatible with other members of this *Moby-Dick* artistic team in particular.

### Bios of Key Individuals:

**First Name:**Christopher  
**Last Name:**McBeth

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

As Utah Opera Artistic Director, Mr. McBeth oversees all operations, plans repertoire, and selects singers, conductors, directors, and designers for all productions. He judges auditions for and directs the company's Resident Artist Program, a nationally recognized young artist training program for singers and pianists. Since joining Utah Opera in 2000, Mr. McBeth has overseen over 60 productions and co-productions. He also serves in the greater opera community as a judge at vocal competitions such as the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions.

Prior to his position at Utah Opera, he was Director of Production/Artistic Administrator at Fort Worth Opera and before that, worked in the marketing, production, and artistic administration departments for Houston Grand Opera.

**First Name:**Kristine

**Last Name:**McIntyre

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Stage director **Kristine McIntyre** has directed more than 70 operas across the U.S. with a focus on new, contemporary and American works. Productions include Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* (**Des Moines Metro Opera, Madison Opera**), Jonathan Dove's *Flight* (**Pittsburgh Opera, Austin Lyric Opera**), the world premiere of Kirke Mechem's *John Brown* (**Lyric Opera of Kansas City**), Jake Heggie's *The End of the Affair* (**Lyric Opera of Kansas City**) and *Three Decembers* (**Des Moines Metro Opera**), Robert Aldridge's *Elmer Gantry* (**Tulsa Opera**), Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men* (**Utah Opera, Austin Opera, Tulsa Opera**), new productions of *Street Scene*, *The Tender Land* (**Michigan Opera Theater**) and Lee Hoiby's *Bon Appétit* and the world premiere of *The Canticle of the Black Madonna* (Newmark Theater, Portland).

**First Name:**Erhard

**Last Name:**Rom

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Set designer Erhard Rom was a Designer of the Year finalist at the 2015 International Opera Awards. He has designed settings for over 200 productions, of which 25 have been operas composed after 1950. Of these, 20 were written by American composers and nine were world premieres. His work has been seen at San Francisco Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, Seattle Opera, Vancouver Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Minnesota Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Opera Colorado, Opéra de Montréal, Atlanta Opera, Wolf

Trap Opera, Opera Boston and Lyric Opera of Kansas City, among others. His world premieres include John Musto and Mark Campbell's *Volpone* and *The Inspector* for Wolf Trap Opera, and *A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck* by Jeanine Tesori and Tony Kushner at Glimmerglass. In 2014, he designed the European premiere of Kevin Puts' opera, *Silent Night*.

**First Name:**Jessica

**Last Name:**Jahn

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Costume designer Jessica Jahn has worked in theatre and opera with directors such as Tina Landau, Tommy Kail, Francesca Zambello, Charles Randolph Wright, Kevin Newbury, Michael Cavanaugh, and artist Michael Counts, as well as writers/composers Charles Fuller, Eisa Davis, Norah Ephron, Kevin Puts, Jake Heggie, Mark Campbell and Charles Busch.

Opera projects that she has collaborated on include: *Life Is A Dream* (world premiere) at Santa Fe Opera; *Monodramas*, and *Mose in Egitto* at New York City Opera; *Carousel* at Glimmerglass Festival; *Anna Bolena* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; *The Manchurian Candidate* (world premiere) and *Carmen* at Minnesota Opera; *Maria Stuarda* at Seattle Opera, and *Norma* at The Gran Teatre de Liceu. Upcoming projects include *Dead Man Walking* at Washington National Opera, *Moby-Dick* at Utah Opera, and *Norma* at the Canadian Opera Company and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

**First Name:**Joseph

**Last Name:**Mechavich

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Conductor Joseph Mechavich is known for exceptional artistry and energy, as well as career-defining relationships with opera companies and orchestras. Of his *Nixon in China* at San Diego Opera, *Broadway World* reported "The expertise in 21st-century operatic repertoire that conductor Joseph Mechavich demonstrated in 2012's *Moby-Dick* has surely increased exponentially as portrayed in his rendering of John Adam's complex score."

Maestro Mechavich presided over Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick* at San Diego Opera and Calgary Opera, as well as *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for Washington National Opera, *Porgy and Bess* for Deutsche Oper Berlin and *Roméo et Juliette* for Florida Grand Opera. Engagements for 2015-16 included Heggie's *Great Scott* for San Diego Opera, *Nixon in China* for Auckland Philharmonia, *Florenzia en el Amazonas* for Arizona Opera, and *Turandot* for Nashville Opera.

**Promotion & Publicity: Briefly describe your plans for promoting and/or publicizing the project.**

Utah Opera will present *Moby-Dick* during the company's 40th season, which will be a year of heightened publicity. The opera's composer, Jake Heggie, and librettist Gene Scheer have expressed their intention to be in Salt Lake City for the production and to be available to help promote it. Events of our *Moby-Dick* cultural festival will raise awareness and generate excitement for the opera. Our staff will also strategize on national publicity for *Moby-Dick*, since a new mid-size production will be of interest to other regional companies.

Utah Symphony | Utah Opera promotes its season through conventional media, such as print, radio, and television, as well as through social media, websites, and blogs. Among the strategies to make our art forms more accessible are online exchanges between staff, artists, and audiences through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and our blogs, "The Musicians' Lounge" and "Backstage at the Opera." USUO has nearly 30,000 social media followers.

**Performance Measurement:**

**How will you measure the success of your project? Describe any plans you have for program evaluation, for working collaboratively with researchers, strategic consultants, program evaluator and/or any other performance measurement related to the project.**

After the run of *Moby-Dick* closes, Utah Opera's artistic and production staffs will evaluate the logistic operation of the new set, and the interface of artists with the scenery in performance.

The designer was assigned to make the set as flexible as possible for a variety of theatres, and an important measure of its success will be the experience and feedback of co-producing partners, and companies who rent the set for presentation in their own venues. The success of this venture will eventually be determined by how many other companies utilize it. The interest of our own community, as measured primarily through ticket sales, will also reflect on the artistic merit of the project as well as our marketing strategy.

## Utah Symphony & Opera

### Utah Symphony | Utah Opera

#### Special Items

**Special Items: Submit any items specified for your discipline that are relevant to your particular project.**

#### Artistic Statement

Utah Opera Artistic Director Christopher McBeth programs seasons that celebrate the established repertoire, and champion the American opera tradition. The company's "American Opera Initiative" has included two commissions, *Dreamkeepers* by David Carlson (1996) and *The Grapes of Wrath* by Ricky Ian Gordon (2007), a co-commission with Minnesota Opera. Other American works produced by Utah Opera over the past 20 years are Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men* and *Cold Sassy Tree*, *Little Women* by Mark Adamo, and *Florecia en el Amazonas* by Daniel Catán. Upcoming in spring 2017 is *The Long Walk* by Jeremy Howard Beck, with libretto by Stephanie Fleischmann from Brian Kastner's 2012 Iraq War memoir of the same title.

*Moby-Dick* by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer has been acclaimed by audiences and reviewers nationwide as one of the foremost new works in American opera. Through intimate arias and duets, as well as large chorus scenes, the work explores universal themes such as our place in the universe, our relationship to nature, the limits of honor, duty, and friendship, and human relationships in a multicultural world. While these themes originally emerged from a 19th-century novel, they are strikingly relevant today in our 21st-century world. Stephen Costello (Greenhorn in the world premiere) has suggested that this will be "a transitional piece in the future of opera," while Talise Trevigne, Pip in the premiere, has expressed that "Moby-Dick has changed the face of opera as we know it. It is a true American masterpiece."

However, the original production is impossible for the majority of American opera companies to present due to its size, technical requirements, and cost to mount. The desire to make this significant work, based on one of the great classics of American literature, accessible to more audiences across the country has driven Utah Opera's decision to create a new mid-size production.

Stage director Kristine McIntyre writes:

"Erhard Rom, Jessica Jahn, and I have designed a world which captures the celestial and universal elements of the story. The large curved wall of the set evokes the sea and the contours of a boat, and displays a map of the Pequod's voyage. The ship is represented by its iconic elements: a mast, a compass, a corner of a sail, and a large prow which rotates on the central disc to create the different scenes and views of the Pequod. The production will trace the journey of the crew, both literal and psychological, as they travel through the seasons from the cold waters of the Atlantic to the heat of the tropics, shedding their dark winter clothing and the connection to their New England

home as the journey unfolds. The costume designs are based on extensive photo research, with each principal and chorus character evoking a real 19th-century whaler and representing the diversity of Melville's crew. Choreographer Daniel Charon will create exciting movement sequences to tell the physical story of the opera, and we will take advantage of the levels built into the set to create compelling stage pictures that capture the vibrant life of the Pequod. In this character-driven production we will explore the emotional journey of the crew as they descend deeper and deeper into the heart of Ahab's obsession. In the end, Moby-Dick will rise from below, where he has been all along, and all elements of the ship and Ahab will be destroyed, leaving only Ishmael to tell his tale."

---



**Glimmerglass Opera Theatre Inc.**  
**Glimmerglass Festival**  
**Project Information**

**Major Project Activities:**

Donizetti's *L'assedio di Calais* premiered in 1836 at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, immediately following the success of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. It includes what many consider some of Donizetti's most moving music. The Italian libretto was written by Salvatore Cammarano and structured after an 1825 play by Luigi Marchionni. Deeply patriotic, the story is based on the historic siege of Calais in 1346 during the Hundred Years War by England's Edward III, during which six citizens offered their lives to save their city from slaughter. Donizetti was at this time the reigning composer of Italian opera, following Rossini's retirement and the death of Bellini. In a letter to his publisher, Ricordi, he notes that the opera was enthusiastically received by audiences, stating that *it was his most carefully worked out score*. *The Siege of Calais* is bel canto at its finest, with soaring melodies and a particularly moving a cappella chorus led by the six heroic doomed volunteers.

The opera disappeared after 1840, and then re-emerged 150 years later at the 1990 Donizetti Festival in Bergamo, having also been recorded two years prior by Opera Rara in London. The few other contemporary stagings include Zambello's 1991 Wexford production and a two-act version by English Touring Opera in 2013 and 2015. Glimmerglass will therefore give the opera in its U.S. premiere and will be presenting it in a new edition. Zambello and Glimmerglass dramaturg Kelley Rourke are collaborating on editorial changes to invigorate the director's vision for the story. They are working closely with Maestro Colaneri to ensure that the musical structure remains sound. This type of collaboration is indicative of how artistic results are successfully achieved at Glimmerglass, with highly involved participation by all members of a creative team contributing their expertise to the process.

The selection of *Calais* aligns with two of Glimmerglass' core artistic tenets: to present rarely-heard work and to use opera as a springboard for ancillary programs about important contemporary issues. The Festival's mainstage offerings are chosen in part to activate the art form's intersection with democracy, humanity and social values by braiding together repertory with second stage programs and outreach initiatives that explore many of the challenges faced by our global society.

In this context, the current European refugee crisis will be visually and conceptually referenced in the production and through community engagement programming. The production will have a contemporaneous setting, inspired by "the Jungle," the modern-day refugee encampment in Calais, which has attracted thousands of asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, North Africa and other war-torn countries awaiting years'-long hoped-for entry into Great Britain.

### **Schedule of key project dates:**

Rehearsals for *Seige of Calais* begin June 1, 2017. The Festival Season opens July 7; *The Seige of Calais* opens July 16, with subsequent performances July 24 and 30, and August 4, 10, 12, 15, 19. It opens fourth in the mainstage repertory schedule, which also includes new productions of Rogers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma*, George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and Handel's *Xerxes*. Second stage productions will include a Glimmerglass commission, *Stomping Grounds*, a hip-hopera by Paige Hernandez and Victor Simonson, and the reprisal of 2015's youth opera, *Odyssey*, by Ben Moore and Kelley Rourke.

### **Intended Audience/Participants/Community: Who will benefit from the project and how?**

Glimmerglass strives to attract as wide an audience as possible. Visitors hail from 45-plus states and 10 foreign countries, and include many local and regional families. Audiences will benefit from exposure to a work few if any have seen and from the thought-provoking second stage programs that delve into current-day issues, enriching the value of experiencing great opera. The performers and the creative team will benefit from working on an opera that will likely be new to all or most of them. The Young Artists participating will all be able to add this to their repertory. The field will benefit from a major classic work being presented in America for the first time and a rentable production created for it. Those affiliated with the Mohawk Valley Regional Center for Refugees will benefit from the associated engagement programs being developed that explore issues pertinent to asylum seekers and as they are welcomed at the opera and into the local cultural community. The still-young Glimmerglass Film Days festival will benefit from the Opera's involvement as a high-profile participant.

Creating a new production is—by its nature—entirely collaborative; the creative team will be consulted throughout the year leading up to the project's implementation. English Touring Opera music staff is being consulted during score preparation, as needed. Educators and institutional community partners, notably the staff of MVRCR and Film Days, will be consulted to shape secondary programs for outreach and enrichment presentations.

### **Selection of Key Organizational Partners: An organization partner is an outside entity that will provide resources (other than money) to support the project.**

As part of Glimmerglass' incorporation of socially relevant programming, the Festival is partnering with the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees. Community engagement programs inspired by the *Calais* production, as well as a Glimmerglass-

commissioned second stage work about dislocation, will be presented for and with MVRRCR constituents. The Glimmerglass programs will be among the services offered by the MVRRCR, with a goal of involving their constituents as new audiences while providing creative expression and enrichment for those coping with assimilation.

Glimmerglass anticipates renewing its association with the Fenimore Art Museum with a related exhibition and will launch a new partnership with Glimmerglass Film Days, an international, multi-day festival whose theme this year is “Resilience,” enabling interesting conceptual linkages with the opera. For the latter, Glimmerglass will host a film showing and present a contextual preview of *Calais* at the film festival.

**Description of Key Organizational Partners:**

**Organization Name:** Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees  
**Proposed or Committed:** Committed  
**Description of Organization:**

The MVRRCR, located in Utica, 40 miles from Glimmerglass, has resettled nearly 16,000 refugees from 34 countries. More than 27% of Utica’s residents speak a language other than English and the city has one of the highest per capita percentages of refugees of any city in the US. The Center holds ESL classes and provides assistance for 200-300 people daily. This partnership begins a multi-year collaboration focusing on themes of homeland, as expressed through the Festival’s mainstage productions.

**Organization Name:** Glimmerglass Film Days  
**Proposed or Committed:** Committed  
**Description of Organization:**

Now in its third year, Glimmerglass Film Days brings international filmmakers and films to Cooperstown to explore humanity’s complex relationship with the natural world. Film Days encourages environmental stewardship through collaboration with artists, activists and scholars, while partnering with local organizations. Talks and other cultural programs accompany a week of screenings each November. The Festival is curated by Margaret Parsons, head of film programs at the National Gallery of Art.

**Organization Name:** [REDACTED]  
**Proposed or Committed:** Proposed  
**Description of Organization:**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Selection of Key Individuals: Briefly describe the process and criteria for the selection of the key individuals that will be involved in this project.**

Francesca Zambello selected the artists for the following reasons: she directed Leah Crocetto as Verdi's Luisa Miller for San Francisco Opera in 2015 and will direct a new *Aida* for SFO with Crocetto in the fall of 2016. Zambello sees her as a sympathetic heroine, with the power and talent to take on the leading role of Eleanora while also serving as a mentor to the many Young Artists in the production. Glimmerglass Music Director Joseph Colaneri is a specialist in the Italian repertoire, and, in addition to conducting, he will oversee the preparation of the Glimmerglass edition. Alexandra Romano, Aurelio, is a recent Glimmerglass Young Artist alumnus; it is an artistic policy to bring recent YAPs back as principals whenever possible as part of the company's commitment to helping launch their careers. The production's creative team have successfully worked together, most recently on 2016's *The Crucible*, and Zambello, Noone and McCullough a year prior for the widely-acclaimed *Candide*.

**Bios of Key Individuals:**

**First Name:**FRANCESCA  
**Last Name:**ZAMBELLO  
**Proposed or Committed:**Committed  
**Bio:**

**STAGE DIRECTOR.** Artistic & General Director Zambello is an internationally recognized director of opera and theater whose work has been seen at the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, the Bolshoi, Covent Garden, the Munich Staatsoper, Paris Opera, New York City Opera, Washington National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and English National Opera, among others. She also serves as Washington National Opera's Artistic Director. Zambello has been awarded the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French government and more recently received the San Francisco Opera Medal for Artistic Excellence for her more than 30 years of artistic contributions to the company, including serving as Artistic Advisor from 2006-2011. Other honors include three Olivier Awards, two Evening Standard Awards, two French Grand Prix des Critiques, Helpmann Award, Green Room Award, Palm d'Or in Germany and the Golden Mask in Russia. She has an honorary doctorate from her alma mater, Colgate University.

**First Name:**JOSEPH  
**Last Name:**COLANERI  
**Proposed or Committed:**Committed  
**Bio:**

**CONDUCTOR.** Renowned for his versatility, musical depth and ability to “inspire musicians”, Music Director Joseph Colaneri is recognized as a multifaceted presence on the podium. An international conductor equally adept with operatic, oratorio and symphonic repertoire, Colaneri has been on the Metropolitan Opera’s roster since 1998 and serves as Artistic Director at Mannes College—The New School for Music. He was also Artistic Director of the West Australian Opera in Perth from 2012-14. Colaneri led more than 60 performances with New York City Opera and has worked with many other distinguished companies such as Den Norske Opera, Portland Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Orlando Opera, UCLA and the San Francisco Opera Center. Orchestras with which he has guested include the Tokyo Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, Orchestra of St. Luke’s and the Chautauqua Symphony.

**First Name:**LEAH

**Last Name:**CROCETTO

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

**Leah Crocetto** makes her Glimmerglass debut as Eleonora in *The Siege of Calais*. She made two other major debuts in the 2015-16 season as Liù in *Turandot* (Metropolitan Opera) and as the title character in *Semirande* (Opéra National de Bordeaux). Other highlights include Luisa in *Luisa Miller* (San Francisco Opera), Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (Santa Fe Opera) and Anna in *Maometto II* (Canadian Opera Company). Crocetto made her New York City recital debut with Martin Katz at Pace University and performed a solo recital for Washington National Opera. She was a finalist in the Song Competition at the 2011 Cardiff BBC Singer of the World Competition, a 2010 Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan National Council Auditions, a First Place Winner, People’s Choice and Spanish Prize Winner of the 2009 José Iturbi International Music Competition and winner of the Bel Canto Foundation competition. She makes her role debut as Aida for SFO in the fall of 2016 in a Francesca Zambello production

**First Name:**JAMES

**Last Name:**NOONE

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

**SET DESIGNER.** James Noone designed the acclaimed 2015 Glimmerglass production of *Candide*, which travels to France for performances in Bordeaux and Toulouse. His company debut was 2004’s *The Mines of Sulphur*. He has been a scenic designer for productions at Playwrights Horizons, Manhattan Theatre Club, Lincoln Center Theatre, Roundabout Theatre and numerous others. Broadway productions include *Jekyll and Hyde*, Tony-nominated Best Musical *A Class Act*, multiple projects for Tony Randall’s National Actos Theatre and the recent revival of *A*

*Bronx Tale* and *Come Back Little Sheba*. His work in opera has been seen at New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera, Washington National Opera and Canadian Opera Company. Noone is head of the Scenic Design department at Boston University. His awards include multiple nominations from The Drama Desk, an American Theatre Wing Design Award, two Helen Hayes Awards, the LA Ovation Award and two NAACP Theatre Design Awards.

**First Name:**JESSICA

**Last Name:**JAHN

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

**COSTUME DESIGNER.** Jessica Jahn designed costumes for the 2016 Glimmerglass production of *The Crucible* and has been a regular guest artist since 2009's *La Cenerentola*. She began her career as a professional dancer and considers her knowledge of movement an underlying current in her design work. Jahn has worked on projects with directors such as Tina Landau, Charlie Newell, Kevin Newbury, Tommy Kail and Carl Andress, artist Michael Counts, and writers Charles Fuller, Eisa Davis, Nora Ephron and Charles Busch. Notable operatic collaborations include *Maria Stuarda* (Houston Grand Opera), *Life Is A Dream* (Santa Fe Opera, world premiere), *Monodramas* and *Mosé in Egitto* (New York City Opera), *Anna Bolena* (Lyric Opera of Chicago), *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Carmen* (Minnesota Opera), *Maria Stuarda* (Seattle Opera) and *Norma* (Gran Teatre del Liceu). Her work was recently displayed in exhibition at Opera America's Design Gallery. Jahn is a Lecturer in Theater Arts at Brandeis University.

**Promotion & Publicity: Briefly describe your plans for promoting and/or publicizing the project.**

E-news is sent to 14,000 addresses, with an avg. open rate of 30.28% and click-through rate of 2.78%, compared with average rates of 19.08% and 1.44%, respectively. Glimmerglass engages in 2-way communication via Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Twitter and a blog. Direct mail efforts: 2,500 subscription renewal forms; 5,000 subscription renewal brochures; 2,000 renewal reminders; 120,000 season brochures; 1,000 group sales brochures; 25,000 pocket calendars. Development produces a semi-annual magazine and an e-news blog, "From Francesca's Traveling iPad." Media kits are distributed to press, and photos can be downloaded online. The Festival typically receives 500 national/international media impressions and about 75 reviews. Several discounts are offered: students, 50%; educators, 25%; county and military, 15%; seniors (65+), 10%; \$10-\$25 youth tickets (12 and younger). Educator and youth discounts are publicized to 100 area schools, online and in brochures.

**Performance Measurement:**

**How will you measure the success of your project? Describe any plans you**

**have for program evaluation, for working collaboratively with researchers, strategic consultants, program evaluator and/or any other performance measurement related to the project.**

Glimmerglass uses *participant-oriented* and *summative evaluation* methods to measure success. **Audience response is evaluated through** ticket sales and reactions. Was something new experienced? Were the ticket buyers' subsequent repertory interests expanded as the result of an experience? This information is gleaned from Salesforce system reports, e-mail and live surveys and conversations with the public, which are plentiful and documented. **Artists' responses:** Were the artists highly engaged and did they grow in their discipline? **Professional growth of the young artists and interns:** Apprentices' careers are followed to see how their success can be attributed to their training and participation on a particular production. **Critical response:** Press reviews provide an outside professional opinion. Media impressions (increase/decrease/sources) are recorded and their tone categorized. **Professional interest in the work:** Did the production inspire other companies to stage the offering?

**Glimmerglass Opera Theatre Inc.  
Glimmerglass Festival  
Special Items**

**Special Items: Submit any items specified for your discipline that are relevant to your particular project.**

**Glimmerglass Festival  
Artistic Director's Statement**

The Glimmerglass Festival includes in its mission the presentation of new and rare works of opera and musical theater. Since becoming Artistic & General Director in 2011, I have continued this by bringing to the stage newly commissioned works as well as American premieres of classic offerings, such as 2016's *The Thieving Magpie* and 2017's *The Siege of Calais*.

I believe great art is a window on the world that helps us examine humanity through an engaging lens; productions of opera and musical theater excel at captivating storytelling, leaving one moved by the consequences of power, conflict, social influence, love and history.

As stated in our application this year, the Festival's mainstage offerings are chosen in part to activate opera's intersection with democracy, humanity and social values and stimulate off-stage programming that carries these values to a broad community. I was moved, as we all have been, by the refugee crisis sweeping Europe. I realized there was opportunity to consider this opera in the context of these world events.

Growing up in France, Calais was always symbolic to me as the gateway from England to much of Europe. As a kid, taking the train back and forth from France to England, I had to stand on long lines in the customhouses of Calais. Waiting there, I used to think about Shakespeare, the Hundred Years Wars, the War of the Roses, World War II and all the dark moments from history that contributed to the legacy of this town. Calais returned to my periphery 25 years ago when I directed Donizetti's long-forgotten opera, *The Siege of Calais*, at the Wexford Festival in Ireland. Calais is once again garnering renown for the huge refugee camp inhabiting the same walls that once nobly held a siege where the citizens fought to keep their homeland.

Many of the great operatic works of the 19th century are now forgotten to us. In this past year, as we watched the refugee crisis spiral out of control, I thought back to this opera and decided to program it, as the story and the incredible beauty of the music might enlighten how we view those trapped in today's Calais. It seemed right to choose a piece written 150 years ago based on an event 1000 years ago that tells a story we experience today.



Since getting to know the work for Wexford, it has always haunted me. I am frequently reminded of the selfless actions of the courageous citizens as I walk past Rodin's statue of the Six Burghers of Calais in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and at the Hirshhorn sculpture garden in DC. I imagine them holding onto each other, offering one another courage as they face a senseless death. These characters come alive in Donizetti's obscure, yet gorgeous and powerful score. It is also one of the few times he creates a heroic protagonist sung by a mezzo in a trouser role. His music portrays great complexity for all of the characters' feelings. In presenting this rare bel canto masterpiece, I hope to also shine a light on the refugees encamped in Calais today, seeking asylum, safety and a new home.

**Francesca Zambello**

**Artistic & General Director, The Glimmerglass Festival**

---

**Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center**  
**Ryan Opera Center**  
**Project Information**

**Major Project Activities:**

During the 2017/18 season, the Ryan Opera Center will select 10 to 14 exceptional up-and-coming singers and one pianist to participate in a rigorous one- to three-year training program taught by skilled faculty who have comprehensive expertise in their respective fields. With the training and experience Ensemble members receive, they will be well-prepared to launch successful operatic careers. The major areas of program study are:

**Voice Instruction:** The Voice Instruction program centers around comprehensive, year-round vocal training for the singers overseen by the Director of Vocal Studies. A select roster of highly-qualified voice teachers who live in the Chicago area provide voice lessons and technical guidance to foster the singers' vocal development. Additional instruction is offered through residencies with guest teachers. The Director of Vocal Studies also attends rehearsals and performances involving Ensemble members to monitor their vocal condition and progress.

**Vocal Coaching:** Under the supervision of the Music Director, the music faculty provides each singer with five to ten hours of private vocal coaching weekly. These professional coachings are very important to the singers' development. They learn essential information about performance practice and tradition as well as musical expression and style. The ongoing sessions help build a base repertoire appropriate for each singer's range and capabilities. Substantial portions of the coachings concentrate on Lyric Opera's season repertoire, preparing the singers for roles they will later perform or understudy. The Music Director also mentors the pianist in developing the knowledge and capabilities necessary for an international operatic career.

**Language Training:** The language program supports the prominent languages of operatic and song repertoire, primarily Italian, German, and French. Both linguistic comprehension and diction are covered. The Ensemble also studies and develops general conversation skills, which are essential to their artistic success.

**Theatrical Training:** Ensemble members learn and develop convincing stage characterizations with attention given to acting through the use of body language and movement to communicate a text's meaning. The artists gain invaluable performance experience through their participation in fully-staged opera workshops, produced during the summer months.

**Master Classes/Mentorship by Leading Artists:** The Ryan Opera Center's relationship with Lyric Opera provides Ensemble members with unique access to many of the world's finest operatic teachers and artists. During Lyric's season, the Center's

training program includes informal "brown bag" chats, master classes, and one-on-one coaching with principal singers, directors, and conductors from Lyric's artistic roster, from whom the members learn firsthand about the many aspects – artistic, personal, and professional – of an operatic career.

**Career Guidance/Professional Development:** Career guidance for Ensemble members focuses on securing management, selecting repertoire, conserving and maintaining one's vocal resources, planning for financial responsibility, and providing promotional assistance (head shots, web site design, etc.).

### **Schedule of key project dates:**

- Auditions: Preliminaries, March – August in 5-6 various U.S. cities. Finals, September at Lyric Opera of Chicago
- Individual Voice Lessons: One per week, May – March
- Individual Vocal Coaching: Five to ten hours per week, May – March
- Theatrical Training: Ongoing, May – March
- Language Training: Ongoing, May – March
- Lyric Opera Mainstage Season Repertory Preparation: Ongoing, May – March
- Master Teachers: Ongoing mentorship, May – March
- "Buddy System" (matches seasoned artists with Ryan Opera Center singers of similar voice type): Ongoing, September – March
- Cultural Outreach Performances: Ongoing, May – March

Most training and activity takes place at Lyric Opera. Cultural engagement programs are presented at public auditoriums and accessible venues throughout the Chicago area.

In addition to training, Ensemble members are given outstanding world-class performance experience, principally through their participation in Lyric Opera's mainstage season, allowing them to put into practice what they have learned from faculty while at the same time working with leading singers, conductors, and directors at the highest international level. Lyric Opera's mainstage season takes place from September through March. During Lyric Opera's 2015/16 season, Ensemble members sang a total of 35 mainstage roles and understudied 59 roles. Through their recurring participation in Lyric Opera productions, these talented artists make a vital contribution to Lyric Opera's artistic accomplishments.

### **Intended Audience/Participants/Community: Who will benefit from the project and how?**

For more than 40 years, the Ryan Opera Center has provided specialized and unique training, performance opportunities, and national visibility to the program's Ensemble members, giving them the experience and preparation needed to launch international

careers in an increasingly demanding and competitive field. Through a fair and open application process, the Ryan Opera Center reaches diverse candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds. From preliminary auditions by over 400 applicants, the pool is narrowed to 25 to 30 finalists. These highly qualified candidates are brought to Chicago for interviews, coaching, and stage auditions. Final auditions are open to Lyric donors and subscribers. Following the final auditions, between 10 and 14 singers and one pianist are invited to participate in one- to three-year residencies at the Ryan Opera Center.

The Ryan Opera Center reaches a local, national, and global audience through a vast array of performance opportunities, including cultural engagement performances within the community and mainstage appearances at Lyric Opera, reaching nearly a quarter-million patrons and 16 million global radio listeners each season. In addition, Ensemble members are featured in a monthly recital broadcast series on 98.7WFMT, available for free on demand via the Ryan Opera Center webpage. It is the only series of its kind in the country and reaches 50,000 listeners for each broadcast. Through these widespread, diverse, and accessible avenues, the Ryan Opera Center shares its world-class artistry with many who are economically disadvantaged, homebound, or reside in remote areas.

**Selection of Key Organizational Partners: An organization partner is an outside entity that will provide resources (other than money) to support the project.**

N/A

**Selection of Key Individuals: Briefly describe the process and criteria for the selection of the key individuals that will be involved in this project.**

A strong administrative staff with significant arts management and artistic expertise is the driving force behind the Ryan Opera Center's success. It is led by Director Dan Novak, Music Director Craig Terry, and Director of Vocal Studies Julia Faulkner, with input from Ryan Opera Center Advisor Renée Fleming and Lyric's esteemed Music Director Sir Andrew Davis. The Ryan Opera Center's faculty includes some of the world's most prominent conductors, vocal coaches, and accompanists, along with language and acting instructors.

The artist-training roster annually includes 10-14 talented singers and one pianist. The current Ensemble includes: Hlengiwe Mkhwanazi, Diana Newman, and Ann Toomey (sopranos); Lindsay Metzger and Annie Rosen (mezzo-sopranos); Lauren Decker (contralto); Alec Carlson, Jesse Donner, Jonathan Johnson, and Mingjie Lei (tenors); Emmett O'Hanlon and Takaoki Onishi (baritones); Bradley Smoak (bass-baritone); Patrick Guetti (bass); and Mario Antonio Marra (pianist).

**Bios of Key Individuals:****First Name:**Dan**Last Name:**Novak**Proposed or Committed:**Committed**Bio:**

Dan Novak was appointed Ryan Opera Center Director in April of 2013, after serving as Manager since 2000. Before then, he held several positions with Lyric Opera of Chicago for over ten years. Novak is an Illinois native and graduated with distinction from Northwestern University in Music Education. He recently represented the Ryan Opera Center at a 2015 OperaEuropa conference and regularly adjudicates major vocal competitions.

**First Name:**Craig**Last Name:**Terry**Proposed or Committed:**Committed**Bio:**

Craig Terry assumed the title of Music Director of the Ryan Opera Center in April 2013 and has served as Assistant Conductor at Lyric Opera of Chicago for the past eleven seasons. Previously, he was an Assistant Conductor at The Metropolitan Opera and a coach/pianist with the Houston Grand Opera Studio. Terry has appeared in recital throughout the U.S., Canada, South America, and Europe. He studied at Tennessee Technological University, Florida State University, and the Manhattan School of Music.

**First Name:**Julia**Last Name:**Faulkner**Proposed or Committed:**Committed**Bio:**

Julia Faulkner has been a Voice Instructor for the Ryan Opera Center since August 2013 and was appointed Director of Vocal Studies in January 2015. She is internationally renowned as a master teacher and had a distinguished singing career with performances on many of the world's great opera and concert stages. Prior to moving to Chicago, Faulkner was a Professor of Voice at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for ten years.

**First Name:**Renée**Last Name:**Fleming**Proposed or Committed:**Committed**Bio:**

Acclaimed American soprano Renée Fleming is Creative Consultant of Lyric Opera of

Chicago and Ryan Opera Center Advisor. In the latter role, she leads master classes and conducts individual coaching and mentoring sessions with all Ensemble members. She remains a strong advocate of the program's mission and provides advice and counsel with strategic planning and artistic direction.

**First Name:**Deborah

**Last Name:**Birnbaum

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Deborah Birnbaum is an internationally established teacher with expertise in breath technique. Widely sought after as a teacher/clinician, she has a unique ability to help singers assimilate the mechanics of *bel canto* breath support while working within the context of their vocal technique. Birnbaum is regularly scheduled for guest teaching engagements at leading artist-development programs and conservatories both in the U.S. and abroad.

**Promotion & Publicity: Briefly describe your plans for promoting and/or publicizing the project.**

Each year, Ryan Opera Center audition announcements are sent to nearly 1,000 universities and music teachers throughout the U.S. Auditions are promoted on the Ryan Opera Center's page of Lyric Opera's website, on Facebook, and listed on the YAPTracker.com site for young artist programs.

Additionally, through cultural engagement performances in partnership with The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Grant Park Music Festival, Lyric Opera, Millennium Park, Ravinia Festival, Rush Hour Concert Series, and a monthly radio recital series, Ensemble members are promoted throughout Chicagoland and beyond.

Final auditions have been open to Lyric Opera donors and subscribers since 2013. Making Final auditions public increases the visibility of the Ensemble singers, as new and expanded audiences have the opportunity to hear the 25 to 30 final applicants vying for the available singer spots.

**Performance Measurement:**

**How will you measure the success of your project? Describe any plans you have for program evaluation, for working collaboratively with researchers, strategic consultants, program evaluator and/or any other performance measurement related to the project.**

Ryan Opera Center leadership holds frequent meetings with resident and guest faculty as well as Lyric Opera artistic and production staff to customize the training path for each

Ensemble member and to assess and evaluate their progress. Regular meetings with artists are scheduled to share feedback and seek their input, fostering individual ownership of further training and development goals.

The distinguished careers of Ryan Opera Center alumni offer the clearest evidence of the program's success. Former Ensemble members regularly perform at the world's leading opera houses and concert halls and are considered major stars. The list includes René Barbera, Nicole Cabell, Andriana Chuchman, Elizabeth DeShong, Mark S. Doss, Christopher Feigum, Elizabeth Futral, Joseph Kaiser, Maria Kanyova, Quinn Kelsey, Dina Kuznetsova, Gary Lehman, Emily Magee, Amanda Majeski, Susanna Phillips, Matthew Polenzani, Patricia Risley, Christian Van Horn, Amber Wagner, and Erin Wall.

**Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center  
Ryan Opera Center  
Special Items**

**Special Items: Submit any items specified for your discipline that are relevant to your particular project.**

**Artistic Statement**

At The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center, our mission as a leader in the field is to nurture the artistic talent and performance skills as well as maximize the career opportunities for some of the nation's most promising young singers and vocal coaches. Through all aspects of their training, we seek to discover and develop their unique artistry and build their confidence, enabling each individual to realize his or her full potential.

The core component of any artist-development program is the instruction provided to its participants. We offer our Ensemble members training and mentorship from some of the foremost opera instructors in the world. The experience of learning from the Center's outstanding faculty has a major influence on them.

Our curriculum covers the broad range of skills needed to perform operatic and song repertoire spanning hundreds of years: vocal technique, musical expression and style, performance practice and tradition, physical characterization, dramaturgical insight and theatrical interpretation, linguistic comprehension and diction, and other key elements. The Ryan Opera Center's faculty has the specific and expert knowledge and the international experience requisite to teach these topics at the high level required for developing world-class artists.

In-depth instruction results in superb performances and cultural outreach to benefit the community at large. Through the Ryan Opera Center's affiliation with Lyric Opera of Chicago, our Ensemble members have the outstanding opportunity to participate in Lyric's mainstage season with the world's leading opera artists and to be heard by millions of radio listeners internationally via the Lyric Opera Broadcasts on 98.7WFMT. Additionally, Ryan Opera Center artists are featured in a monthly recital broadcast series on 98.7WFMT, the only such series of its kind in the country, heard by an audience of nearly half a million. The Center's summer workshop performances provide another occasion for the Ensemble to hone and test their skills, as do the numerous concerts presented throughout the Midwest in collaborative partnerships with many educational, civic, and cultural institutions. In all of these performance experiences, our members share their exceptional artistry with the public and make practical the teachings of their instructors.

The Ryan Opera Center makes a major financial investment in its faculty to ensure that



the very best resident and guest instructors in all areas are engaged and retained. This is why support from the National Endowment for the Arts is crucial.

Funding faculty costs of the Ryan Opera Center is a fitting project for the National Endowment for the Arts under the Art Works: Learning category. The Center's world-class faculty is the cornerstone of our program. Their work is essential to the Ensemble members' development and ultimate success as performers. The good seeds planted by the Endowment's support will have far-reaching impact on their artistry and, in turn, on the future of opera and the cultural vitality of America.

On behalf of the Ryan Opera Center, I sincerely thank the National Endowment for the Arts for this consideration and its generous past support.

Dan Novak  
Director

---

## **Representative List of Current Professional Affiliations**

### **2015/16 Alumni?Current Professional Affiliations**

#### **Laura Wilde (soprano)**

In Wilde's three years in the Ryan Opera Center she was featured in Lyric Opera mainstage performances of *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Nabucco*, and *Der Rosenkavalier*. Concert engagements include the Elgin Symphony Orchestra. A former Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions semi-finalist, Wilde recently made a triumphant European debut in the title role/*Jenufa* with English National Opera. She will return to Lyric Opera of Chicago in the 2016/17 season as Freia/*Das Rheingold* and later appear at Arizona Opera, Nashville Opera, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (*Vitellia/La clemenza di Tito*).

#### **Anthony Clark Evans (baritone)**

As a Ryan Opera Center member for three years, Evans was featured in Lyric Opera mainstage productions of *Otello*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Rusalka*, *Wozzeck*, and *Bel Canto* (world premiere). He has won numerous awards, including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Grand Finals, first prize in the Giulio Gari Foundation Vocal Competition, a Sara Tucker Study Grant, first prize in the Marcello Giordani Foundation Competition, and top prize in The Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition. Evans recently made his debut with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Marcello/*La bohème* as well as San Diego Opera as Sharpless/*Madama Butterfly*, a role he will reprise for San Francisco Opera in the 2016/17 season.

#### **Richard Ollarsaba (bass-baritone)**

Ollarsaba's Lyric Opera mainstage performances over his three years in the Ryan Opera

Center included the title role/*Don Giovanni* (stepping in at the last minute for an ailing colleague), Basilio/*The Family Barber*, and Angelotti/*Tosca*. Recipient of a Richard F. Gold Career Grant, the bass-baritone was previously a national semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Recent engagements include Escamillo/*Carmen* at Minnesota Opera (previously at Tulsa Opera), the title role/*Don Giovanni* at Intermountain Bozeman Opera, and Fallito/*L'opera seria* with Wolf Trap Opera.

## **2014/15 Alumni?Current Professional Affiliations**

### **Tracy Cantin (soprano)**

Cantin's Lyric Opera mainstage performances in her three-year Ryan Opera Center tenure included the title role/*Anna Bolena* (stepping in mid-performance) and Berta/*Il barbiere di Siviglia*. She was recently featured as Miss Jessel/*The Turn of the Screw* at Opera on the Avalon. Among Cantin's honors are a Sullivan Award, the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Emerging Artist Award, a 2015 Sylvia Gelber Music Foundation Award, and national semi-finalist in the 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. The soprano is an apprentice artist with Santa Fe Opera this summer and will appear in the upcoming season as Chrysothemis/*Elektra* with Edmonton Opera.

### **J'nai Bridges (mezzo-soprano)**

During Bridges' three years at the Ryan Opera Center she performed in Lyric Opera productions as Vlasta/*The Passenger*, Rosina/*The Family Barber*, and 2nd Wood Nymph/*Rusalka*. Recent engagements include her return to Lyric Opera of Chicago as Carmen/*Bel Canto* (world premiere) and leading roles at San Diego Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, and Knoxville Opera. A semifinalist in the 2015 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition, Bridges has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Oregon Symphony. Upcoming season portrayals include Nefertiti/*Akhnaten* with Los Angeles Opera and Sister Helen Prejean/*Dead Man Walking* with Vancouver Opera.

### **Julie Miller (mezzo-soprano)**

As a member of the Ryan Opera Center for two years Miller appeared in Lyric Opera mainstage performances as Krzystina/*The Passenger*, Ida/*Die Fledermaus*, and Emilia/*Otello*. In 2015, she was invited to participate in the Georg Solti Accademia Bel Canto and also debuted with the Oregon Mozart Players. The mezzo-soprano's upcoming performances include Baroness Nica/*Charlie Parker's Yardbird* with both Madison Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

### **John Irvin (tenor)**

Irvin's Lyric Opera mainstage roles during his three years in the Ryan Opera Center included Count Almaviva/*The Family Barber* and Alfred/*Die Fledermaus*. He returned to Lyric Opera last season as Christoph/*Bel Canto* (world premiere) after a tremendously successful debut at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Matthew Gurney/*Emmeline*. This summer Irvin returned to the Georg Solti Accademia Bel Canto, followed by an

engagement at the Salzburg Festspiele. Upcoming performances include *Roméo/Roméo et Juliette* at Madison Opera, where he previously portrayed Count Almaviva/*Il barbiere di Siviglia*.

### **Will Liverman (baritone)**

As a Ryan Opera Center member for three years, Liverman was featured in Lyric Opera mainstage productions as Papageno/*The Magic Victrola*, Figaro/*The Family Barber* and Brühlmann/*Werther*. Winner of the 2015 Stella Maris International Vocal Competition and a Grand Finalist in the 2012 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Liverman's recent engagements include Opera Philadelphia (Dizzy Gillespie/*Charlie Parker's Yardbird*, world premiere, also at the Apollo Theater), Wolf Trap Opera, Seattle Opera, Atlanta Opera, Madison Opera and Minnesota Opera. In the coming season he will reprise Dizzy Gillespie at Madison Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

### **Maureen Zoltek (pianist)**

Zoltek was the new pianist for the Ryan Opera Center beginning in the 2013/14 season. During her tenure she worked closely with Ensemble artists and also prepared *Tosca*, *The Magic Victrola*, and *La clemenza di Tito* for Lyric Opera's mainstage season. Last year, Zoltek prepared *La Rondine* and *Emmeline* for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. This upcoming 2016/17 season she will return to San Francisco Opera for *Jenufa*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Don Pasquale*, and *Madama Butterfly*.

---

## **Professional Development Curriculum Plan**

Voice Instruction: The Voice Instruction program centers around comprehensive, year-round vocal training for the singers overseen by the Director of Vocal Studies. A select roster of highly-qualified voice teachers who live in the Chicago area provide voice lessons and technical guidance to foster the singers' vocal development. Additional instruction is offered through residencies with guest teachers. The Director of Vocal Studies also attends rehearsals and performances involving Ensemble members to monitor their vocal condition and progress.

Vocal Coaching: Under the supervision of the Music Director, the music faculty provides each singer with five to ten hours of private vocal coaching weekly. These professional coachings are very important to the singers' development. They learn essential information about performance practice and tradition as well as musical expression and style. The ongoing sessions help build a base repertoire appropriate for each singer's range and capabilities. Substantial portions of the coachings concentrate on Lyric Opera's season repertoire, preparing the singers for roles they will later perform or understudy. The Music Director also mentors the pianist in developing the knowledge and capabilities necessary for an international operatic career.

Language Training: The language program supports the prominent languages of operatic and song repertoire, primarily Italian, German, and French. Both linguistic

comprehension and diction are covered. The Ensemble also studies and develops general conversation skills, which are essential to their artistic success.

**Theatrical Training:** Ensemble members learn and develop convincing stage characterizations with attention given to acting through the use of body language and movement to communicate a text's meaning. The artists gain invaluable performance experience through their participation in fully-staged opera workshops, produced during the summer months.

**Master Classes/Mentorship by Leading Artists:** The Ryan Opera Center's relationship with Lyric Opera provides Ensemble members with unique access to many of the world's finest operatic teachers and artists. During Lyric's season, the Center's training program includes informal "brown bag" chats, master classes, and one-on-one coaching with principal singers, directors, and conductors from Lyric's artistic roster, from whom the members learn firsthand about the many aspects – artistic, personal, and professional – of an operatic career.

**World-Class Performance Opportunities:** During Lyric's 2015/16 season, current Ryan Opera Center Ensemble members sang 35 mainstage roles and understudied 59 roles. Principal roles included Hlengiwe Mkhwanazi as Barbarina in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Diana Newman as Clorinda and Annie Rosen as Tisbe in Rossini's *Cinderella*, Jonathan Johnson as St. Brioche in Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, and Laura Wilde as Anna and Jesse Donner as Abdallo in Verdi's *Nabucco*. Six current Ensemble members had named roles in the world premiere of López's *Bel Canto*, and thirteen Ensemble members appeared in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. Ryan Opera Center alumni returned to Lyric to sing fifteen roles and understudy four. Principal roles for alumni this season included Amanda Majeski as the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* and as the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Christian Van Horn as Alidoro in *Cinderella*, Nicole Cabell as Hanna in *The Merry Widow*, J'nai Bridges as Carmen and John Irvin as Christoph in *Bel Canto*, and Elizabeth DeShong as Fenena in *Nabucco*.

**Career Guidance/Professional Development:** Career guidance for Ensemble members focuses on securing management, selecting repertoire, conserving and maintaining one's vocal resources, planning for financial responsibility, and providing promotional assistance (head shots, web site design, etc.).

### Program Schedule

- Auditions: Preliminaries, March – August in 5-6 various U.S. cities. Finals, September at Lyric Opera of Chicago
- Individual Voice Lessons: One per week, May – March
- Individual Vocal Coaching: Five to ten hours per week, May – March
- Theatrical Training: Ongoing, May – March
- Language Training: Ongoing, May – March
- Lyric Opera Mainstage Season Repertory Preparation: Ongoing, May – March

- Master Teachers: Ongoing mentorship, May – March
  - "Buddy System" (matches seasoned artists with Ryan Opera Center singers of similar voice type): Ongoing, September – March
  - Cultural Outreach Performances: Ongoing, May – March
-

**Opera Omaha, Inc.**  
**Opera Omaha**  
**Project Information**

**Major Project Activities:**

2017-2018 will mark Opera Omaha's 60th Anniversary Season, providing an opportunity for the company to celebrate its ongoing commitment to championing new work, to developing adventurous opera projects, and to keeping opera accessible for community members of all ages. In honor of this milestone season, Opera Omaha will undertake a 60th Anniversary Festival that includes the world premiere stage performances of *Proving Up*, the newest opera by up-and-coming American composer, Missy Mazzoli, and librettist Royce Vavrek. The festival format will provide significantly increased opera programming during a three to four-week period in the spring months of 2018. The fully-staged production of *Proving Up* will run in tandem with the company's third main stage production of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, which will be an all-new production performed in the company's home venue, the historic Orpheum Theater. Monteverdi's *Orfeo* from 1607 is generally considered to be the first opera ever composed. The pairing of these two - the oldest opera and the newest opera - performed in contrasting venues, form the base of the 60th Anniversary Festival. Additional festival programming will consist of a broad menu of social events and smaller-scale operatic happenings around the city featuring local restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and community partners.

To help plan and execute this new initiative, Opera Omaha has engaged director/designer/curator James Darrah as Artistic Director of the 60th Anniversary Festival. Mr. Darrah has received critical and popular acclaim for his recent productions for Opera Omaha (*Agrippina*, 2014; *A Flowering Tree*, 2015; *Semele*, 2016) as well as his role as curator of the recent Gala events at the Omar Baking Company (2014), the Crossroads Mall (2015), and Paxton & Vierling Steel Co. (2016). Mr. Darrah's interdisciplinary approach to opera creates unique experiences for both performers and patrons by blurring traditional performance lines and interweaving the operatic form with dance, dynamic physical staging, and innovative technology. Mr. Darrah will involve his production company Chromatic in the design and execution of inventive production elements for both of the festival's full opera productions, while also transforming non-traditional spaces into temporary hubs of operatic activity during the festival weeks. To help create and produce the smaller-scale operatic happenings in Omaha during the festival, Opera Omaha will build on existing partnerships and develop new relationships with local leaders, arts partners, artists, restaurants, bars, and coffee shops.

Beyond 2017-2018, Opera Omaha will continue to dedicate several weeks each spring to heightened operatic activity. The 60th Anniversary Festival in 2017-2018 will serve as a pilot program to help inform plans for ongoing expanded opera activity in the spring months. Each year Opera Omaha will further diversify and expand the company's programming, sometimes even blurring the lines between performance and social event. Emphasizing the experiential and unique nature of these events will compel

audiences to actively participate as no other art form or electronic media device would be able to compete or serve as substitute.

### **Schedule of key project dates:**

PROJECT PERIOD: 06/01/2017 – 07/31/2018  
 June 2017 Finalize plans for 2018 Festival Events  
 July 2017 *Proving Up* production designs due  
 August 2017 *Orfeo* production designs due  
 8/1/17 Piano/Vocal score draft of *Proving Up* delivered - tentative  
 Sept 2017 *Proving Up* workshops in Washington, D.C.  
 Sept 2017 Begin festival marketing push (ads, brochures, etc.)  
 Oct 2017 Construction of *Orfeo* and *Proving Up* sets and costumes begins - tentative  
 12/1/17 Final Score and orchestra parts of *Proving Up* delivered - tentative  
 3/12/18 Rehearsals begin in Omaha for *Orfeo* and *Proving Up*  
 4/1/18 Festival Activities Begin in Omaha  
 4/17/18 *Proving Up* Opening Night in Omaha - tentative  
 4/18/18 *Orfeo* Opening Night in Omaha - tentative  
 4/19/18 *Proving Up* #2 (of 4) - tentative  
 4/20/18 *Orfeo* #2 (of 3) - confirmed  
 4/21/18 *Proving Up* #3 (of 4) (matinee) - tentative  
 4/22/18 *Orfeo* #3 (of 3) (matinee) - confirmed; and *Proving Up* #4 (of 4) (evening) - tentative  
 4/23/18 End of Festival  
 May 2018 Festival Wrap-up meetings and Evaluation

### **Intended Audience/Participants/Community: Who will benefit from the project and how?**

The intended beneficiaries of Opera Omaha's 60th Anniversary Festival and world-premiere of *Proving Up* include the core artists, current and future audience members, partner organizations and their constituents, the broader community, and the opera industry. The core artists involved in the creation and implementation of the 60th Anniversary Festival programming are all rising stars in the American opera industry. The festival provides an opportunity for them to continue creating new projects, while having the support of an established, well-regarded company in a creatively-open community. Audience members will benefit from the availability of more opera programming during the 60th Anniversary Season, with exposure to projects that provide one-of-a-kind opera experiences. Partner organizations and the constituents they serve will benefit from the imagination and inspiration that naturally develops from interaction with the arts and dynamic creative artists who bring new ideas and new approaches into the community. The intermingling of new operatic work with the first opera ever written, and ideas that spark alternative approaches to opera production, will be at the core of

Opera Omaha’s 60th Anniversary Festival. With this innovative and adventurous project, Opera Omaha is forging a path in the opera industry that demonstrates opera is a vibrant and relevant art form with the ability to connect art, ideas, and people to create a more vibrant, culturally-stimulated community.

**Selection of Key Organizational Partners: An organization partner is an outside entity that will provide resources (other than money) to support the project.**

Opera Omaha has a broad range of community engagement programs that reach thousands of people of all ages each year. With the 60th Anniversary Festival, Opera Omaha will collaborate with new and existing partners who share the company’s passion for community, collaboration and the arts, to weave opera programming throughout the city during the multi-week festival period. Festival partnerships will reflect the integrity and level of excellence that Opera Omaha demands of itself.

While festival planning is ongoing, current plans under discussion include an exhibition at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, opera-themed menu and performance at Le Bouillon Restaurant in downtown Omaha, immersive performances at the House of Loom (a downtown bar specializing in “culture, community and craft cocktails”), Archetype Coffee (in the trendy new Blackstone District popular with young professionals), as well as a masterclass for young students of the Omaha Conservatory of Music.

**Description of Key Organizational Partners:**

<p><b>Organization Name:</b>Chromatic  <b>Proposed or Committed:</b>Committed  <b>Description of Organization:</b></p> <p>Chromatic, an existing partner, is a new Los-Angeles based production company led by James Darrah and Peabody Southwell. It is comprised of interdisciplinary artists who collaborate to create aesthetic theatrical and visual experiences across blurring mediums in an increasingly wide range of formats. Chromatic explores and redefines processes for creative teams to combine prismatic skills for original projects within theater, film, opera, visual art, photography, dance and new work development.</p>
---

<p><b>Organization</b> [REDACTED]  <b>Proposed or Committed:</b>Proposed  <b>Description of Organization:</b></p>
---



[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Organization Name:** [Redacted]

**Proposed or Committed:** Proposed

**Description of Organization:**

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Organization Name:** [Redacted]

**Proposed or Committed:** Proposed

**Description of Organization:**

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Organization Name:** Gallery 1516

**Proposed or Committed:** Committed

**Description of Organization:**

With a commitment to fine art's importance to the cultural life of a community, the mission of Gallery 1516 is to provide a venue for regional artists to exhibit their work at no charge to the artist. Opera Omaha has an existing partnership with Gallery 1516, a venue where chamber performance can take place in tandem with art installation in the same space. Gallery owner Pat Drickey is interested in the work of James Darrah, and would like to host a festival event.

**Organization Name:** [Redacted]

**Proposed or Committed:** Proposed

**Description of Organization:**

[Redacted]

**Organization Name:** [Redacted]  
[Redacted] **Committed:**Proposed  
**Description of Organization:**  
[Redacted]

**Organization** [Redacted]  
**Proposed or Committed:**Proposed  
**Description of Organization:**  
[Redacted]

**Organization Name:** [Redacted]  
[Redacted] **Committed:**Proposed  
**Description of Organization:**  
[Redacted]

**Organization Name:** [Redacted]  
[Redacted] **Committed:**Proposed  
**Description of Organization:**

**Selection of Key Individuals: Briefly describe the process and criteria for the selection of the key individuals that will be involved in this project.**

Roger Weitz, Opera Omaha's General Director, has developed an artistic vision for Opera Omaha's future seasons and its 60th Anniversary Festival. To fulfill the vision, he has sought and developed relationships with dynamic creative young artists in the opera industry who are eager and open to vibrant new techniques in opera production and who are successfully creating new operatic work. Opera Omaha has engaged director James Darrah as the Artistic Director of the 60th Anniversary Festival. Darrah made his Opera Omaha debut in 2014 with *Agrippina*, and in the ensuing seasons directed new, highly acclaimed productions of *A Flowering Tree* and *Semele*. His Los Angeles-based design team, Chromatic, will create two new fully-staged opera productions as the core of the festival programming. One of these productions will be the world-premiere of *Proving Up*, a new opera by composer Missy Mazzoli and librettist Royce Vavrek, commissioned by Opera Omaha.

**Bios of Key Individuals:**

**First Name:**Roger

**Last Name:**Weitz

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Roger Weitz, a native of Omaha, Nebraska, assumed the post of General Director of Opera Omaha in August of 2011. Weitz holds a degree in music from Carleton College where he studied voice and sang in multiple ensembles. After college, Roger moved to Chicago and began a decade-long tenure with Chicago Opera Theater, the first seven as Artistic Administrator, and the last three as General Manager. Through these posts, Roger became well versed in opera production from both the artistic and business perspectives. He has managed the planning and execution of over 30 new productions, working with the illustrious artists and creative teams customary to Chicago Opera Theater. Between his posts in Chicago as Artistic Administrator and General Manager, Roger spent a year in Washington, DC, as an Arts Management Fellow in the highly selective program created by Michael M. Kaiser for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

---

**First Name:**James

**Last Name:**Darrah

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Los Angeles based director and designer James Darrah's collaborative focus through varied mediums has quickly led him to be recognized as a gifted young American director. As a co-founder of the production and design company Chromatic, he has worked to develop a collective of interdisciplinary artists who collaborate to create aesthetic, theatrical events across blurring mediums that include original productions of opera, theater, installations and events. He made his European debut this year directing Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* with Teatro Nacional de São Carlos in Portugal. This spring, he continued his ongoing collaboration with conductor Michael Tilson Thomas as director of Bernstein's *On the Town* in a new staged production for the San Francisco Symphony. Upcoming projects include a new production of Mascagni's *Iris* at Bard SummerScape, and the world premiere of Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's operatic adaptation of Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* for Opera Philadelphia.

**First Name:**Missy

**Last Name:**Mazzoli

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Missy Mazzoli was recently deemed "one of the more consistently inventive, surprising composers now working in New York" (The New York Times). Her music has been performed all over the world by the Kronos Quartet, eighth blackbird, pianist Emanuel Ax, the Detroit Symphony, the LA Philharmonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra, JACK Quartet, Opera Philadelphia, New York City Opera, cellist Maya Beiser, violinist Jennifer Koh, pianist Kathleen Supové, Dublin's Crash Ensemble, the Sydney Symphony and many others. She is currently Composer-in-Residence with Opera Philadelphia, Gotham Chamber Opera and Music Theatre-Group, and in 2011/12 was Composer/Educator in residence with the Albany Symphony. Missy was a visiting professor of music at New York University in 2013, and recently joined the composition faculty at the Mannes College of Music, a division of the New School.

**First Name:**Royce

**Last Name:**Vavrek

**Proposed or Committed:**Committed

**Bio:**

Royce Vavrek is an [REDACTED] Brooklyn-based librettist known for his exemplary creation of operatic prose. His collaboration with composer David T. Little has led

Heidi Waleson of The Wall Street Journal to proclaim them “one of the most exciting composer-librettist teams working in opera today.” Their first full-length opera, *Dog Days*, received its world premiere in 2012 at Peak Performances @ Montclair. In 2014, Royce premiered *27*, his first collaboration with composer Ricky Ian Gordon, at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. The work brought to life Gertrude Stein’s famous salon at 27 rue de Fleurus that hosted the likes of Picasso, Matisse, Hemingway and Fitzgerald. His collaboration with composer Missy Mazzoli yielded the opera *Song from the Uproar*, which was presented by Beth Morrison Projects at The Kitchen in February of 2012. Following the premiere of *Breaking the Waves* in Fall 2016, the team will collaborate in 2018 on the world premiere of *Proving Up* with Opera Omaha.

**Promotion & Publicity: Briefly describe your plans for promoting and/or publicizing the project.**

In April 2016, Opera Omaha held a press conference to announce the addition of the fourth opera, the festival format and the new production of the world premiere of *Proving Up*. The press event received local coverage as well as coverage in the Wall Street Journal. For future promotions of the festival, Opera Omaha plans to include the fourth opera and festival activities in all subscription communication, including the brochure, website, email marketing, online marketing, signage and renewal letters. A local advertising campaign will be implemented as well as national advertising in opera trade publications and other opera companies’ program books. The local media outlets are already anticipating this event, so Opera Omaha expects a large amount of local publicity, especially since this falls in the company’s 60th anniversary season. Opera Omaha will pitch opera reviewers for publications such as the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, the New Yorker, Wall Street Journal and NPR.

**Performance Measurement:**

**How will you measure the success of your project? Describe any plans you have for program evaluation, for working collaboratively with researchers, strategic consultants, program evaluator and/or any other performance measurement related to the project.**

Opera Omaha’s Strategic Plan has identified three strategic pillars, with the 60th Anniversary Festival falling within Programming Innovation and Diversification. The Strategic Planning Committee has created a list of quantitative measurements, measurements that are a blend of quantitative and qualitative, and qualitative measurements for each strategic priority. Opera Omaha employs traditional methods of evaluation to continually assess the organization’s community relevance and the intrinsic impact of its performances and programs. These include analysis of ticket sales, critical response, and post-performance surveys to gather demographic data and narrative feedback. Success of Opera Omaha’s 60th Anniversary Festival will be measured in part through attendance at performances and events. Opera Omaha is currently engaged in Market Research to gain a clearer understanding of how constituents are

and are not being served by Opera Omaha's programs.

**Opera Omaha, Inc.**  
**Opera Omaha**  
**Special Items**

**Special Items: Submit any items specified for your discipline that are relevant to your particular project.**

**ARTISTIC STATEMENT:**

Opera Omaha's new spring festival is conceived as an artist-driven exploration of boundary-less programming, immediacy in design and aesthetics and bold storytelling. The festival features performances, events and celebrations over a multi-week period of time and brings together artists to reside in Omaha, an emerging city full of collaborative potential and possibilities. With a strong emphasis on experimentation, Opera Omaha's festival will foster an environment that celebrates and encourages bold artistic risks from artists looking to venture into new material and theatrically vibrant scene work. The festival gives production opportunities to exciting composers and librettists, and allows designers to bring new ideas that they can see realized. Eschewing traditional festival formats, Opera Omaha's season will be flooded with programming every spring that produces visually compelling new productions of exciting musical and theatrical operatic work and crafts multiple music events in varied venues and spaces throughout the city.

One of the major components of Omaha Omaha's new festival is centered around "artists in residence": directors, designers, singers, dancers, choreographers and more--all from varied backgrounds who reside in the city for weeks and not only take part in the large-scale productions, but also collaborate in the myriad of events, social gatherings, exhibitions and concerts featured in the festival. Audience members and the Omaha community therefore also have a unique opportunity to develop vibrant relationships with the artists working with Opera Omaha--traditional proscenium isolation gives way to an emphasis on working artists who are given the space and tools to work with the culturally vibrant city of Omaha as a canvas. They have direct interaction with some of the opera's strongest supporters, and also engage the burgeoning population of the city in ways formerly limited to a single theater. This unique annual arrangement, following in the model of fine arts residencies, makes Opera Omaha one of the first large artist retreats for today's working opera artists. -James Darrah

---

**COMPOSER STATEMENT:**

When we were first asked to create a new chamber opera, we set out to find a story that was timely, unusual, and uniquely American. We discovered the perfect collaborator in young American writer Karen Russell, who, in 2013 published *Proving Up*, the short story on which the opera is based. Russell's story is a surreal and haunting allegory of the American dream, as told through the invented narrative of a mid-19th century Nebraska homesteader family. Russell developed this story in the wake of the

foreclosure crisis in 2008, and was inspired by America's fervent obsession with home ownership and the accumulation of status symbols. During the 2008 crisis, the ugly realities and sometimes tragic consequences of this obsession were thrown into a harsh light. Russell was able to explore these effects and origins of this fixation through a surreal, terrifying, and endlessly inventive narrative that explores the lengths to which people will go to "prove up." We feel that American opera is uniquely positioned to explore the stories that underlie our unique mythos. Karen Russell's *Proving Up* combines historical fact and magical realism in ingenious ways, resulting in a frank commentary on this enduring part of American identity.

The rich layers of the operatic form provide a fertile place in which to explore the psychology and motivations of these unusual characters. As a composer I am drawn to the idea that I can illuminate the Zegner's inner lives and desires not only through text, but through a combination of surprising instrumental textures and melodic lines. I can imagine the three dead sisters singing from their graves, accompanying their mother as she laments the tragedies of a homesteader's life. I can hear the surging brass and percussion music as Miles rides through the blizzard, gripped with equal parts terror and excitement. I can easily imagine the grim desperation of the black-lipped man, an eerily high voice accompanied by a shimmering cloud of string harmonics. I feel that the richness of this story, and the vast potential of the operatic form to illuminate psychological complexity through layers of music, text and staging, will lead to a vibrant and thrilling theatrical experience. – Missy Mazzoli

---

#### LIBRETTIST STATEMENT:

As a librettist, I have become somewhat pre-occupied with understanding my heritage, the cultural and life experiences that my ancestors encountered. Generations ago, a particular strand of my bloodline came into the United States from Switzerland, settling first in Pennsylvania and then up to Canada before heading west on the Ox Trail before building their dreams on a homestead in northern Alberta. *Proving Up* is an opportunity for me to open a dialogue with those resilient relations of years past who cleared the land and waited for the deed that meant they had succeeded in taming their own corner of the world. – Royce Vavrek

---