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Seattle Opera cultivates musical storytelling in Washington State

Creation Lab brings diverse new stories to opera

SEATTLE—Seattle Opera is announcing a new initiative to help cultivate and develop the next generation of opera composers and librettists in Washington State. **Creation Lab** seeks 16 emerging composers and writers of all genres to give way to the creation of short operatic pieces, which will be performed during the 2020/21 Season.

General Director Christina Scheppelmann says new operas are crucial to amplifying Seattle Opera's impact locally and nationally.

"Creation Lab will help to bring diverse stories and perspectives to our art form, and to the operatic repertoire at large," Scheppelmann said. "We're looking for young musical artists in our region who want to gain experience in creating compelling, resonant narratives told through music and singing. A specific opera background is not required."

Seattle Opera is committed to racial equity, and Black, Indigenous and other People of Color are encouraged to apply to the new program. Selected participants will develop an opera that's a maximum of 20 minutes, to be presented in a concert

format at the Opera Center in 2021. Each piece will undergo a development process that includes a table reading, music workshop, and rehearsal prior to the public performance. The creative teams will receive support from professional composers and librettists as they develop their work. Review panelists for applications include Seattle Opera Artistic staff, **Jennifer Zeyl** (Artistic Director, Intiman Theater), **Kathy Hsieh** (actor/writer/director), **Stephen Newby** (Professor of Music at Seattle Pacific University/composer/conductor), and **Orlando G. Morales** (musician/educator/songwriter).

Creation Lab mentors this year include **Aishé Keita**, a “must-see artist” (*Seattle Magazine*) who’s performed all over the U.S., and has been recognized for her work in Danai Gurira’s *Familiar*, presented at Seattle Repertory Theater and The Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis. Additional mentors include **Jerre Dye** (librettist) and **Zach Redler** (composer)—team behind *The Falling and the Rising* (’19), described as “true and powerful” (*The Seattle Times*), and **Kamala Sankaram** (composer). Praised as “strikingly original” (*The New York Times*), Sankaram has received commissions from Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and Opera Memphis. Finally, **Tazewell Thompson** (librettist and stage director) joins this year’s team of mentors. Thompson previously spoke on Seattle Opera’s 2018 racial justice panel *Breaking Glass*, and wrote the libretto for *Blue*—a story of love, loss, and resilience of a Black American family.

To apply and learn more about Creation Lab, go to seattleopera.org/creationlab.

About Seattle Opera

Established in 1963, Seattle Opera is committed to serving the people of the Pacific Northwest with performances of the highest caliber and through innovative educational and engagement programs for all. Each year, more than 95,000 people attend Seattle Opera performances, and more than 400,000 people of all ages are served through school performances, radio broadcasts, and more. By drawing our communities together, and by offering opera’s unique fusion of music and drama, we create life-enhancing experiences that speak deeply to people’s hearts and minds. Connect with Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and on 98.1 Classical KING FM.