



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Oct. 20, 2020

Contact: Kristina Murti, [kristina.murti@seattleopera.org](mailto:kristina.murti@seattleopera.org)

Images: <https://seattleopera.smugmug.com/Seattle-Opera-Company-/SOATC/n-bg443p>

Password: "press"

## \$1 million gift to Seattle Opera cultivates a new generation of musical storytellers

### **Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab seeks to empower emerging librettists and composers**

SEATTLE—A \$1 million gift to the Seattle Opera will help usher in a more diverse generation of storytellers in opera, with a focus on composers and librettists ages 18–30. The gift from the Friday Foundation establishes the **Jane Lang Davis Creation Fund**, an endowed fund at Seattle Opera Foundation to support the Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab annual programming. Applications for the first year of the Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab were accepted late into summer 2020, and chosen participants will be announced this fall. The majority of applicants were Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color (BIPOC)—and/or identified as women. The 16 artists selected will create 20-minute operas, which will be performed in Tagney Jones Hall at the Opera Center next year. Participants will receive support throughout the development process and refine their pieces through table readings and music workshops.

**Seattle Opera General Director Christina Scheppelmann** said the new, multi-year initiative will bring new stories and perspectives to the community, and to the repertoire at large:

"New stories, new voices in opera complement the great works of the past and help us continue to evolve. The Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab will engage young artists

of varied backgrounds in music and theater. We hope to stimulate curiosity about opera, and welcome in new artists, storytellers, and audiences—especially those who have not felt included before.”

Mentors for this year’s lab include **Tazewell Thompson** (librettist and director), speaker for the racial justice panel *Breaking Glass* ('18), and librettist for *Blue*, an opera about the love, loss, and resilience of a Black American family. Additional mentors are **Aishé Keita** (actress), who’s been recognized for her work in Danai Gurira’s *Familiar* at Seattle Repertory Theater and The Guthrie Theater and **Kamala Sankaram** (composer)—who has received commissions from Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and Opera Memphis. Finally, **Jerre Dye** (librettist) and **Zach Redler** (composer) creators of *The Falling and the Rising* ('19), join this year’s mentor group.

The Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab is also significant for Seattle Opera’s commitment to racial equity. The company’s [Racial Equity and Social Impact \(RESI\) plan](#)—which was just made available to the public—mandates that programming include diverse perspectives and topics. The company is also challenging itself to present more operas and works by BIPOC creators.

The Friday Foundation’s \$1 million donation enabling creation lab is part of a major investment in arts and culture. Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Art Museum, the Henry Art Gallery and Seattle Symphony will also receive gifts from the foundation, which honor the memory of the late Jane Lang Davis and Richard E. Lang. The couple’s commitment to performing and visual arts stems from their belief that the arts are fundamental to the health and growth of the Puget Sound region.

Jane Lang Davis was a member of Seattle Opera’s Board of Directors from 1971–1980, and a longtime member of Seattle Opera’s Advisory Board. A subscriber for more than 50 years, she introduced many of her close friends and family to opera. She also helped to connect former General Director Speight Jenkins with important

contacts in the region's performing arts community. To learn more about the Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab, go to [seattleopera.org/creationlab](http://seattleopera.org/creationlab) and [fridayfoundationarts.org/news](http://fridayfoundationarts.org/news).

# # #

#### **About The Friday Foundation**

The Friday Foundation is dedicated to supporting arts organizations following the passion and philanthropy of Jane Lang Davis and Richard E. Lang during their lifetimes. Visit <https://www.fridayfoundationarts.org> for more information.

#### **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.