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Free forum explores the intersection of race and opera

National arts leaders of color lead the discussion at ‘Breaking Glass’

**10:30 a.m., Saturday, July 28
Nesholm Lecture Hall | McCaw Hall**

SEATTLE—Everyone is welcome to join the conversation at [Breaking Glass: Hyperlinking Opera & Issues](#). This free public forum opens a door to frank discussion about race and diversity in opera. Topics will include how art is produced in an increasingly diversified America, and who has the right to tell whose story; the role of art in stimulating public discussion about racism and discrimination; and what roles social justice plays within the artistic mission of an opera company. All are welcome; and **People of Color are encouraged to attend.**

“At Seattle Opera, we have spent a lot of time thinking about who we want to be as a company,” said **Barbara Lynne Jamison** Director of Programs and Partnerships. “We love this art form; it can be powerful, transcendent, and life-affirming. As a historically White organization, Seattle Opera is committed to taking ownership of opera’s Eurocentric, and at times, racist past. We will continue to learn from marginalized voices and bring them into the center of discussions in order to build a more equitable future.”

A collaboration between Seattle Opera and the Glimmerglass Festival (a nonprofit opera festival based in Cooperstown, New York), this forum happens at a time when Seattle Opera has been highly visible for its work to increase equity, which has included nuanced, and at times, charged conversations with communities of color who have helped to hold the company accountable. Since summer 2017, Seattle Opera has used several forums and events to engage in dialogue with members of the Asian Pacific Islander community during *Madame Butterfly*, and the Black community during *Aida*.

As an equity change-leader in the opera industry, Seattle Opera was excited to be able to partner with Glimmerglass, a company that has been innovative with its storytelling and dismantling of the Eurocentric status quo. Breaking Glass originated with the desire to examine how music and art can respond to societal inequities, and as a means to provoke thoughtful discourse. Other tour sites of this forum include: Atlanta, New Orleans, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Cooperstown, Washington DC, and New York City.

The forum will include excerpts from new operas written for Glimmerglass, as well as opportunity for audience questions and input. Librettists **Tazewell Thompson** and **Paige Hernandez** will talk about the substantive social content in their new operas *Blue*, which depicts an African American family after their son is shot by a police officer, and *Stomping Grounds*, a “hip-opera.” **Matthew Morrison** from the Clive Davis Institute of New York University, Tisch School of the Arts will moderate the discussion.

The development of *Stomping Grounds*, *Blue*, and *Breaking Glass: Hyper-linking Opera & Issues* has been funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Opera America Innovation Grant and Repertoire Development Grant.

This event will be livestreamed. For more information, and to RSVP for this free event, go to: seattleopera.org/breakingglass.

Panelists

Paige Hernandez

***Stomping Grounds* director, choreographer, and librettist**

Paige Hernandez is a multidisciplinary artist who is critically-acclaimed as a performer, director, choreographer and playwright. She is known for her effective fusion of theatre, hip-hop, dance and education. As a master teaching artist, Hernandez has taught throughout the country to all ages and disciplines, to date reaching approximately 10,000 students in over 100 residencies, workshops and performances. As a performer, choreographer and hip-hop advocate, her work has been seen at The Kennedy Center, Wolf Trap, Imagination Stage, Lincoln Center, Arena Stage, Folger Theatre and Forum Theatre, among other stages across the globe. Hernandez tours internationally with her company B-FLY ENTERTAINMENT, promoting original works such as *Liner Notes*, *Havana Hop* and *Paige in Full: A B-girl's Visual Mixtape*. Awards include an Individual Artist Award from the Maryland State Arts Council, the Thomas Fichandler Award for exceptional promise in theater education from the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning and two Helen Hayes nominations for choreography and performance. Hernandez was named a "classroom hero" by the Huffington Post for her outstanding arts integration and work with STEM initiatives.

Matthew Morrison

NYU Tisch School of the Arts

Matthew Morrison is an Assistant Professor Faculty/Fellow at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. He holds a Ph.D. in Musicology from Columbia University, a masters in Musicology from The Catholic University of America and was a Presidential music scholar at Morehouse College, where he studied violin and conducting. Morrison has served as Editor-in-Chief of the peer-reviewed music journal *Current Musicology*, where he published a special issue on Race, Sound, and Performance (Spring 2012) featuring an interdisciplinary group of scholars writing about the sounds of music in society. His published work has appeared in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, the *Grove Dictionary of American Music* and on Oxford University Press's online music blog. Morrison is currently the Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs for the W. E. B. Du Bois Scholars Institute at Princeton University. He also curates and contracts a variety of performances featuring some of the most dynamic musicians (of color, in particular). His current book project, *American Popular Sound: From Blackface to Blacksound*, considers the implications of positing sound as a major component in both individual and societal identity constructions, specifically race formation.

Tazewell Thompson

***Blue* librettist and director**

Harlem native Tazewell Thompson, is an internationally-acclaimed director of opera: Europe, Asia, Africa, Canada and the U.S.; theatre: over 85 productions (many world and American premieres and over 24 productions at

Arena Stage, where he served for many seasons as resident director); an award winning playwright (*Constant Star*, *Jam & Spice*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Mary T & Lizzy K*) with commissions from Lincoln Center Theatre, Arena Stage, South Coast Rep and People's Light and Theatre Company. He recently directed *Ruined* for Everyman Theatre, *Caucasian Chalk Circle* for New York University Tisch School of the Arts, and the American premiere of Vivaldi's opera *Cato in Utica* for the Glimmerglass Festival and Opera Lafayette. His production of *Porgy & Bess*, broadcast on *Live From Lincoln Center*, received EMMY nominations for Best Classical Production and Best Director. He made his Washington National Opera directorial debut in November 2015, with the world premiere of Philip Glass' *Appomattox*, and returned for the February 2016 production of *Lost in the Stars*, which he originated with Cape Town Opera/Glimmerglass Festival to widespread recognition in 2012. Most recently, Tazewell directed the 2017 Glimmerglass production of Handel's *Xerxes*.

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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 through the [Seattle Opera channel on Classical King FM. 98.1.](#)