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OPERA FIELD MAKES TWIN CITIES ITS STAGE TO CHART THE FUTURE OF THE ART FORM

Over 600 Opera Professionals and Artists to Attend Opera Conference 2022 May 18–21 in Minneapolis

**Hosted by Minnesota Opera
Presented by OPERA America**

May 11, 2022 (New York) — The Twin Cities will welcome over 600 administrators, artists, trustees, educators, and other professionals from the national and international opera field for the industry's largest annual convening. Hosted by Minnesota Opera and presented by OPERA America, the North American service organization for opera, the 2022 Opera Conference will leverage the thought leadership, activism, and expertise of the Twin Cities to inspire the future of the art form nationwide.

The conference reunites a vibrant community of producers, creators, and supporters for the first time in three years as the sector searches for new models of service and sustainability after the pandemic. The opera industry was upended by COVID-19, with thousands of canceled performances, tens of thousands of canceled artist contracts, and hundreds of thousands in financial losses. Nevertheless, with over \$221 million in federal relief and the creative talent of artists and opera company staff, the field did not remain shuttered for long. They produced opera on film, outdoor performances, livestreams, and a variety of other socially distanced programming that brought opera to audiences who had never entered the opera house.

This reinvention of programming informs the central question at Opera Conference 2022: What is the mission of an opera company in today's world? From May 18 to 21, leading thinkers from the opera field and from over 20 organizations in the Twin Cities (see speaker list below) will consider new possibilities for how opera companies, artists, and the art form can bring meaning to the communities they serve. (Visit operaamerica.org/ConferenceAgenda for the full schedule of sessions.)

Kao Kalia Yang, the award-winning Hmong American writer (*The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*, *The Song Poet*) based in Minnesota, will kick off the conference with a keynote address that connects art to issues of race, class, and gender. Yang is currently working with Minnesota Opera on the libretto for a new opera to premiere in March 2023.

Yang's address will set a tone for a conference that calls for diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the programming. Just miles from where the murder of George Floyd galvanized the racial justice movement in 2020, Opera Conference 2022 will expose biases and barriers that must be dismantled in order to create belonging for everyone who wishes to work in the sector or enjoy the art form. Opera professionals will look to organizations in the Twin Cities as reference points for advancing equity. (See "[Answering the Call](#)" in the spring 2022 issue of *Opera America Magazine*.)

Closing the conference will be remarks from Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar. Senator Klobuchar co-sponsored the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, which provided over \$13.5 billion to over 12,800 arts and culture organizations in 2021 as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. Opera companies received over \$95 million to keep opera companies open as they planned their return to live performance.

“The opera field could never have overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic without the lifeline of federal relief,” attests Marc A. Scorca, president and CEO of OPERA America. “It is fitting that, in the heartland of the country, we come together for the first time in three years to celebrate the perseverance and ingenuity of our field — and stand in ovation to the public figures who made it possible.”

Minnesota Opera, one of the most important companies in the United States, hosts Opera Conference 2022 around performances of Georges Bizet's *Carmen*. Conference-goers will join Minnesotan audiences for a new production of the classic work directed by American mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves in her directorial debut. Minnesota Opera received the sponsorship of Ascent: Private Capital Management of U.S. Bank for its lead role in the conference.

The conference also will showcase the new work that has defined opera in the Twin Cities for decades. Nautilus Music-Theater will welcome conference-goers into its intimate Saint Paul studio theater for the world premiere of *Moonlit Walk Home*, by composer Daniel Nass based on the poetic writings of Fern Green Baldwin. Four other American opera companies — The American Opera Project (New York, NY), Houston Grand Opera (Houston, TX), Opera on Tap (New York, NY), White Snake Projects (Boston, MA) — will bring new works in development to the Twin Cities with performances in the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis and Westminster Hall. (Visit operaamerica.org/ConferencePerformances to learn more about the new works. (For a history of new work development in the Twin Cities, see “[Fertile Ground](#)” in the spring 2022 issue of *Opera America Magazine*.)

What begins in the Twin Cities will be shared nationally this summer. During the past two pandemic years, OPERA America has hosted the national Opera Conference virtually, reaching two to three times the average in-person attendance. Key sessions from the Minneapolis conference, along with new sessions derived from the learning and inspiration at the in-person meeting, will be presented virtually on June 27 and 28. (Registration available at operaamerica.org/Conference.)

Featured Speakers and Organizations from the Twin Cities

- **Joelle Allen**, Director of Client Engagement & Marketing, kpCompanies; Board Member, Minnesota Opera
- **Torrie Allen**, President & CEO, Arts Midwest
- **Jeremie Bur**, Associate Individual Giving Director, Minnesota Opera
- **Mary M. Ceruti**, Executive Director, Walker Art Center
- **Greg Cunningham**, Chief Diversity Officer, U.S. Bank
- **James Darville**, Policy & Organizing Director, OutFront Minnesota
- **Brent Michael Davids**, Composer
- **Terrence R. Dolan**, Vice Chair and CFO, U.S. Bank
- **Dayna Frank**, CEO, First Avenue & The 7th St. Entry
- **Julie Gilbert**, Partner, McKinsey & Company
- **Rie Algeo Gilsdorf**, Facilitator & Founder, Embody Equity
- **Christopher Harrington**, President & CEO, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts

- **Seena Hodges**, Founder & CEO, The Woke Coach
- **Eric J. Jolly**, President & CEO, Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation
- **Clara Jung**, Associate Director of Philanthropic Giving, Macalester College
- **Ben Krywosz**, Artistic Director, Nautilus Music-Theater
- **Matt Lewellyn-Otten**, Religious Organizer, OutFront Minnesota
- **Jon Limbacher**, Managing Director & President, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra
- **Mallory Mitchell**, Resource Mobilization Director, Black Vision; Co-Founder, Community Centric Fundraising Minnesota
- **Tabitha Montgomery**, Interim Executive Director, Mixed Blood Theater
- **Karen Quisenberry**, Chief Production Officer, Minnesota Opera
- **Vanessa Rose**, Executive Director, American Composers Forum
- **Nadege Souvenir**, COO, Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation; Board Chair, Minnesota Opera; Board Member, OPERA America
- **Sarah Staiger**, Fundraising Coach and Consultant, STAIGER | VITELLI and Associates, LLC
- **Ryan Taylor**, President and General Director, Minnesota Opera
- **Chris Woznicki**, Director of Marketing, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra
- **Kao Kalia Yang**, Author, Public Speaker, and Teacher

Institutional support for Opera Conference 2022 is provided Ascent Private Capital Management, C. Graham Berwind, III, National Endowment for the Arts, Mellon Foundation, Bank of America, American Express, and the Tobin Theatre Arts Fund.

OPERA America gratefully acknowledges the support of the following Opera Conference 2022 sponsors: Fisher Dachs Associates, Vatic, Athlone Artists, Easy Connect, Genovese Vanderhoof & Associates, Music Publishers Association, Schuler Shook, Stagetime, Threshold Acoustics, and Marquee TV.

For more information about Opera Conference 2022, visit operaamerica.org/Conference.

For press credentials or interviews, contact Sarah K. Ivins,
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Follow the conference conversation on social media with #OperaCon and [@OPERAAmerica](https://twitter.com/OPERAAmerica).



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ABOUT OPERA AMERICA

OPERA America (**operaamerica.org**) leads and serves the entire opera community, supporting the creation, presentation, and enjoyment of opera. The organization is committed to:

- Promoting collaboration and effectiveness among opera companies, universities, and allied businesses.
- Delivering professional development to artists, administrators, and trustees.
- Increasing appreciation of opera through educational and audience development resources.
- Offering support and services that foster the creation and presentation of new works.
- Fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion across all aspects of the opera industry.
- Undertaking national research and representing the field to policymakers and the media.
- Managing the National Opera Center, a custom-built facility that provides a centralized space for collaboration, rehearsal, and performance.

Founded in 1970, OPERA America fulfills its mission through public programs, an annual conference, regional workshops, consultations, granting programs, publications, and online resources. It is the only organization serving all constituents of opera: artists, administrators, trustees, educators, and audience members. Membership includes 200 professional opera companies; 500 associate, business, and education members; and 3,200 individuals. OPERA America extends its reach to 80,000 annual visitors to its National Opera Center and over 83,000 subscribers and followers on digital and social media. Representing over 90 percent of eligible professional companies, OPERA America is empowered to lead field-wide change.

Over the past five decades, OPERA America has awarded \$20 million to opera companies and artists across North America. This strategic philanthropy, made possible through OPERA America's Opera Fund endowment and partnerships with leading foundations, supports field-wide innovation at OPERA America's member companies, with an emphasis on new work development, co-productions, audience building, and increased civic practice. Awards to individuals highlight emerging artists, recognize the leadership of exceptional trustees, and advance the careers of women and people of the global majority in creative roles.