

Black Opera Research Network

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U.S. Regional Opera Companies Lead the Way

While the Metropolitan Opera's production of Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* made history for that institution, regional opera companies have led the way in supporting the work of Black composers. Opera Theatre of Saint Louis commissioned both of Blanchard's operas: his first, *Champion* and *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*. Many of Anthony Davis's operas were premiered by smaller opera companies including *Under the Double Moon* (1992, Opera Theatre of St. Louis), *Wakonda's Dream* (2007, Opera Omaha), and the Pulitzer Prize winning *The Central Park Five* (2019, Long Beach Opera). During the pandemic, the Nashville Opera produced an opera on film, *One Vote Won* (2020) by Dave Ragland. Regional companies continue their efforts this season with productions of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* by Anthony Davis (Michigan Opera Theatre), *Written in Stone*—a series of 4 one-act operas, two of which are written by Black composers (National Opera Company), and *Blue* by Tazewell Thompson (Seattle Opera).

Black Opera in Boston

An ambitious multi-year [collaboration](#) between the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Odyssey Opera, and Castle of Our Skins has resulted in a new series, *As Told By: History, Race, and Justice on the Opera Stage*. Beginning in June 2022 the partners will perform five operas by Black composers starting with a production of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* on June 17. They will also perform *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom* by Nkeiru



Upcoming Events

12 May 2022

Panel Discussion with Jessica Nupen about her Dance | Rap | Opera *The Nose* sponsored by the University of Bern and the University of Bayreuth. Contact noemie.felber@musick.unibe.ch for a Zoom link

17 May 2022

Premiere of *Omar* by Michael Abels (music) and Rhiannon Giddens (libretto) at the Spoleto Festival, Charleston, SC, USA.

New Initiative

The Cincinnati Opera has received a \$1.3 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to commission new operas about the experiences of Black Americans. They plan to premiere the first opera during their 2025 Summer Festival. Read more about it [here](#).

Okoye, *Troubled Island* by William Grant Still, *Frederick Douglass* by Ulysses Kay, and *The Bridge* by Jonathan Bailey Holland.

Community Highlights

Carillonist Tiffany Ng will premiere two new pieces she commissioned from affiliate **Bongani Ndodana-Breen** and fellow Black South African composer, Chantal Willie-Peterson on April 1, 2022, at the University of Michigan.

Affiliate **Kira Thurman** is a finalist for the [Marfield Prize](#) for her book *Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms*.

Affiliate **Lucy Caplan** has published an article about nineteenth-century Black American opera singer, Sissieretta Jones, in the February Issue of *Opera News*.

Working Team member **Naomi André** gave the keynote lecture at Black Identities on the Opera Stage: A Symposium with Music on 26 March 2022. Affiliate **Antonio Cuyler** also spoke at the event which was planned by Working Team member **Kristen Turner** and Elizabeth Keathley.

Announcements & Opportunities

The University of York, UK, is seeking a Lecturer in Music with expertise in Black Music Studies or Global Musics. See [here](#) for more information.

The UCLA PEER Lab directed by affiliate **Nina Eidsheim** and the Durham University Music Department is sponsoring an online symposium 29–30 April called Naming, Understanding, and Playing with Metaphors in Music. Register [here](#).

Working team member **Lena van der Hoven** is planning an online symposium titled “South African Opera and Globalization (1994–2022)” on May 13, 2022. Proposals for presentations, mini-lectures, or panels are due April 20. See [here](#) for more information.

Affiliate **Ryan Ebright** is planning the Eighth International Conference on Music and Minimalism on 5–8 May 2022 at Bowling Green State University. Registration and more information available [here](#).

Upcoming Events

18–22 May 2022

Boston Lyric Opera performance of *Champion: An Opera in Jazz* by Terence Blanchard

New Interpretations

Heartbeat Opera Company has re-imagined *Fidelio* by Ludwig van Beethoven as the story of a Black activist wrongfully incarcerated. They collaborated with choirs of incarcerated individuals at prisons across the United States to sing the Prisoners' Chorus in performances during February 2022. See [here](#) and [here](#) for more information.



Curtis Bannister as Stan