

# Black Opera Research Network

blackoperaresearch.net | blackoperaresearchnetwork@gmail.com

**Opera Theatre of St. Louis** has embarked on an ambitious performance and educational agenda highlighting Black opera. In 2021, the troupe began an exploration of race and opera. Partnering with Washington University's Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity & Equity and the Music Department, they've sponsored concerts, panels, new productions of existing operas and new commissions as part of this initiative. Some upcoming events are: [Belonging in Opera](#) a series of panels and conversations from 16 March to 29 April; performances of three new 20-minute operas 16 to 18 March that are the result of the [New Works Collective](#), a three-year commissioning cycle; "[The Road to Freedom](#)" concert

celebrating Black excellence in music on 12 May; and a production of [Treemonisha](#) by Scott Joplin 20 May to June 24.



Alexander/Treemonisha  
Opera St. Louis

Brandie Sutton, Freddie



## Upcoming Events

### 11–25 March 2023

The Washington National Opera will perform *Blue* by Jeanine Tesori at the Kennedy Center.

### 24 March – 8 April 2023

The Lyric Opera of Chicago will premiere [Proximity](#), a trio of operas which includes *The Walkers*, music by Daniel Bernard Roumain and libretto by Anna Deavere Smith



South African soprano, Pretty Yende, will sing at the coronation of King Charles III. Read more [here](#).

## Announcements

**Opera in the Rock**, Little Rock, Arkansas's opera company, has built their 2022–23 season around various aspects of Black Opera. Their remaining two events this season are a concert by soprano Takesha Meshé Kizart-Thomas on 4 March 2023 and a performance of William Grant Still's *Highway One* on 3 & 4 June 2023. Learn more [here](#)

**Operatunity** is a four-part series which follows young opera singers from South Africa as they start their careers. Conceived by Xolane Marman from Cape Town, the series follows Bongiwwe Nakani, mezzo-soprano, Vuyisa Xipu, tenor, Smelo Mahlangu, baritone, and Setsoane Ntseki, soprano. The episodes are available [here](#).

**Izikhalo zikaNongqawuse, The Musical** by Bongani Magatyana (music) and Mhlanguli George (libretto) had a sold-out world premiere at the Chris Hani School of Arts in Khayelitsha, South Africa on 18 February.

## Community Highlights

Affiliate **Dr. Bode Omojola's** opera *Funmilayo* (with libretto by Doyin Aguru) will be performed at Mt. Holyoke College on 8 April 2023. More information [here](#).

Affiliate **Nicholas Newton**, bass-baritone, has a busy spring opera season. He will be performing at the Detroit Opera in *Xerxes* (4–10 March); in *Tosca* (21 April–5 May) and *Salome* (28 April–12 May) with the Houston Grand Opera; and in *The Barber of Seville* (6 & 8 July) with the Cincinnati Opera.

Working Team member **Mia Pistorius** published a new article in *Twentieth-Century Music* called "A Modern-Day Florestan: Fidelio on Robben Island and South Africa's Early Democratic Project."

The program for a three-day conference planned by working team member **Lena Van der Hoven** for 8–10 September 2023 on "The African Operatic Voice": Opera and Music Theatre in Africa and the African Diaspora is available [here](#).

## Upcoming events

### 25 March – 1 April 2023

Obsidian Theatre and Tapestry Opera have come together to produce a new opera. *Of the Sea* by Ian Cusson (music) and Kanika Ambrose (libretto) will premiere at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in Toronto

### 21 April – 6 May 2023

After many delays, *The Head and the Load* by William Kentridge will be performed at the Joburg Theatre in Johannesburg. The work depicts the suffering of Black porters during WWI and features several important Black South African singers.



**If you have something you'd like us to announce in a future newsletter, please contact us!**

Allison Smith  
[asmith26@bu.edu](mailto:asmith26@bu.edu)  
Kristen Turner  
[turnerk1@bellsouth.net](mailto:turnerk1@bellsouth.net)