

Black Opera Research Network

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Upcoming Events

23 January 2025

Premiere of *Morgaine* by Edmond Dédé at St. Louis Cathedral, New Orleans with a pre-concert panel discussion with Patrick Dupre Quigley (conductor), Sally McKee (Dédé's biographer), and BORN affiliate Candace Bailey. More [here](#)

3 February–7 February 2025

Performances of *Morgaine* at the Lincoln Theatre (3 Feb.), Rose Hall at Lincoln Center (5 Feb.), and the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center in College Park, MD (7 Feb.) See [here](#) for more information.



World Debut of an Historic Black Opera

Morgaine (1887) by Edmond Dédé (1827–1901) is the earliest opera by a Black composer that survives with a full score. Dédé was born a free person of color in New Orleans and received his early training in the city. After working in Mexico City for several years, Dédé moved to Paris in 1855 to study in Paris. Although he visited the United States in the years that followed, he lived in Bordeaux and Paris for the rest of his life. He composed *Morgaine* in Bordeaux, where he was a conductor at the Grand Théâtre. The French grand opera draws upon themes from the folk tale "Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves."

In a co-production between New Orleans-based [OperaCréole](#) and Washington, D.C.'s [Opera Lafayette](#), *Morgaine* will finally receive its premiere on 23 January 2025 in New Orleans, Louisiana with more performances in Washington D.C. and New York City in early February. OperaCréole and Opera Lafayette collaborated for several years to edit the manuscript score and prepare individual parts before rehearsals could begin. Independently, **BORN affiliate Candace Bailey** was also working on a scholarly edition of the score, and, in 2024, Bailey joined the opera companies' efforts.

To celebrate the production, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC is [exhibiting the original score](#), and [several panel discussions on Dédé](#), *Morgaine*, and his legacy will be held as well (one of which may be attended virtually). The premiere has also received significant press coverage in the U.S. including a long article in the *Washington Post*, and broadcast news stories.

Announcements

The [Black Leadership Arts Collective](#) is dedicated to “supporting and empowering Black vocal artists.” Led by executive director Alyson Cambridge with board members who include J’Nai Bridges, Kenneth Overton, Karen Slack, and others, the non-profit mentors young singers chosen through application and hosts master classes and other events.

Duke University Press will release [Sounds of Black Switzerland: Blackness, Music, and Unthought Voices](#) by Jessie Cox on February 11, 2025.

Videmus, Inc. in partnership with Boosey & Hawkes will publish all previously unpublished music by Black American composer Julia Perry. [Videmus](#) is a non-profit that promotes concert works by African Americans, women, and under-represented composers, and holds the copyright to Perry’s unpublished works. Learn more [here](#).

Under the leadership of Barbara Gentili, the University of Surrey has opened the [Theatrical Voice Research Centre](#). They are currently [accepting proposals](#) for a conference on Actors, Singers, and Celebrity Cultures Across the Centuries to be held 12–14 June 2025.

Community Highlights

We are excited to welcome **Joshua David** on to the Working Team! Joshua is a graduate student at the University of Toronto and has worked with the MUSON Choir and Opera Unit in Lagos, Nigeria.

Affiliate **Candace Bailey** will be a participant in several panel discussions about Edmond Dédé and *Morgaine* in New Orleans (23 Jan.), Washington, DC (3 Feb.), New York City (5 Feb.), and College Park, MD (7 Feb.).

Working Team members **Naomi André** and **Donato Somma**, along with affiliate **Innocentia Mhlambi** and Thomas Pooley have edited [The Music of Mzilikazi Khumalo: Language, Culture, and Song in South Africa](#). The collected edition on the life and work of this historic South Africa linguist, composer and choral practitioner was released by Bloomsbury Academic in August 2024, and a launch event for the book will be held on 28 January 2025 in the Great Hall at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

Affiliate **Nicholas Newton** has launched an Instagram account for the Black Opera Database that he and fellow affiliate **Allison Lewis** created in 2020. The database continues to grow as Newton and Lewis amend and annotate this unprecedented research. Follow [@blackoperadatabase](#) for updates and announcements.



Upcoming Events

31 January & 2 February 2025

The Anonymous Lover by Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges will be performed by Opera Philadelphia. The cast is led by Symone Harcum and Travon D. Walker. See [here](#) for more.

6–8 February 2025

Opera Theater of St. Louis will present *Black Coffee* by Concert Black and Alicia Revé Like, *Family Style* by Meilina Tsui and Melisa Tien, and *Kandake* by Tim Amukele and Jarrod Lee. See [here](#) for more.

The [Cartography Project](#) is a new multi-year commissioning project focusing on music that maps “Black dignity and Black futures.” It is a US-based project and is a collaboration between the Kennedy Center’s Social Impact team, the National Symphony Orchestra and the Washington National Opera. The first commissions are two short operas performed on 10 January 2025 by the Washington National Opera—*The Seer* by Brittini Ward and Levi Taylor and *Future of Dreams* by Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton and Jaylin Vinson.