

# THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER AMERICA

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## OPERA AMERICA SELECTS FINALISTS OF THE 2017 ROBERT L.B. TOBIN DIRECTOR-DESIGNER SHOWCASE

### Finalist Teams Will Present Concepts to Opera Producers at Opera Conference 2017 in Dallas

December 20, 2016 (New York) — **OPERA America**, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion for American opera, is proud to announce the 2017 finalists of the **Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase**, a biennial program offered as part of OPERA America's continuing efforts to foster emerging opera artists. The showcase, made possible through support from the **Tobin Theatre Arts Fund**, was established to bring promising talent to the attention of the field and connect up-and-coming directors and designers with those who are in a position to advance their careers.

More than 40 applicant teams of directors and designers each created a production concept for an opera chosen from a diverse, curated repertoire list. For the first time, teams had the option of selecting operas from the standard canon, in addition to 20<sup>th</sup>-century and contemporary works, which have always been a part the program. As part of the application process, each team submitted a production concept that included visions for staging, scenery, props, costumes and required resources.

The 2017 Director-Designer Showcase finalist teams are:

#### ***Glory Denied*** (By Tom Cipullo)

**Ashley Tata**, director  
**Stephan Moravski**, scenic designer  
**Liene Dobraja**, costume designer  
**Abigail Hoke-Brady**, lighting designer  
**Brad Peterson**, projection and video designer

The team envisions a *Glory Denied* in which an "American dream home" is fractured, with the prisons of society, matrimony and motherhood reflecting those of a POW cell.



### ***Der fliegende Holländer*** (By Richard Wagner)

**Shannon Knox**, director and scenographer  
**Becky Heisler**, lighting designer  
**Gabrielle Heerschap**, technical director  
**Micaela Tobin**, sound designer and composer

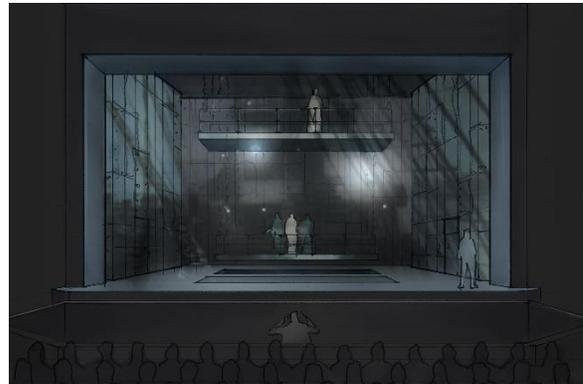
This conception of *Der fliegende Holländer* evokes contemporary political reality, casting Senta as an isolated young woman in rural Pennsylvania who turns to extremist propaganda chatrooms for community and purpose.



### ***Der fliegende Holländer*** (By Richard Wagner)

**Luke Harlan**, director  
**Alexander Woodward**, scenic designer  
**Fabian Fidel Aguilar**, costume designer  
**Andrew F. Griffin**, lighting designer  
**Rasean Davonte Johnson**, projection designer

This surrealistic reimagining of *Der fliegende Holländer* focuses on the collision of past and present. In a bleak English fishing village in the 1980s, a poor fisherman's daughter caresses the image of a legendary sea captain, who eventually beckons to her across the threshold of time itself.



These production concepts were selected by an independent panel consisting of **Camille Assaf**, costume designer; **James Darrah**, director and designer; **Leon Major**, stage and production director; **Ben Percy**, creative director of the design firm 59 Productions, Ltd.; and **Bradley Vernatter**, director of operations at Opera Omaha. As opera is an intrinsically collaborative art form, the projects chosen were selected not only because they demonstrate the requisite creativity and skill, but because they display true collaboration and collective passion.

The finalist teams will each be given \$2,000 to be used toward further research and the production of more comprehensive renderings and models. Each team will be mentored by one of the selection panelists as they prepare the final presentation of their designs. Up to two representatives from each team will be provided with transportation, lodging and registration to attend Opera Conference 2017 in Dallas, where they will present their proposals to opera producers at a special live-streamed session. At the most recent Director-Designer Showcase, held in 2015, more than 150 opera producers attended the presentation. Over the next two years, the teams will also have their designs featured in eight-month rotating exhibitions at the National Opera Center in New York.

"It's impossible to overestimate the value that participating in the Director-Designer Showcase has had for me," stated director Alison Moritz, one of the 2015 finalists. "Our team's collaborative process and the mentorship we received helped me hone my own artistic voice, and the friendships forged during the competition have become my artistic bedrock."

Following their Showcase experiences, members of the 2015 finalist teams have received engagements with organizations such as Anchorage Opera, Ash Lawn Opera, Austin Opera, Boston Baroque, Boston Early Music Festival, Central City Opera, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Fresno Grand Opera, The Juilliard School, Minnesota Opera, National Sawdust, Odyssey Opera, Opera Grand

Rapids, Opera Memphis, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Orlando Philharmonic, Seattle Opera, Skylight Music Theatre, Townsend Opera, Tulsa Opera and Yale Baroque Opera Project.

"OPERA America is uniquely positioned as the field's convener and connector to advance the careers of the most talented creative artists," stated Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. "The Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase enables us to support the career development of stage directors and designers and, through them, further the artistic development of the art form. We are profoundly grateful to the Tobin Theatre Arts Fund for its continued support of this program."

**For more information about OPERA America, its many programs and the National Opera Center, visit [operaamerica.org](http://operaamerica.org).**



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### **About OPERA America**

OPERA America ([operaamerica.org](http://operaamerica.org)) leads and serves the entire opera community, supporting the creation, presentation and enjoyment of opera.

- Artistic services help opera companies and creative and performing artists to improve the quality of productions and increase the creation and presentation of North American works.
- Information, technical and administrative services to opera companies reflect the need for strengthened leadership among staff, trustees and volunteers.
- Education, audience development and community services are designed to enhance all forms of opera appreciation.

Founded in 1970, OPERA America's worldwide membership network includes 150 Professional Company Members, 250 Associate, Business and Educational Members, 1,200 Individual Members, and 16,000 subscribers to the association's electronic news service. In response to the critical need for suitable audition, rehearsal and recording facilities, OPERA America opened the first-ever **NATIONAL OPERA CENTER** ([operaamerica.org/OperaCenter](http://operaamerica.org/OperaCenter)) in September 2012 in New York City. With a wide range of artistic and administrative services in a purpose-built facility, OPERA America is dedicated to increasing the level of excellence, creativity and effectiveness across the field.