

Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants - 2025-2026

OPERA America

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Generously funded by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation

This program supports women composers in their exploration of opera as an artistic medium, providing funding for activities such as libretto readings, workshops, and working performances. The maximum request accepted is \$15,000.

Timeline

Intent to apply deadline: December 18, 2025, 11:59 p.m. ET

Required for access to full application

Application deadline: January 22, 2026, 11:59 p.m. ET

Grantees notified: February 2026

Grant period: April 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027

To access the grant guidelines, please click **here**. Please read the guidelines in full before applying.

Applicant Information

Composer and Librettist

Throughout this application, the author of the music will be referred to as the composer, and the author of the text will be referred to as the librettist, although applicants may have prior experience as songwriters, poets, or playwrights.

The composer is considered the applicant for all submissions.

Applications submitted on behalf of a project with more than one composer, and/or that represent the efforts of a collective, are allowed. However, for the purposes of this grant program, the applicant will be considered the sole representative of the project and the sole recipient of any grant award.

Composer First Name

Character Limit: 250

Composer Surname/Family Name

Character Limit: 250

Composer Email

Character Limit: 254

Composer Citizenship Status

Indicate if you have United States citizenship, permanent residence, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status.

Choices

Yes

No

Applicant Gender Identity

Do you identify as a woman composer?

Choices

Yes

Applicant Biography*

Share a brief narrative biography. You may also upload a PDF version of your resume/CV (optional).

Character Limit: 1000 | File Size Limit: 1 MB

Applicant Website

Character Limit: 2000

Personal Statement*

Provide a brief artistic statement explaining what draws you to the operatic medium. What inspires you creatively?

Character Limit: 3000

Teammate(s) (if applicable)

Teammate First Name

Character Limit: 150

Teammate Surname/Family Name

Character Limit: 250

Teammate Creator Type

Check all that apply.

Choices

Composer

Librettist

Teammate Email

Character Limit: 254

Teammate Biography

Share a brief narrative biography. You may also upload a PDF version of your teammate's resume/CV (optional).

Character Limit: 1000 / File Size Limit: 1 MB

Teammate Website

Character Limit: 2000

Teammate 2 First Name

Character Limit: 250

Teammate 2 Surname/Family Name

Character Limit: 250

Teammate 2 Creator Type

Check all that apply.

Choices

Composer

Librettist

Teammate 2 Email

Character Limit: 254

Teammate 2 Biography

Share a brief narrative biography. You may also upload a PDF version of your teammate's resume/CV (optional).

Character Limit: 1000 / File Size Limit: 1 MB

Teammate 2 Website

Character Limit: 2000

Collectives

Is your work created as part of a collective? That is, where multiple artists share creative responsibilities in a way that is not captured using only the composer and librettist categories. Briefly describe your working arrangement.

If this does not apply, indicate N/A.

Character Limit: 750

Creative Team History*

Describe the composer/librettist relationship. Have you worked together previously? Whether or not you have, explain why have you chosen each other for this project.

If you are both the composer and librettist, please describe your reason for serving in both capacities.

Character Limit: 1000

Work Information

Work Title*

Title or working title of the opera in development

Character Limit: 250

Work Summary*

Provide a plot summary of the work associated with the application.

Character Limit: 2000

Creative Impetus*

Explain why you are drawn to create this work at this time, and why you are choosing to tell this story with music.

Character Limit: 2000

Intellectual Property*

“Existing work” includes items such as a novel, short story, film, or life story. Please select the appropriate choice from the drop-down menu below.

Choices

This is my own original work.

This is based on existing work protected by copyright. I have secured rights to this material.

This is based on existing work protected by copyright for which I have not yet secured rights.

This is based on existing work that is in the public domain. Rights do not need to be secured.

Rights Documentation

If the opera is based on an existing work protected by copyright, please attach rights documentation or outline the timeline and process for securing the rights using the space below. Rights must be secured by the full application deadline (January 22, 2026). Applications where intellectual property rights are not secured are unlikely to receive funding.

Character Limit: 750 / File Size Limit: 1 MB

Roles*

For example, in an opera adaptation of *The Avengers*, a cast list might look like this: Captain Marvel, Soprano; Black Widow, Mezzo-Soprano; Spiderman, Tenor; Black Panther, Baritone; The Hulk, Bass.

For a list of common voice types in opera, please click [here](#). You are welcome to include non-traditional/alternate voice types, and may explain those choices below.

Character Limit: 1000

Chorus

If this work utilizes a chorus, indicate the number of singers in the chorus by voice type (e.g., Soprano: 4, Alto: 2, Tenor: 6, Bass: 1).

For a list of common voice types in opera, please click [here](#). You are welcome to include non-traditional/alternate voice types, and may explain those choices below.

Character Limit: 500

Instrumentation*

Please list the instrument(s) you will utilize in your work (e.g., "I will write for 1 piano, 1 violin, 1 viola, 1 cello, and 1 Iranian santur").

Character Limit: 2000

Scenic Breakdown*

Provide a scenic breakdown of the opera. You may use either a character/scene breakdown, storyboard, or dramaturgical outline that narrates the theatrical arc of the work. Please refer to [this link](#) for examples.

Character Limit: 10000

Score

Describe your progress composing the score of the proposed work. Where are you in the creative process?

(Optional) Upload up to 10 pages of the score.

Character Limit: 750 / File Size Limit: 5 MB

Libretto

Describe your or your librettist's progress writing the libretto of the proposed work.

(Optional) Upload up to 10 pages of the libretto. If your librettist's work is not represented in the work samples later in the application, including a sample or preparatory sketch of the work's libretto is highly encouraged.

Character Limit: 750 / File Size Limit: 5 MB

Project Information

Please update these fields if anything has changed since you submitted the intent to apply.

Project Activity Type*

Choices

Libretto Reading
Workshop
Working Performance
Other

Other - Project Activity Type

Share more about your project activity.

Character Limit: 500

Project Description*

Describe the specific activities for which funding will be used.

Character Limit: 1000

GRANT ACTIVITY PERIOD

While the development of the project may have commenced, the scope of the funded activities proposed cannot cover expenses incurred outside of the award period, and the budget should be restricted to anticipated expenses between **April 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027**.

Proposed Project Start Date*

Funding may not be applied to expenses incurred before April 1, 2025.

Character Limit: 10

Proposed Project End Date*

Grant-funded activities must be completed by June 30, 2027.

Character Limit: 10

Timeline*

Provide a timeline for the development of the work, including the activities for which you are requesting funding. An example of a timeline is included below for your reference.

July 2026: Creative team meeting with composer, librettist, and dramaturg

September 2026: Libretto reading

October - December 2026: Revisions to the libretto, completion of excerpts or full piano/vocal score for workshop

January 2027: Piano/vocal workshop (5 days), recorded by videographers (day 6)

Post-workshop: Creative design meeting with the stage director, librettist, composer, and media designer

This is an example. Your timeline may include other activities.

Character Limit: 2000

Evaluation

Learning*

Share what you hope to learn during this grant period. This could refer to your compositional skills, your journey as a collaborator/working in a team, your exploration of opera, or something completely different.

Character Limit: 2000

Goals*

What are your short- and long-term goals for this project? What milestones do you hope to achieve during the grant period?

Character Limit: 2000

Evaluation*

How will you evaluate the progression of your work undertaken during the grant period? Who will be part of your evaluation teams? How will you know if changes are needed? How will you adjust your plans/timeline if a change is required?

Character Limit: 2000

Creative Team

You are not required to have a full creative team in place at this time. Share the names of any other creative or performing artists associated with this project, if known at this time (e.g., stage director, music director, lighting designer, dramaturg).

Creator 1 Name

Character Limit: 250

Creator 1 Role

(e.g., stage director, music director, lighting designer, dramaturg)

Character Limit: 250

Creator 1 Website (Optional)

Character Limit: 2000

Creator 2 Name

Character Limit: 250

Creator 2 Role

(e.g., stage director, music director, lighting designer, dramaturg)

Character Limit: 250

Creator 2 Website (Optional)

Character Limit: 2000

Creator 3 Name

Character Limit: 250

Creator 3 Role

(e.g., stage director, music director, lighting designer, dramaturg)

Character Limit: 250

Creator 3 Website (Optional)

Character Limit: 2000

Creator 4 Name

Character Limit: 250

Creator 4 Role

(e.g., stage director, music director, lighting designer, dramaturg)

Character Limit: 250

Creator 4 Website (Optional)

Character Limit: 2000

Budget

FUNDING PARAMETERS

Grants of up to \$15,000 will be awarded.

Funding may not be applied to expenses incurred before July 1, 2025.

Grant activities must be completed by June 30, 2026.

Applicants are required to submit a budget for the proposed project, listing anticipated expenses and any revenue.

Grants will cover up to 100 percent of eligible expenses, not exceeding the amount of the grant award; no matching funds are required. Additional expenses to complete the project are the responsibility of the creators.

- Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- o Vocalist, instrumentalist, and other performer fees;
- o Music director/conductor;
- o Dramaturg;
- o Orchestrator, arranger, copyist;
- o Stage director;
- o Vocal coach;
- o Sound designer;
- o Rehearsal and workshop venue rental fees;
- o Stage manager;
- o Equipment rental (e.g., lighting, sound, instrumental cartage);
- o Childcare and/or eldercare while creators are in rehearsal or workshop;
- o Research materials (e.g., performance tickets, new work recordings, reference books);
- o Living expenses for the composer of up to 30% of grant request; and
- o Transportation and housing for personnel related to creative meetings, rehearsals, and performances. (Airfare is limited to coach class.)

You may wish to include ineligible expenses on your budget in order to give panelists a more complete picture of your planned activities and/or process. This is optional; note that this may require you to show other sources of support beyond the Discovery Grant (prospective or secured).

- o Ineligible expenses include:
 - o Commissioning fees to composers and librettists;
 - o Set, costume, or properties construction or rental expenses for a fully staged production;
 - o Institutional overhead expenses if partnering with an organization;
 - o Expenses that are not connected specifically to a project, including general administrative expenses and competition or contest application fees;
 - o Tuition expenses;
 - o Professional development fees;
 - o Fundraising expenses;
 - o Ticket subsidies; and
 - o Any other expenses incurred in relation to a fully produced premiere for public presentation.

SAMPLE BUDGET

Below is a sample budget breakdown for a potential project funding a piano workshop. This is just one proposed model for your consideration. No item contains a standardized rate because there are not any. The best suggestion for a budget layout is to take the budget you have available, start with the highest responsibilities/fees, and work down from there.

5-Day Workshop for New Opera Based on a Budget of \$14,000

Piano workshop in NYC. No travel or housing costs required.

5 days workshop with public/invited event on last day

6 hours per day (2x3 hour session; i.e., 10-1 and 2-5 with one-hour break)

\$2000 - Conductor/Music Director (1 person)

\$2000 - Stage Director

\$1500 - Piano/Coach (1 person)

\$1250 - Dramaturg

\$1250 - Stage Manager

\$3750 - 3 Singers - principal roles (\$1250 each)

\$2250 - 3 Singers - secondary/ensemble roles (\$750 each)

This is an example. There are many factors that would influence the line items differently in your unique project.

Budget*

OPERA America provides an Excel worksheet outlining many possible expenses for your consideration. You do not need to complete every line. There are other lines in each budgetary section to add other expenses if necessary.

Please use the budget worksheet provided [here](#) to create your budget. Upload it as a PDF document.

File Size Limit: 1 MB

Budget Narrative

Briefly detail any underlying assumptions that impact your submitted budget.

Example 1: I am a post-doctoral fellow and will be employing student musicians for my workshop, which will take place in university facilities.

Example 2: I have been awarded another grant to support [a discrete part of the project], and Discovery Grant funds would be allocated to [a different part of the project].

Character Limit: 1000

Total Requested Funding*

Please indicate your total request below. You may request up to \$15,000.

Character Limit: 20

Work Samples

Composer Samples

Applicants are required to submit two work samples that best represent their voices and creative styles. The most competitive applications will include examples of recent compositions that demonstrate the composer's ability to compose theatrical works for the trained voice and instrumental ensemble. Work samples need not be classical or operatic.

Samples that demonstrate the creator's aptitude for theatrical storytelling are recommended. At least one sample must feature voice(s) (not digitally generated).

All samples should be hosted audio or video on sites like YouTube, Vimeo, Dropbox, or SoundCloud. Combined samples must be no longer than 20 minutes. Neither sample should exceed 10 minutes in length. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure samples are accessible to the review panel until they are notified of the outcome of their application.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit excerpts of the work for which funds are being requested, if possible. If work samples from the proposed work are not available, be prepared to explain how the submitted sample(s) are stylistically related to the proposed work.

Scores or other forms of visual representation of a musical work are optional.

SAMPLE 1

Composer Sample 1 Title*

Character Limit: 100

Sample from Grant Project (Sample 1)*

Is this sample from the work you are requesting funds for as part of this grant? (This is not required.)

Choices

Yes

No

Composer Sample 1 Relevance*

Explain the reasons you are presenting this sample to support this application.

Character Limit: 500

Composer Sample 1 A/V Link*

Character Limit: 2000

Composer Sample 1 A/V Password (if necessary)

Character Limit: 100

Composer Sample 1 Timings*

If you are not providing trimmed samples of the specific excerpt that you would like to be reviewed, please provide suggested timings (e.g., Play from 3'22"–7'49").

Character Limit: 250

Composer Sample 1 Composer Name*

Character Limit: 100

Composer Sample 1 Librettist Name*

Character Limit: 100

Composer Sample 1 Description*

Provide a brief synopsis of the sample, including roles, voicing, and information about this work sample, and credit the performing artists (e.g., soprano Sally Singer, bass Bobby Baritone).

Character Limit: 1000

Composer Sample 1 Score or Chart (optional)

Upload up to 10 pages of the score/chart corresponding to this work sample and provide any relevant notes about the score here.

Character Limit: 500 / File Size Limit: 4 MB

Composer Sample 1 Libretto Upload (optional)

Upload up to 10 pages of the libretto corresponding to this work sample.

File Size Limit: 4 MB

COMPOSER SAMPLE 2**Composer Sample 2 Title***

Character Limit: 100

Sample from Grant Project (Sample 2)*

Is this sample from the work you are requesting funds for as part of this grant? (This is not required.)

Choices

Yes

No

Composer Sample 2 Relevance*

Explain the reasons you are presenting this sample in support of this application.

Character Limit: 500

Composer Sample 2 A/V Link**Character Limit: 2000***Composer Sample 2 A/V Password (if necessary)***Character Limit: 100***Composer Sample 2 Timings**

If you are not providing trimmed samples of the specific excerpt that you would like to be reviewed, please provide suggested timings (e.g., Play from 3'22"–7'49").

*Character Limit: 250***Composer Sample 2 Composer Name****Character Limit: 100***Composer Sample 2 Librettist Name****Character Limit: 100***Composer Sample 2 Description***

Provide a brief synopsis of the sample, including roles, voicing, and information about this work sample, and credit the performing artists (e.g., soprano Sally Singer, bass Bobby Baritone).

*Character Limit: 1000***Composer Sample 2 Score or Chart (optional)**

Upload up to 10 pages of the score/chart corresponding to this work sample and provide any relevant notes about the score here.

*Character Limit: 500 / File Size Limit: 4 MB***Composer Sample 2 Libretto Upload (optional)**

Upload up to 10 pages of the libretto corresponding to this work sample.

File Size Limit: 4 MB

Certification

Citizenship*

I certify that at least 50 percent of the team members in this proposal (including the composer/applicant) are United States citizens or permanent residents, or possess Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status.

Choices

Yes

Signature

Applicant Signature*

By typing your name below, you acknowledge that the information contained in this application and its attachments is accurate and complete.

Character Limit: 100