



Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants

Supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation

2022 Guidelines and Application Procedures

OPERA America
National Opera Center
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operaamerica.org

Purpose

OPERA America has long been committed to increasing the quantity and quality of new American operas, granting over \$21 million to the opera field to support the work of opera creators, companies, and administrators. From 1990–2015, fewer than five percent of the \$13 million granted was awarded to works by composers who identify as women. Since the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation began supporting Opera Grants for Women Composers, the percentage has nearly doubled to nine percent of the \$21 million OPERA America has awarded. Through the generous support of the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, OPERA America offers two Opera Grants for Women Composers: Commissioning available for Professional Company Members; and Discovery available for individual artists. Both programs provide support for the development of new operas by women-identifying composers, advancing the important objective to increase gender parity and diversity across the field.

OPERA America believes that different perspectives, cultural histories, life experiences, and personal stories enrich the operatic repertoire. OPERA America is committed to supporting creators who reflect the diversity of the nation.

Definitions

In this document, 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.

Opera can be defined as a music-theater experience with a dramatic arc, written for trained voice or voices accompanied by instruments.

Important Dates

Application available online: November 2021

Intent to apply deadline: December 22, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. ET

Application deadline: January 18, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. ET

Application adjudication: February 2022

Grantee notification: March 2022

Grant Activity Period: April 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Discovery Grants

OPERA America invites proposals for grants of up to \$15,000 from composers who identify as women and can document their ability to compose theatrical works for the trained voice and instrumental ensemble. Each Discovery Grant will provide financial assistance to advance and promote an opera project in development.

Grant recipients will be introduced to leaders in the field through *Opera America Magazine* and at future New Works Forum meetings and annual conferences. Supported works will be considered for presentation at future forum events.

Funder

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Supported Activities

Supported activities include but are not limited to:

- Lab productions, workshops, readings, and working performances, with or without an audience;
- Costs incurred to create or prepare new musical materials, such as expanded or reduced orchestrations and copyist expenses for the creation of parts;
- Other specific expenses associated with the development of a new opera;
- Production design development; and
- Dynamic promotional materials.

Projects that request funds for the development of the work described in the application will be given priority.

Eligibility

- The applicant must self-identify as a woman composer.
- The applicant must be a United States citizen, permanent resident, or DACA recipient. Verification may be requested before the payment of any award.
- The applicant must demonstrate her ability to write for the opera/music-theater medium by providing recording samples of theatrical work for voices and instrumental ensemble as part of the application.
- The applicant must be the composer, who serves as the fiscal agent for the project. The composer must apply for the grant, disburse all funds received, and provide all required financial and narrative documentation. The work of each applicant remains the property of the composer.
- Grant funding may not be applied to expenses incurred before April 1, 2022.

- Proposed projects must be completed by June 30, 2023.
- Applicants whose work received a Commissioning Grant from OPERA America in any previous cycle are ineligible to apply for a Discovery Grant.
- Applicants who were awarded a Discovery Grant in any previous cycle are ineligible to apply for additional Discovery Grants.
- Applicants may only submit one proposal per cycle.
- Applicants may only submit the same work for consideration for three cycles of this granting program.
- Applicants who have applied unsuccessfully in two cycles with the same piece must articulate the substantive changes made since the last cycle in their intent to apply. Changes may include but are not limited to:
 - Rewriting of the text and/or music;
 - Restructuring of the dramatic arc; and
 - Change in librettist or other key personnel.
- A piece that has already had its premiere may be considered for a Discovery Grant provided the submission represents a **substantial** reworking of the piece.

Funding Parameters

- It is anticipated that individual grants of between \$10,000 and \$15,000 will be awarded.
- The size of an individual grant will vary according to the project's total costs as defined in the preliminary budget. Additional expenses to complete the project are the responsibility of the composer.
- Grants will cover up to 100 percent of eligible expenses, not exceeding \$15,000; no matching funds are required.
- **Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:**
 - Vocalist, instrumentalist, and other performer fees;
 - Music director/conductor;
 - Dramaturg;
 - Orchestrator, arranger, copyist;
 - Stage director;
 - Vocal coach;
 - Sound designer;
 - Rehearsal and workshop venue rental fees;
 - Stage manager;
 - Equipment rental (e.g., lighting, sound, instrumental cartage);
 - Living expenses for the applicant (up to 25% of grant request);
 - Childcare and/or eldercare while creators are in rehearsal or workshop;
 - Research materials (e.g., performance tickets, new work recordings, reference books); and
 - Transportation and housing for personnel related to creative meetings, rehearsals, and performances. (Airfare is limited to coach class.)

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

Timeline

The following timeline is in place for the 2022 Discovery Grants:

- **Application available online:** November 2021
- **Intent to apply deadline:** December 22, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. ET (required for access to full application)
- **Application deadline:** January 18, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. ET
- **Applications adjudicated:** February 2022
- **Grantees notified:** March 2022
- **Grant Period:** April 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

How to Apply

- Read these guidelines carefully before completing any application materials.
- Applications must be submitted online by the composer at [OPERA America's Grants Dashboard](#).
- Applicants will be advised of the suitability of the project for support and counseled on the eligibility of proposed expenses once their intent to apply is submitted. Only applicants who submit an intent to apply form will be advanced to the full application. Early submission facilitates the review and counseling process. Intents must be filed by 11:59 p.m. ET on December 22, 2021.
- Submit a complete application, including all supplementary materials, by 11:59 p.m. ET on January 18, 2022. Applications that are submitted without work samples as specified in the application will not be considered. Applications that are incomplete, late, or sent via fax, mail, or email will not be accepted.
- Contact Diana Hossack, director of grantmaking, at DHossack@operaamerica.org with any questions.

Application Review

All final applications for Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants are reviewed by an independent panel drawn from a pool of experts approved by the Board of Directors of OPERA America. No current board member or employee of OPERA America may serve on any panel. Individuals who stand to benefit from a grant are also ineligible to serve. Each panel represents the diverse disciplines involved in creating and producing new works, as well as artists and individuals with special expertise in interdisciplinary programming and audience development. Panelists are also selected to reflect geographic diversity. The decisions of the panel are final.

The following review criteria are weighed equally by panelists to determine which applications will receive funding and at what level. Projects eligible for support through Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants must meet all criteria.

- **Artistic Merit:** Applications are judged on the artistic excellence — or the potential for excellence — of the work and the merit of the women composer’s body of work.
- **Quality and Distinction in Concept and Planning:** Applications are evaluated on the appropriateness, effectiveness, and thoroughness of the planning process guiding the proposed activity.
- **Evaluation:** Applications must articulate plans for long-term evaluation of the work and the project. Goals should be realistic and achievable.

The most competitive applications will include recent examples of compositions that demonstrate the composer’s ability to write theatrical work for trained voices and instrumental ensemble. **Applications are most effective when they include a work sample from the opera for which support is requested.**

Grant Announcement

- All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their requests when the panel completes its review.
- Grant award letters will contain an end date for the grant period. Requests for extensions must be made in writing.
- In general, advances of up to 75 percent of the grant amount will be extended upon request, provided the grantee has submitted a revised budget for the project or activity.
- The balance of the grant will be paid upon satisfactory completion of the narrative and financial reporting requirements.
- All Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants are restricted to the project described in the application. Funds advanced to the grantee by OPERA America must be repaid in the event the approved project is not carried out.
- The receipt of a grant at any stage of a project or activity does not guarantee continued support from OPERA America.

Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants will receive an award letter explaining the grant's terms and conditions, including the financial documentation and narrative reporting requirements. These reports will be reviewed by the OPERA America staff. All reporting requirements must be completed before the grant will be fully paid.

Grantees are required to acknowledge OPERA America and other funders in the manner described by OPERA America in the award letter. Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grant recipients must maintain OPERA America's logo, including a hyperlink to OPERA America's website, on their website (if they have one) and in program copy for any future performances of the work. The submission of proof of acknowledgment constitutes an element of the final report of the grant.

Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grantees may be asked to submit additional documentation or cooperate with OPERA America in sharing the results of their projects with the field. Applicants may be invited to provide information on the results of projects even when not supported by Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants.

Staff Contact Information

For more information, contact Diana Hossack, director of grantmaking, at DHossack@operaamerica.org.