



# Campbell Opera Librettist Prize

*Created and funded by  
Librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell*

## 2023 Guidelines

### **Important Dates**

**Application available online: February 2023**

**Intent to apply deadline: March 24, 2023 (required for full application)**

**Application deadline: April 21, 2023**

**Adjudication: May 2023**

**Awardee notification: June 2023**

**OPERA America**  
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[operaamerica.org](http://operaamerica.org)

Over the past five decades, OPERA America has awarded \$23 million to opera companies and artists across North America. Professional Company Members are eligible for grants that support new work development, audience building, civic practice, co-productions, and field-wide innovation. Since 2009, OPERA America has also offered grants to individual artists, with an emphasis on highlighting the work of emerging artists and advancing the careers of women and creators from the global majority.

In 2020, OPERA America worked with librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell to establish the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize — the first award in the history of American opera that specifically recognizes the opera librettist. Early in Campbell’s career, Stephen Sondheim presented Campbell with the first Kleban Foundation Award — a prize for extraordinary theater writers. “The award changed my life,” said Campbell. “Sondheim’s acknowledgment of my talent instilled a confidence in me to move my career forward.”

“In designing the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize,” said Marc A. Scorca, OPERA America president/CEO, “we seek to replicate Campbell’s experience and have a similar impact on the career of one outstanding librettist/lyricist each year. We also hope this award shines a light on the important role librettists/lyricists play in the development of new American opera.”

## Purpose

The Campbell Opera Librettist Prize is an annual award created and funded by Mark Campbell and offered as part of OPERA America’s continuing effort to support individual opera creators. The program is intended to recognize a librettist who has:

- Exceptional talent for writing opera librettos with a growing body of work that is making a substantial contribution to the American opera literature; and
- Demonstrates experience writing for opera/music theater and a commitment to making opera a central part of their artistic work and career.

## Award

The prize winner will receive:

- A one-time \$7,000 direct cash prize in support of their artistry and development as an opera librettist to be used by the awardee at their own discretion;
- Access to OPERA America’s professional development programs for artists, including a two-part Opera Entrepreneurship Workshop;
- Recognition through *Opera America Magazine* and at future annual conferences and New Works Forums; and
- A one-year individual OPERA America membership.

## Eligibility

- Applicants must have demonstrated experience as an opera librettist and have written at least two complete librettos that have been set to music or are in the process of being set to music.
- Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to opera as a central part of their artistic work.

- Applicants must have U.S. citizenship, permanent residence, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. (Proof of residency and citizenship will be requested.)
- Applicant participation (past or current) in a librettist-training program is preferable, but not required.
- Applicants may only apply for consideration for three cycles of this program. Applicants who have applied and not received funding in two cycles must articulate substantive career progress made since their last application when they submit their third intent to apply.
- Recipients of the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize may not reapply for the Prize in a subsequent cycle.

OPERA America recognizes that historic practices impact who has access to resources and opportunities in the opera industry. If you are a librettist who does not have the experience for this grant program, please review OPERA America’s portfolio of grants for artists ([link](#)).

## Timeline

The following timeline is in place for the 2023 Campbell Opera Librettist Prize:

- Application available online: February 2023
- Intent to apply deadline: March 24, 2023 (required for full application)
- Application deadline: April 21, 2023
- Adjudication: May 2023
- Awardee notification: June 2023

## How to Apply

- Read these guidelines carefully before completing any application materials.
- All materials must be submitted online via the online grants system at [operaamerica.org/GrantsDashboard](https://operaamerica.org/GrantsDashboard).
- The submission of an intent to apply is required for all applicants and is due by **11:59 p.m. ET on March 24, 2023**. OPERA America will provide individualized support to applicants based on their intent to apply to guide them to the full application. Only applicants who submit an intent to apply may submit a full application.
- Submit a complete, final application by **11:59 p.m. ET on April 21, 2023**.
- Applications submitted without work samples as specified in the application will not be considered. Applications that are incomplete or late will not be accepted.

## Application Review Process

All applications for the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize are reviewed by an independent pool of experts approved by OPERA America’s board of directors. The panel will consist of professionals of varied racial, ethnic, and gender identities with different areas of expertise and experts with an understanding of diverse writing and creation styles, as well as new work producers from OPERA America Professional Company Members.

No current OPERA America employee may serve as a panelist. Individuals who stand to benefit financially from a grant are also ineligible to serve.

All panel decisions are final.

Using the following criteria, panelists evaluate the applications through a cultural humility lens, which is a practice of honoring the cultural values and perspectives of the applicants while self-reflecting on how one's own background and the background of others impact the review of applications:

- **Artistic Ability:** The artistic quality of the work samples.
- **Creativity:** The capacity to enrich the art form and the field.
- **Impetus for Opera:** Applicants' motivations for expressing themselves through opera.
- **Collaborative Expression:** The history of successful collaborative work in the applicant's artistic practice.

## Narrative Statements

In addition to a current biography, applicants are required to submit written narrative statements describing their:

- Desire to choose opera as a form for their storytelling;
- Experience writing opera librettos;
- Success working collaboratively with composers and other creators; and
- Vision of what impact they hope to have through their writing and how they want to affect people using the opera/music-theater medium.
- Vision of how they will use their writing skills to influence the future direction of opera.

## Work Samples

Work samples are one of the most important parts of this application. Your work samples represent your artistic work and voice.

- Applicants must submit two written work samples, and may submit up to three written work samples. Audio or video recordings of the submitted samples are encouraged (whether set to music or text readings), but not required.
- The most competitive applications will include recent examples of the librettist's works.
- Samples should demonstrate your aptitude for theatrical storytelling for trained voice(s) and instrumentation.
- Two of the samples must be from opera librettos that have been set to music or are in the process of being set (though not necessarily premiered in a full production).
- Shorter and/or one-act librettos are permitted. Only complete dramatic works for the stage will be considered. Screenplays, poems, text for arias, fragments from librettos, and academic articles are not accepted.
- Librettos written in languages other than English must be accompanied by a complete English translation.

## Award Announcement

- All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their requests after the panel adjudication.
- The award letter will contain dates for the additional OPERA America activities included in the award.
- The recipient of the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize will serve as the fiscal agent for the award. This is a singular award in the designated year that does not constitute continued financial support for the named awardee.
- The Campbell Opera Librettist Prize is intended for the named awardee only and is not transferable to any other artist or organization.

## Reporting Requirements

The awardee will receive an award letter explaining the prize terms and conditions, including financial documentation and narrative reporting requirements. A final report on how the prize has benefitted the artist in the development of their career as a librettist will be required for learning purposes for both the awardee and OPERA America.

The awardee is required to acknowledge OPERA America and Mark Campbell/the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize in the manner described by OPERA America in the award letter. If the recipient of the prize has a website, it should feature OPERA America's logo, including a hyperlink to OPERA America's website.

The recipient of the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize may be asked to submit additional documentation or cooperate with OPERA America in sharing the results of their award with the field.

## Staff Contact

For more information, contact Diana Hossack, grantmaking director, at [DHossack@operaamerica.org](mailto:DHossack@operaamerica.org) or 646.699.5236.

## Funder

Mark Campbell, librettist/lyricist