



# **Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants**

***Supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin  
Foundation***

## **2022-2023 Guidelines and Application Procedures**

### **Important Dates**

**Application available online:** December 2022

**Intent to apply deadline:** December 22, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. ET

**Application deadline:** January 20, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. ET

**Application adjudication:** February 2023

**Grantee notification:** March 2023

**Grant Activity Period:** April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

**OPERA America**  
National Opera Center  
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New York, NY 10001  
[operaamerica.org](http://operaamerica.org)

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.

## Purpose

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.

Through the generous support of the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, OPERA America offers two types of Opera Grants for Women Composers: Commissioning Grants available for Professional Company Members; and Discovery Grants 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.

From 1990 to 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.

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

### Opera

OPERA America defines opera as a music-theater experience with a dramatic arc written for trained voice(s) of all genres and accompanied by instruments.

### Composer/Librettist

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.

## Grant Awards

Grant recipients will receive:

- \$15,000 to support costs associated with the production of a workshop, reading, or other performance-based event.
- Complimentary registrations, transportation, and housing stipend (valued at \$2,250) to attend OPERA America's Opera Conference and New Works Forum.
- An OPERA America individual membership.
- An announcement in the *Opera America Magazine*.

Supported works will be considered for presentation at future forum events.

## Supported Activities

Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants support the exploration of opera as an artistic medium through such activities as:

- A Libretto Reading: a reading in which the devised literature is read aloud for evaluation.
- A Workshop: an informal performance of some or all of a work to obtain feedback on specific elements of the piece. Workshops might be performed with piano and/or instrumental accompaniment.
- Working Performance: a partial or full run-through of a work, with piano or instrumental accompaniment, to obtain feedback for the further development of the piece. An audience may or may not be present.

Other eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- 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 which are more fully-developed will be given priority in determining funding.

## Eligibility

- The applicant must self-identify as a woman composer.
- Applicants must have U.S. citizenship, permanent residence, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. (Proof of citizenship will be requested.)
- Applicants must demonstrate their ability to write music and/or text by providing work samples.
- 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.
- Funding may not be applied to expenses incurred before April 1, 2023.
- Grant-funded activities must be completed by June 30, 2024.
- This program is open to composers from all performing arts disciplines.
- 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

- Grants of up to \$15,000 will be awarded.
- Funding may not be applied to expenses incurred before April 1, 2023.
- Grant activities must be completed by June 30, 2024.
- Grants will cover up to 100 percent of eligible expenses, not exceeding \$15,000; no matching funds are required.
- Additional expenses that exceed the amount granted are the responsibility of the composer.
- **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 percent 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 and librettists;
  - 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
- Any other expenses incurred in relation to a fully produced premiere for public presentation.

## Important Dates

The following timeline is in place for the 2022–2023 Discovery Grants:

- **Application available online:** December 2022
- **Intent to apply deadline:** December 22, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. ET (required for access to full application)
- **Application deadline:** January 20, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. ET
- **Applications adjudicated:** February 2023
- **Grantees notified:** March 2023
- **Grant Period:** April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

## How to Apply

- Read the guidelines carefully before completing any application materials.
- All materials must be submitted online via the [Grants Dashboard](#).
- A brief overview of the composer and proposed project, known as an intent to apply, must be submitted by December 22, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. ET. Only applicants who submit an intent to apply may submit a full application.
- Applicants will receive notification if the intent to apply form has been advanced to the application stage.
- OPERA America will provide individualized support to applicants based on their intent to apply to guide them to the full application.
- Complete applications, including work samples, must be submitted by January 20, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. ET. Applications submitted without work samples as specified in the application will not be considered. Applications that are incomplete, late, or sent via mail or email will not be accepted.
- No applications will be accepted unless an intent to apply form has been submitted on or before December 22, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. ET.

## Application Review

All applications for the Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants are reviewed by an independent pool of experts approved by OPERA America’s board of directors. The panel will consist of professionals of varied races and ethnicities with different areas of expertise and experience with diverse musical styles, as well as producers from OPERA America member companies.

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 creative team and the proposed work based on the application and samples provided.
- **Quality and Distinction in Concept and Planning:** The appropriateness, effectiveness, and thoroughness of the planning process guiding the proposed activity.
- **Evaluation:** The articulation of realistic and achievable goals for evaluating the proposed project.

## Work Samples

Applicants are required to submit work samples that best represent their voices and creative styles. Work samples need not be classical or operatic. Samples that demonstrate the creator's aptitude for theatrical storytelling are recommended.

Composers: two samples (hosted audio or video on sites like YouTube, Vimeo, Dropbox, and SoundCloud) with at least one sample featuring voice(s) (not digitally generated). Combined samples must be no longer than 20 minutes. Neither sample should exceed 10 minutes in length. Scores or other forms of visual representation of a musical work are optional.

## Narrative Statements

Applicants are required to submit written narrative statements providing:

- A personal statement;
- Explanation about the proposed work; and
- Description of project.

## Grant Announcement

- All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their requests after the adjudication.
- Awarded applicants will receive an agreement explaining the grant period and the terms and conditions. Requests for extensions must be made in writing.
- Grantees may request up to 75 percent of the total direct grant in one or more installments for expenses incurred on or after April 1, 2023.
- The final balance of the grant will be paid after the completion of the activities proposed in the application and upon the submission of the final report.
- All OPERA America grant awards are intended to support the activity described in the application. Significant changes to the activities or goals must be discussed with and

approved by OPERA America staff.

- The receipt of a grant at any stage of a project or activity does not guarantee continued support from OPERA America.

## Reporting Requirements

Awarded applicants will receive an agreement explaining the grant's terms and conditions, including financial documentation and narrative reporting requirements. OPERA America staff will review these reports. All reporting requirements must be completed before the grant will be fully paid.

Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants recipients are required to acknowledge OPERA America and other funders, including the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, in the manner described by OPERA America in the award letter. Recipients of Discovery Grants who have a website should feature OPERA America's logo, including a hyperlink to OPERA America's website.

Recipients of OPERA America Grants may be asked to submit additional documentation or cooperate with OPERA America in sharing the results of their projects with the field.

## Staff Contact Information

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

## Funder

Opera Grants for Women Composers: Discovery Grants is funded by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation.