



CAMPBELL OPERA LIBRETTIST PRIZE

*Created and funded
by librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell,
with additional support from
Bill Murray and Ross Janssen*

**2026 GUIDELINES &
APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

operaamerica.org/Grants | Grants@operaamerica.org

OPERA America
National Opera Center
330 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10001

Timeline

- Intent to apply deadline: January 15, 2026, 11:59 p.m. ET
Required for access to the full application
- Application deadline: February 12, 2026, 11:59 p.m. ET
- Grantees notified: April 2026

Important Links

[OPERA America Website](#)
[OPERA America Grants Portal](#)

The OPERA America website and Grants Portal require different usernames and passwords.

If you need to reset your password for OPERA America's website, go [here](#).
For Grants Portal information, contact [Jenny Fornoff](#), senior manager for grants.

How to Apply

- Read the guidelines carefully before completing any application materials.
- All materials must be submitted online via the [Grants Portal](#).
- An intent to apply form is required for all applications and is due by January 15, 2026, 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.
- Submit a complete final application, including all supplemental materials, by February 12, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET.
- Applications that are incomplete, late, or sent via mail, fax, or email will not be accepted.

Purpose

The Campbell Opera Librettist Prize shines a light on the important role librettists/lyricists play in the development of new American opera by recognizing talented writers and their contributions to the field. Created and funded by noted librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell, the prize is 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 inaugural Kleban Foundation Award — a prize for extraordinary theater writers. Campbell's wish is to extend the deep sense of recognition and encouragement he received following that early award to others through the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize.

The program recognizes one librettist in each cycle who:

- Has exceptional talent for writing opera librettos with a growing body of work that is already making a 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 Scope

Recipients 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;
- Complimentary registrations to attend OPERA America's Opera Conference;
- Access to professional development programs for OPERA America grant recipients;
- Recognition through *Opera America Magazine*; and
- An OPERA America individual one-year digital membership.

The prize winner will receive a 1099 tax form at the end of the calendar year. This is for tax purposes. Awardees should consult a tax professional as necessary.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, or possess Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. (Proof of residency and citizenship may be requested.)
- Applicants must have demonstrated experience as an opera librettist by having written at least two complete librettos that have been set to music or are in the process of being set to music.
- Past recipients of the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize may not reapply for the prize in a subsequent cycle.

Applicant participation (past or current) in a librettist-training program is preferable but not required.

Work Samples

Work samples are one of the most important parts of this application. Your work samples represent your artistic work and voice. The most competitive applications will include examples of the librettist's works. Samples should demonstrate your aptitude for theatrical storytelling for trained voice(s) and instrumentation.

Applicants are asked to submit two or three written work samples along the following guidelines:

- 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).
- Audio or video recordings of the submitted samples (whether set to music or text readings) are not required, but are encouraged.

- Only complete dramatic works for the stage will be considered. Screenplays, poems, text for arias, fragments from librettos, and academic articles are not accepted.
- Shorter and/or one-act librettos are permitted.
- Librettos written in languages other than English must be accompanied by a complete English translation.

Narrative Statements

In addition to a current biography, applicants will be prompted to craft narrative statements describing their:

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

Application Review

All final applications for the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize are reviewed by an independent panel of experts approved by the board of directors of OPERA America. The panel will consist of professionals of varied races and ethnicities, as well as 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. Panelists are also selected to reflect geographic diversity.

No current OPERA America board member or employee may serve on the panel. Individuals who stand to benefit 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 of the applicant's work to enrich the art form and the field.
- **Impetus for Working in Opera:** The applicant's motivations for expressing themselves through opera.
- **Collaborative Expression:** The history of successful collaborative work in the applicant's artistic practice.

Terms, Payment Schedule, and Reporting Requirements

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their requests after the panel completes its review.

Prize recipients are not employees of OPERA America, and recipients do not hold a contract with the organization. This funding is a gift from OPERA America to welcome recipients into a community of support and encouragement to further their careers in opera.

Successful applicants will receive an award agreement explaining the prize's terms and conditions. The Campbell Opera Librettist Prize recipient may be asked to submit documentation or cooperate with OPERA America in sharing the results of their award.

Awardees are required to acknowledge OPERA America and Mark Campbell, including the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize, in the manner described by OPERA America in the award agreement.

The Campbell Opera Librettist Prize is intended for the named awardee(s) only and is not transferable to any other artist or organization. The receipt of the prize does not guarantee future support from OPERA America grant programs.

The recipient of the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize will serve as the fiscal agent for the award. The prize winner will receive a 1099 tax form at the end of the calendar year. This is for tax purposes. Awardees should consult a tax professional as necessary.

Contact Information

For more information, contact Jenny Fornoff, senior manager for grants, at Grants@operaamerica.org or 646.699.5258.

Funder

The Campbell Opera Librettist Prize is made possible through the generosity of Mark Campbell, with additional support from Bill Murray and Ross Janssen.

Over the past five decades, OPERA America has awarded \$25 million to opera companies and artists across North America. Since 1984, OPERA America has been committed to increasing the quality and quantity of North American opera, providing financial support to Professional Company Members in such areas as new work and audience development, civic practice, co-productions, innovation, and gender parity in key artistic leadership roles.