

KENTUCKY OPERA Amplify your voice.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Kentucky Opera Devotes 20/21 Brown-Forman Season to Themes of Faith, Justice and Family

Mainstage artists remain on full contract and will invite the voices and values of Kentuckians to be amplified through opera

Louisville, KY – Kentucky Opera is launching a bold new initiative to amplify the voice of Kentuckians as they explore together the meaning and expression of Faith, Justice and Family through opera. Using its “virtual” stage, Kentucky Opera announces its 20/21 season, “**Amplify Your Voice,**” a season designed to engage with audiences and multiple organizational partners through crowdsourced material, interviews and individual and collective expression. Kentucky Opera retained its artists and apprentices from its cancelled *Hansel and Gretel* and *La bohème* to produce and perform original, online artistic content and live, in-person performances. Kentucky Opera’s stage directors have also been retained as creative directors for the performances.

“This season, Kentucky Opera will stay true to our responsibility of telling and elevating stories — *our* stories — through music,” says Barbara Lynne Jamison, General Director and CEO. “We invite our community to share their voices and perspectives, which we will amplify through story and song. At a time when many people yearn to be heard and understood, we will explore the values we hold dear both individually and collectively. At a time when we long for social connection, we will bring our community together with shared purpose.”

Additional artistic outcomes from the non-traditional season will include newly commissioned songs and a series of videos featuring photos and interviews from audiences set to pieces performed by mainstage artists. Other community engagement activities to support the new season include book clubs - with a surprising twist, The JO(e)Y of Opera, an 11-week online opera exploration of the 400-year evolution and history of opera, and Hoops & High Notes. Hoops & High Notes is a video series that includes a lighthearted comparison of opera singers with athletes, artists and artisans in our community to compare notes, flaunt their skills, compare secrets of their craft and share in good-natured competition.

20/21 Season Themes

The concept of **Faith** will be explored through the lens of art in a theme titled “**Conviction and Creed.**” Stories and songs will be gathered through interviews with individuals and faith-based organizational

partners; they will then be featured along with performances showcasing characters who rely on, or grapple with, their various faiths in the standard opera repertoire. These performances will be professionally produced and shared on Kentucky Opera's social media platforms. The exploration of this theme will culminate in a partnership with KORE Gallery and an exhibition of visual art inspired by artists' varied relationships with their faiths. Faith leaders from around Kentucky will be invited to participate on the exhibit jury. Kentucky Opera will hold a black-tie fundraiser at KORE Gallery in April 2021 with live performances for the opening of the exhibition.

Another theme that will be highlighted this season is **Justice**. Jamison explains, "The Civil Rights songs of the 1960s helped to shape a movement. What are our songs for today? What words represent and inspire our country at this point in history?" Kentucky Opera artists will perform historical songs that have illustrated important moments in history as part of this theme titled "**Testimonies to Justice.**" Kentucky Opera will encourage the community to submit poems, messages, sayings and adages that express their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward the civil justice movement today. These submissions will be used to inspire a set of original songs, written by baritone and composer Jorell Williams.

Finally, the theme of **Family** will be considered as it relates to the diverse expressions and manifestations of today's family units. Called "**A Heart's Home,**" this theme will collect and re-tell the stories of families throughout Kentucky in a series of webisodes (short, 5 to 7-minute produced videos) based on curated content shared by the community. Explains Jamison, "What special moments have defined your family? All families are unique, with stories of pain, joy and hope that deserve to be told. When they are shared, these stories have the potential to bring us closer together as a community." A final live performance featuring curated content is planned for Spring 2021.

Culmination in Programming Vote for the Kentucky Opera 22/23 season

Kentucky Opera will use guidance from community partnerships and input from the discussions and audience involvement to develop its 70th Anniversary Mainstage season. Early next year, Kentucky Opera will begin to reveal various aspects of three specific, existing operas that exemplify these three themes, and it will unveil how the operas would be produced on stage.

"While our community will begin to share our individual and collective voices this season along with each of the three themes, our voices won't fall silent there," explains Jamison. "We will invite our community to vote on which opera theme speaks most prominently to us today." Kentucky Opera will, in turn, commit to producing the audience's choice of opera in its Mainstage season at the Brown Theatre in Fall 2022.

20/21 Season At-a-Glance: Kentucky Opera "Amplify Your Voice"

Theme: Conviction and Creed

- Pre-recorded performances exploring humanity's complicated relationship with faith, as represented in opera
- Pre-recorded videos with performances and interviews with audience members about their faiths and journeys with faith
- Juried visual art exhibit exploring faith at KORE Gallery black-tie Kentucky Opera fundraiser in April 2021

- Key community partnerships include Center for Interfaith Relations, faith leaders and local houses of worship representing many faith traditions

Theme: Testimonies to Justice

- Crowdsourced words, poems, messages, sayings and adages that express our community's feelings and thoughts about today's Civil Rights movement
- Performances of historical songs that have represented times of suffering, protest and change
- Newly commissioned songs by Jorell Williams, based on material from audience engagement
- Key community partnerships include One West and Louisville Urban League

Theme: The Heart's Home

- Crowdsourced stories from families
- Pre-recorded webisodes featuring themes of love and family as used in operatic literature
- Live performance inspired by audience content
- Key community partnerships include Pandora Productions and Pillar

Opera lovers, enthusiasts and those who are 'opera-curious' can follow Kentucky Opera's reimagined 20/21 Brown-Forman season, "Amplify Your Voice," online at www.KYOpera.org, on Facebook @KentuckyOpera and Instagram @KYOpera.

Information and registration for The JO(e)Y of Opera can be found at <https://kentucky-opera.teachable.com/p/the-joey-of-opera/>. The course will be led by Kentucky Opera's Artistic Advisor, Joseph Mechavich, and is \$25.

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ABOUT KENTUCKY OPERA

Kentucky Opera was founded in 1952 and designated the State Opera of Kentucky in 1982. The mission of Kentucky Opera is to enrich and engage our community through spectacular music, creative storytelling and the thrill of the human voice. Follow the Kentucky Opera on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The Kentucky Arts Council, the state arts agency, supports Kentucky Opera with state tax dollars and federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.