

KENTUCKY OPERA

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Kentucky Opera Announces Louisville Premiere of *This Little Light of Mine* Honoring Voting Rights Icon Fannie Lou Hamer

The one-act opera is Kentucky Opera's first commission since 1988

LOUISVILLE, KY – Kentucky Opera will premiere its first commissioned opera in over 25 years, “This Little Light of Mine,” a new work inspired by the life and legacy of civil rights icon Fannie Lou Hamer. Composed by Chandler Carter with a libretto by Diana Solomon-Glover, it celebrates Hamer’s fight for voting rights and her enduring impact on the fight for justice in America.

The Louisville production comes just a month after Hamer was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor, for challenging the exclusion of Black voices in the political system, laying the groundwork for the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This recognition cements her legacy in American history.

“Opera is so much more than a theatrical performance. It tells stories that bring us in community, reminding us of our greater whole. Through her courage and resilience, Fannie Lou Hamer’s story inspires us to continue to use our voices in our communities and at the ballot box to shape the world we share,” said Barbara Lynne Jamison, General Director and CEO of Kentucky Opera.

Co-commissioned with Santa Fe Opera as part of the Opera for All Voices initiative in 2018, “This Little Light of Mine” will have its Louisville premiere on February 21 and 23. The production is directed by Kimille Howard and conducted by Everett McCorvey.

Artist, writer, and singer Diana Solomon-Glover shared this about bringing the civil rights leader’s story to the stage: “My purpose is to give the audience a deeper understanding not only of this extraordinary woman and her power and resilience, but also her place of distinction in American history. Her influence is felt today.”

Fannie Lou Hamer was the daughter of Mississippi sharecroppers and rose to prominence as a leader of the Civil Rights Movement. In 1963, she was forcibly beaten by Black prisoners on orders from the White jailers. Hamer suffered the physical effects of that beating for the rest of her life. Her fearless testimony at the 1964 Democratic National Convention galvanized national support for equal voting rights, reminding the nation of the power of one voice to spark change.

Hamer regularly drew on hymns and spirituals to deliver her message. Whenever she was speaking, she was also singing. Composer Chandler Carter expressed excitement about bringing Hamer’s story to life through music, “The sound of her singing protest songs and hymns was the inspiration

for the music, especially for the chorus. But just as important is the sound of Hamer's powerful words, which I incorporate into the score, telling her harrowing story of torture and triumph."

Sung in English with English captions, "This Little Light of Mine" illuminates Hamer's extraordinary life and legacy, reminding audiences that every light has the power to change the world.

Performance

Friday, February 21, 8 p.m.

Sunday, February 23, 2 p.m.

W. L. Lyons Brown Theatre

315 W. Broadway, Louisville

(NEW!) Tag-Along

Opera can be an experience for the whole family. Tag-Along allows children ages 3-8 to explore opera with games, singing, and storytelling while their grownups attend a matinee performance in the theatre. A fun, interactive afternoon at the Kentucky Opera Center for Cultural Health, only three blocks from the Brown, is led by professional teaching artists and offers the entire family the opportunity to engage with opera. Available for the Feb. 23 performance only.

Awakenings: Understanding "This Little Light of Mine"

Kentucky Opera's Awakenings series invites audiences to delve into the history and social relevance of individual operas with artists, scholars, and community members.

Thursday, February 6, 6:00 p.m.

Kentucky Opera Center for Cultural Health

708 Magazine Street, Louisville

FREE

Opening Night Dinner with the Composer and Librettist

Friday, February 21, 5:00 p.m. (reception); 6:00 p.m. (dinner)

8UP, Hilton Garden Inn Louisville Downtown

350 W. Chestnut St., Louisville

Tickets and information for all events at KYOpera.org.

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About Kentucky Opera

For more than 70 years, Kentucky Opera has enriched the cultural and artistic landscape of the region. Designated the State Opera in 1982, Kentucky Opera is a producing company dedicated to sparking discovery, joy, and connection through the shared experience of music and theatre. We believe the power of the arts invites a more empathetic, compassionate, and just community. For more information, visit KYOpera.org.