

Immediate Release

Kentucky Opera Production of *This Little Light of Mine* focus of \$60,000 Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts Award

Louisville, KY, May 20, 2024—Kentucky Opera is pleased to announce it has been approved by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for a Grants for Arts Projects award of \$60,000. This grant will support the February 2025 production of *This Little Light of Mine*.

Production information: *This Little Light of Mine*, composed by Chandler Carter to a libretto by Diana Solomon-Glover, is inspired by the life of Fannie Lou Hamer, a former Mississippi sharecropper's daughter who rose to national prominence at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. As a Black woman of humble origins, she spoke truth to power, coalescing broad support for equal voting rights. Her legacy shines as an extraordinary reminder that every light has the power to illuminate the world. Mezzo-soprano Ronnita Miller (Fannie Lou Hamer), soprano Chabrelle Williams (Dorothy Jean Hamer), and soprano Brandi Diggs (June Johnson) are joined by the professional Kentucky Opera Chorus, creating a masterful blend of contemporary relevance, captivating music, and powerful drama.

We are deeply grateful to the NEA for its support of Kentucky Opera's production of this profound American opera. Mrs. Hamer's story, and her use of song to elevate her message, reminds us all that our individual voices can inspire a movement, and paired with music, together we can change the course of history.

—Barbara Lynne Jamison, Kentucky Opera's General Director + CEO

Co-commissioned with Santa Fe Opera as part of the Opera for All Voices initiative in 2019 and workshopped in Louisville in 2021, Kentucky Opera is honored to bring Fannie Lou Hamer's story to the stage in this brand-new production led by stage director Kimille Howard and conductor Everett McCorvey.

"So many aspects of our communities such as cultural vitality, health and wellbeing, infrastructure, and the economy are advanced and improved through investments in art and design," said NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD. "Projects like Kentucky Opera's exemplify the creativity and care with which communities are telling their stories, creating connection...all through the arts."

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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.

In 2023, the Kentucky Opera Center for Cultural Health opened in downtown Louisville as the company's hub for cultural enrichment events, after-school youth programs, and civic engagement opportunities. It also joins the iconic Brown Theatre as a performing stage for Kentucky Opera productions.

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