



502.584.4500 • marketing@KYOpera.org • KYOpera.org

Media Contact:

Jocelyn Hankins, Director of Advancement
502-561-7939. Jocelyn_Hankins@KYOpera.org

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Kentucky Opera Gets Out the Vote, Celebrates Voting Rights Legend Fannie Lou Hamer in October Concert, February Opera

Amplify Freedom Songs: Celebrating Fannie Lou Hamer concert in October marks Hamer's 107th birthday with music and a voting drive, teases new opera – This Little Light of Mine – coming in February

Louisville, KY - On October 6, 2024, Kentucky Opera honors the 107th birthday of the late Fannie Lou Hamer, a prominent civil rights activist and leader, with a special performance – Amplify Freedom Songs: Celebrating Fannie Lou Hamer. Jorell Williams, baritone and pianist Taylor Burkhardt, will perform classical songs and spirituals by Black composers and poets to commemorate Hamer's indelible legacy.

Born in Mississippi to a family of sharecroppers, Hamer experienced the harsh realities of racism and economic exploitation in the Jim Crow South and spent her life working against both forces. She rose to national prominence at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, coalescing broad support in the fight for equal voting rights.

As Kentucky Opera continues its mission to define the arts as a force for contributing to a healthy and just society, the October concert not only shares Hamer's story, but it also advances her life's mission through a get-out-the-vote event.

"Our goal is to use the medium of opera to tell stories that matter to all of us," said Barbara Lynne Jamison, General Director and CEO of Kentucky Opera. "Fannie Lou Hamer's story is one of resilience, courage, and unwavering commitment to justice – and her influence remains extremely relevant today, as we continue to see threats and fears surrounding voting. Through this concert and our upcoming performance of This Little Light of Mine, we aim to honor Mrs. Hamer's legacy and inspire our community to continue her fight for Americans' freedom to use our voices at the ballot box."

In February (21 and 23), Kentucky Opera continues lifting Hamer's life and impact with the fully-staged production of This Little Light of Mine, commissioned by Santa Fe Opera and co-commissioned by Kentucky Opera in 2018. The music is composed by Chandler Carter to a libretto by Diana Solomon-Glover. Conductor Dr. Everett McCorvey and stage director Kimille Howard will lead this production. Mezzo-soprano Ronnita Miller (Fannie Lou Hamer), soprano Chabelle Williams (Dorothy Jean Hamer), and soprano Brandi Diggs (June Johnson) make their Kentucky Opera debuts and are joined by the professional Kentucky Opera Chorus.

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Last Spring, Kentucky Opera [received a \\$60,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts](#) to support This Little Light of Mine.

More details about each production and tickets are available on 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. In 2022, 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 the second stage for Kentucky Opera productions.