



MEDIA RELEASE

Cincinnati Opera and CCM to workshop *The Highlands*, a new opera by Carlos Simon, Lynn Nottage, and Ruby Aiyo Gerber, through Opera Fusion: New Works Partnership

Commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera/Lincoln Center Theater New Works Program, *The Highlands* workshop culminates in a free, public presentation of excerpts on Saturday, March 23 at Music Hall's Wilks Studio.



Carlos Simon
Composer



Lynn Nottage
Librettist



Ruby Aiyo Gerber
Librettist

CINCINNATI (February 8, 2024)—Cincinnati Opera and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) have announced the next workshop in their joint program, Opera Fusion: New Works.

In March 2024, the partners will host a workshop of Act I of the new two-act opera *The Highlands*, with music by GRAMMY-nominated composer Carlos Simon and a libretto by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage and her daughter, poet and writer Ruby Aiyo Gerber. *The Highlands* is a commission of the Metropolitan Opera/Lincoln Center Theater New Works Program, a co-venture between the two institutions that aims to nurture, promote, and stage new opera and music theater works.

Opera Fusion: New Works (OF:NW) is co-directed by Robin Guarino, professor of opera at CCM, and Evans Mirageas, The Harry T. Wilks Artistic Director of Cincinnati Opera, and provides composers and librettists the opportunity to collaborate with singers and creative personnel to refine their works-in-progress. During the March workshop, Simon, Nottage, and Gerber will work alongside conductor Donald Lee III, dramaturg Paul Cremona, and a cast of singers to take the opera to its next creative stage.

The OF:NW workshop for *The Highlands* will culminate in a public performance of excerpts on Saturday, March 23, 2024, at 2 p.m. at Cincinnati Music Hall's Wilks Studio (1241 Elm Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202). The performance will be followed by a conversation about the opera with the creative team and cast moderated by Guarino and Mirageas. Admission to the performance and post-performance conversation is free, though seating is limited and reservations are required. Tickets become available on Thursday, February 8, 2024, and can be reserved at cincinnatiopera.org or by calling 513-241-2742.

About *The Highlands*

In the near future amid the flood-ravaged Louisiana territory known as The Highlands, the matriarch of the Lenox family informs her heirs of a deeply-held family secret—that they are the keepers of an ancient griot magic originating with their African ancestors. On the eve of Carnival, one of the Lenox siblings—Clarence, Darius, or their younger sister, Lucinda—will inherit this great gift, as well as the responsibilities that come with it. When the family's secret is revealed, members of their community debate how it should be used and whom it should benefit. Amid arguments and struggles, the magic is eventually entrusted to the compassionate yet reluctant Lucinda, who must decide how best to wield its power.

Opera Fusion: New Works is generously funded by the Mellon Foundation.

About Opera Fusion: New Works

Funded through a generous gift from the Mellon Foundation, Opera Fusion: New Works (OF:NW) is a partnership between Cincinnati Opera and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) dedicated to fostering the development of new American operas. This collaboration is jointly led by Robin Guarino, professor of opera at CCM, and Evans Mirageas, The Harry T. Wilks Artistic Director of Cincinnati Opera. OF:NW offers composers or composer/librettist teams the opportunity to workshop an opera during a residency in Cincinnati. Residencies utilize the facilities, personnel, and talent of both Cincinnati Opera and CCM. The workshops are cast with a combination of CCM students and professional artists, and each workshop concludes with a free public presentation of excerpts followed by an audience Q&A session. For more information, visit ofnw.org.

About CCM

Nationally ranked and internationally renowned, the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) is a preeminent institution for the performing and media arts. The school's educational roots date back to 1867, and a solid, visionary instruction has been at its core since that time. CCM offers nine degree types (BA, BM, BFA, MFA, MM, MA, AD, DMA, PhD) in nearly 120 possible majors, along with a wide variety of pre-collegiate and post-graduate programs.

Declared a top college vocal program by Backstage Magazine and described as "one of the continent's major music schools," by the Toronto Star, CCM's Departments of Opera and Voice provide one of the most comprehensive training programs for opera singers, coaches, and directors in the United States. CCM offers an international faculty of dedicated educators who are also celebrated professionals in their own right, widely and currently active in their respective fields. Several national opera companies hold auditions at the conservatory, and CCM students frequently advance to the final rounds of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. CCM graduates have performed on the stages of the

world's greatest opera companies, including Cincinnati Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Royal Opera (London), La Scala (Italy), and more. To learn more, visit ccm.uc.edu.

About Cincinnati Opera

Cincinnati Opera's mission is to enrich and connect our community through diverse opera experiences. Founded in 1920 and the second-oldest opera company in the nation, Cincinnati Opera presents a thrilling season of grand opera every summer and engaging programs throughout the year. The company's repertoire includes beloved classics and contemporary masterworks brought to life by some of the world's most dynamic performers and creative artists.

Cincinnati Opera is supported by the generosity of tens of thousands of contributors to the ArtsWave Community Campaign. This project was supported in part by the Ohio Arts Council, which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. Cincinnati Opera also receives general season support from The Louise Dieterle Nippert Musical Arts Fund, Patricia A. Corbett Estate and Trust, and the Harry T. Wilks Family Foundation, along with general season and project support from many other generous individuals, corporations, and foundations. Cincinnati Opera is a proud member of OPERA America. Learn more at cincinnatiopera.org.

About The Metropolitan Opera /Lincoln Center Theater New Works Program

The Metropolitan Opera /Lincoln Center Theater New Works Program, founded in 2006, has provided developmental resources for many composers and librettists. The program has overseen the creation of several new operas, including Two Boys, composed by Nico Muhly with a libretto by Craig Lucas; Eurydice, composed by Matthew Aucoin with a libretto by Sarah Ruhl, based on her play; and Grounded, composed by Jeanine Tesori with a libretto by George Brant, based on his play—all three produced by the Met. Intimate Apparel, composed by Ricky Ian Gordon with a libretto by Lynn Nottage, based on her play, was produced by Lincoln Center Theater. Other projects in development include new works by Joshua Schmidt and Dick Scanlan; David. T. Little and Royce Vavrek; Maxim Kolomiets and George Brant; Carlos Simon; and Valerie Coleman, Jessie Montgomery, and Joel Thompson.

The Met/LCT New Works Program is funded by a generous gift to the Met from the Francis Goelet Charitable Trusts, with additional support from Linda Hirshman.

###

MEDIA CONTACT:

Katie Syroney
Director of Communications
Cincinnati Opera
ksyroney@cincinnatiopera.org / 513-768-5526

RESOURCES:

[High-resolution images are available for download here.](#)