



# FORT WORTH OPERA

**NEWS RELEASE  
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**FORT WORTH OPERA ANNOUNCES CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR  
*FRONTIERS: FWO LIBRETTO WORKSHOP*,  
A TWO-NIGHT ONLINE EVENT, AND EXPLORATION OF OPERATIC STORYTELLING  
LED BY PULITZER PRIZE AND GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING LIBRETTIST AND LYRICIST MARK CAMPBELL  
AND AN ALL-STAR PANEL OF OPERA LIBRETTISTS, COMPOSERS, DIRECTORS, AND ARTISTS.**

*Company seeks out groundbreaking 21<sup>st</sup>-century literary voices for its latest workshop.*

**FORT WORTH, TX — Fort Worth Opera (FWO) is pleased to announce a call for submissions for *Frontiers: FWO Libretto Workshop*, an exciting exploration of operatic storytelling, and the eighth installment of the company's innovative new works showcase.** Led by Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning librettist and lyricist **Mark Campbell**, this **two-night online event will be held in front of a live Zoom audience on October 7 and 8, 2020, at 7 PM CT.** In addition to Mr. Campbell's presence, FWO's workshop will feature a distinguished panel of librettists, composers, directors, and artists, including **Héctor Armienta, Nicole Brooks, Octavio Cardenas, Blythe Gaisert, Alison Moritz, Rachel J. Peters, Kelley Rourke, and Talise Trevigne.** Submissions will be accepted through Monday, September 14, 2020, at midnight. On Tuesday, September 29, six librettists will be chosen, and the winning selections will be publicly announced.

While the first seven installments of *Frontiers* highlighted thrilling new unproduced works-in-progress, the company's latest workshop strips away the musical elements and focusses entirely upon the text of new operas in-the-making. In creating this program, FWO wanted to provide librettists with a platform for dramaturgical development and assure the industry and opera lovers everywhere that the storytellers within this incredible art form would not be neglected during this pandemic. The company continues its commitment to supporting the creation of new works, and **Frontiers: FWO Libretto Workshop** will provide librettists with an exclusive opportunity to hone their craft. Not only will they experience passages of their libretto performed by professional actors, but they will receive real-time feedback from some of the top creative minds in opera. Librettists will also be able to obtain a recording of the Zoom workshop to assist them further in their compositional process.

With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, operatic productions have temporarily come to a halt until companies can safely return to the theater. Just as plagues have inspired art, literature, and music for centuries, the resulting economic uncertainty has fostered a sense of community and ingenuity within the opera world that will undoubtedly continue to resonate long after a vaccine has arrived and the industry has normalized. Music and drama are the essential ingredients of any operatic work, and the two must be stylistically united for the piece to be successful. As the text or "script" of an opera, the libretto should have clear sense of internal timing throughout its dramatic structure. It should embrace the emotional resonance and importance of silence, as well as offer up pages of dialogue or monologues, and it must be able to live within a musical space. What works for theatrical plays, does not necessarily translate well to the grandeur or intimacy of the operatic stage. Above all, a libretto should inspire a composer, spark conversation, connection, and the imagination.

Hailed as "one of the most significant music events of the year" by *D Magazine*, Fort Worth Opera's *Frontiers* showcase has yielded numerous regional and world premieres since its inception. Commissioned by the American Lyric Theater, Patrick Soluri and Deborah Brevoort's macabre, Edgar Allan Poe-inspired opera *Embedded* (*Frontiers* 2013) appeared during Fort Worth Opera's 2016 Festival. Matthew Peterson and Jason Zencka's critically acclaimed, true crime opera *Voir Dire* (*Frontiers* 2014) proved to be a highlight of the company's 2017 Festival and recently received its official cast album recording. Composer and librettist Rachel J. Peters' acclaimed dark comedy *Companionship* (*Frontiers* 2018) received its world premiere during FWO's 2019 Festival.

Beyond North Texas, Robert Paterson and David Cote's trio of comic, one-act operas, *Three Way*, premiered at Nashville Opera and BAM Fisher in 2017, and Opera Colorado presented the world premiere of Gerald Cohen and Deborah Brevoort's true-life WWII romance, *Steal a Pencil for Me* (*Frontiers* 2016) during their 2018 season. Griffin Candey and Thom Miller's delectable dark comedy, *Sweets by Kate* (*Frontiers* 2017), received its NYC premiere at the legendary Stonewall Inn in July of 2017 with OperaRox Productions. In 2019, Clint Borzoni and John de los Santos' erotic opera, *When Adonis Calls* (*Frontiers* 2015), received its world premiere by Asheville Lyric Opera.

Visit <https://www.fwopera.org/frontiers-libretto-workshop>

### **Frontiers: FWO Libretto Workshop Submission Information:**

Applications must be submitted between August 19 and September 14, 2020.

Librettists from the Americas (citizens or residents of North, Central, and South America, as well as associated territories) are eligible and invited to submit a libretto. All application materials must be submitted electronically through the *Frontiers* web portal. Six libretti will be selected and showcased. Works not selected will not be automatically reconsidered for future showcases.

Only completed libretti will be considered. Due to the online forum of this workshop, libretti must be in English, and submissions must include a synopsis. **There is no fee for submissions.** Fort Worth Opera retains the right to select fewer than six works for the showcase. **Please contact Fort Worth Opera at [frontiers@fwopera.org](mailto:frontiers@fwopera.org).**

### **Frontiers: FWO Libretto Workshop Panelists:**

**Night One Panel** (October 7, 2020): Mark Campbell, Nicole Brooks, Octavio Cardenas, Blythe Gaissert, and Kelley Rourke.

**Night Two Panel** (October 8, 2020): Mark Campbell, Héctor Armienta, Alison Moritz, Rachel J. Peters, and Talise Trevigne

## **PANELIST BIOS**

### **Héctor Armienta**

Héctor Armienta, a nationally recognized composer/librettist, focuses on creating work that explores the Mexican and Mexican-American cultural experience. His awards and commissions include those from Meet the Composer, the National Endowment for the Arts, Fort Worth Opera, Opera Southwest, Opera Pacific, the Pacific Symphony, Oakland East Bay Symphony, and others. His work for orchestra, theater, and opera has received support from seven NEA grants in artistic excellence. Upcoming projects include *Mi Camino* and the world premiere of *Zorro*. Drawing on his training as a classical composer, his mission is to reinvent classical musical forms by incorporating music from both sides of the border. <https://www.hectorarmienta.com/>

### **Nicole Brooks**

In the performing arts world, Nicole Brooks is beyond a triple-threat. Her extensive accomplishments include: filmmaker, director, performer, singer, playwright, composer, curator, teacher and 'art-ivist'. Brooks has devoted over 20 years producing innovative content (for the stage and screen), with a focus on narratives that illuminate the peoples of the African Diaspora. In 2012, Brooks officially added playwright to her list of talents. Her debut theatrical work *Obeah Opera* - which she created, wrote, composed and performs in - has been staged in various incarnations from festivals to staged workshop productions in Toronto between 2009 and 2014. Honoured with a Dora nomination for Outstanding New Opera/Musical in 2012 and with continued development thereafter, an updated version of *Obeah Opera* premiered in August 2015, as a prestigious commission from the cultural arm of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am / Parapan Am Games. Its final incarnation mounted in June 2019 as part of the critically acclaimed roster of the Luminato Festival in Toronto and was honoured with two additional DORA nominations in 2020 for Outstanding Choreography and Outstanding Feature Performance. <http://obeahopera.com>

## **Mark Campbell**

The work of Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell is at the forefront of the contemporary opera scene in this country. Mark has written 38 opera librettos, lyrics for 7 musicals and text for 5 song cycles and 2 oratorios. His best known works are *Silent Night*, *Sanctuary Road*, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, *As One*, *Elizabeth Cree*, *Stonewall*, *Later the Same Evening*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Volpone*, *Bastianello/Lucrezia*, and *Songs from an Unmade Bed*. Mark also mentors future generations of opera composers and librettists through such organizations as the American Opera Project, American Lyric Theater and the American Opera Initiative and recently created the first prize in the history of opera designated specifically for opera librettists, called the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize. [www.markcampbellwords.com](http://www.markcampbellwords.com)

## **Octavio Cardenas**

Stage director Octavio Cardenas captivates audiences with his visionary, visceral, and physical style of directing. Born in the city of Guadalajara, Mexico, Opera News has praised him for “an immersive theater experience” while the *Dallas Morning News* hailed him for bringing “every character and situation to life.” Recent projects include *Dead Man Walking* for Opera Delaware and *La boheme* for Des Moines Metro Opera and *Madame Butterfly* for Opera Santa Barbara. As the former Director of Opera for Baylor University, Mr. Cardenas directed productions of *L'elisir d'amore*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, and *Rita*. He has served as the Head of the Directing Staff at Des Moines Metro Opera and has also been part of the directing staff at Chautauqua Opera. <http://www.octaviocardenas.com>

## **Blythe Gaissert**

Mezzo-soprano Blythe Gaissert has established herself as one of the preeminent interpreters of some of the brightest stars of new classical music. A true singing actress, she has received critical acclaim for her interpretations of both new and traditional repertoire in opera, concert, and chamber repertoire. “Gaissert gave a dramatically powerful, vocally stunning portrait of a woman growing increasingly desperate and delusional from lack of contact with the outer world. Gaissert’s development of Loats’s personality was utterly believable, and she gave a virtuoso performance of this very challenging music” (Arlo McKinnon, *Opera News* for *The Echo Drift*). Known for her warm tone, powerful stage presence, and impeccable musicianship and technical prowess....” Mezzo-soprano Blythe Gaissert was impossible to ignore as the headstrong Mother Marie. She has a pure, powerful and appealing voice and a forceful stage presence to match.” (*Denver Post*). <http://www.blythegaissert.com>

## **Alison Moritz**

Alison Moritz’s productions have been lauded as “raw, funny, surreal, and disarmingly human” by *Opera News*. Upcoming 2020–2021 projects include new productions for Glimmerglass, Chicago Opera Theatre, Opera Santa Barbara, and world premieres for Experiments in Opera and Contemporaneous. In fall of 2020, Alison makes her first foray into the world of VR directing *Miranda* – a dystopian satire imagining an alternative American legal system (Sankaram/Reese; co-produced by LUMA Projection Festival and Tri-Cities Opera). Her 2019–2020 season included mainstage debuts at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Opera Omaha, the Ravinia Festival, and Rice University. Other recent directing highlights include the world premieres of *Taking Up Serpents* (Sankaram/Dye; Washington National Opera), *Candide* (Tanglewood), *Chunky in Heat* (Experiments in Opera), and *Penelope* (Snider/McLaughlin; new performing edition for Lyric Opera of Kansas City). Committed to contemporary American repertoire, Alison has workshopped pieces for Opera Philadelphia, directed the world premiere of *Proving Up* (Mazzoli/Vavrek; Washington National Opera), and created a visceral new production of *The Manchurian Candidate* (Puts/Campbell; Austin Opera) in the lead up to the 2016 presidential election.

<https://www.alisonmoritz.com>.

## Rachel J. Peters

Composer/librettist Rachel J. Peters writes all manner of works for the stage. Operas: *Companionship* (Fort Worth Opera), *Rootabaga Country* (Sarasota Opera), *The Wild Beast of the Bungalow* (Oberlin Conservatory), *No Ladies in the Lady's Book* (Utah Opera). *Steve* (Boston Opera Collaborative), Musicals: *Only Children* (NYU), *Tiny Feats of Cowardice* (NYC Fringe), *Tomato Red* (UC Irvine), *Octopus Heart* (NYU). Concert works: *Ethel Smyth Plays Golf in Limbo* (Semperoper Dresden), *If You Can Prove That I Should Set You Free* (Albany Symphony), *Jack's Vocabulary* (Hartt School), *Fronde: The Wisdom of Fanny Fern* (Walt Whitman Project). Contributor to *The AIDS Quilt Songbook*. Scores for plays: *Stretch* (a fantasia) (New Georges), *Tania in the Getaway Van* (Flea Theater), *Transatlantic* (Arkansas Rep). Upcoming premieres: Opera Kansas, Opera Steamboat, Lyric Opera of the North. <https://www.racheljpeters.com>

## Kelley Rourke

Kelley Rourke is a librettist, translator and dramaturg. She collaborates frequently with John Glover, with whom she has written *Lucy*, *Natural Systems*, and *Guns n' Rosenkavalier*, among others. She has written libretti for three youth operas that have been performed across the country: *Odyssey* and *Robin Hood* (both with Ben Moore) and *Wilde Tales* (with Laura Karpman). Kelley's modern English adaptations of numerous standard and not-so-standard operas have been hailed as "cracklingly witty" (*The Independent*, London) and "remarkably well wedded to the music and versification in arias" (*New York Times*). Her work has been commissioned and performed by Washington National Opera, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Boston Lyric Opera, Young People's Chorus of NYC, Seattle Opera, Minnesota Opera, Carnegie Hall, Urban Arias (Washington, DC), Met LiveArts, Houston Grand Opera's HGOco, San Francisco Conservatory, Milwaukee Opera Theatre, American Opera Projects, Atlanta Opera, Kentucky Opera, Walnut Hill School for the Arts, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and Nautilus Music-Theater, among others.

<https://www.kelleyrourke.com>

## Talise Trevigne

Grammy-nominated American soprano Talise Trevigne made her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut last fall as Kitty Heart in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, and joined the Metropolitan Opera cast of *Porgy & Bess*. Besides creating key roles in the world premieres of *Moby-Dick*, *JFK*, *Proving Up* and *It's A Wonderful Life*, she has headlined productions on both sides of the Atlantic, proving herself "a Butterfly worthy of mention alongside Maria Callas" (*Voix des Arts*). Last season Miss Trevigne debuted the role of Ma in Missy Mazzoli/Royce Vavrek's highly lauded *Proving Up* at Omaha Opera and at Lincoln Centre and made a further role debut at Madison Opera as Nedda Pagliacci. She travelled to Theater Basel for one of her signature roles, Cio-Cio-san in *Madama Butterfly*, a role that originally brought her great accolades at North Carolina Opera and at Kentucky Opera. She finished the season at Cincinnati Opera in the title role in *Porgy & Bess* reviving her great success in the role at Glimmerglass Festival the previous season. <https://arbourartists.com/roster/talise-trevigne/>

**ABOUT FORT WORTH OPERA:** Founded in 1946, Fort Worth Opera is the oldest continually-performing opera company in Texas, and one of the 14 oldest opera companies in the United States. The organization has received national acclaim from critics and audiences alike for its artistic excellence. Beginning in 2017, Fort Worth Opera launched the second phase of its landmark, 10-year Opera of the Americas initiative with *Noches de Ópera (Nights of Opera)*, a groundbreaking campaign that introduces powerful operas, each reflecting the diverse cultures of American audiences.

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