

Cleveland Opera Theater {NOW} Festival: a celebration of new opera

by Daniel Hathaway



The creation of new operas is a passion of Scott Skiba, Cleveland Opera Theater's executive artistic director. The company will host the third annual [{NOW} Festival](#) at Baldwin Wallace Conservatory beginning on Monday, February 4 and running through Sunday, February 9. All Festival activities are free and open to the public.

This year's Festival will include partnerships between Baldwin Wallace, Bowling Green State University, the Cleveland Composers Guild, Hiram College, and Oberlin. "Every year we try to make the institutional collaborations and student engagement more rich," Skiba said during a telephone conversation. "And this year we've got great energy around everything that's happening."

The Festival will also include an [American Futures Residency](#) by composers Jake Heggie and Griffin Candey, and soprano Ann Moss. "We started putting the plans for this together during the first {NOW} Festival," Skiba noted. "The residency will allow us to bring these three exceptional artists to the BW campus to work and collaborate with Conservatory students."

Skiba said that the {NOW} Festival is "esoteric within an esoteric art form," but it gives Cleveland Opera Theater "an opportunity to address topics that are socially important, as well as the ability to be a bit more nimble and innovative with our programming."

Everything will kick off on Monday, February 4 at 7:30 pm in Wilder Main Lounge on the Oberlin College campus with an Oberlin Winter Term Opera performance of

Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up*. Directed by Christopher Mirto, the opera tells a haunting tale of a family's pursuit of the American Dream in the shadow of Civil War Nebraska. Cleveland Opera Theater will host a post-performance talkback and reception with Missy Mazzoli and librettist Royce Vavrek. Click [here](#) to read a preview. The evening is free but [tickets](#) are required.



On Wednesday, February 6 at 7:00 pm in BW's Gamble Auditorium, Soo Han will lead the BW Symphony Orchestra and soprano Ann Moss in the U.S. orchestral premiere of Jake Heggie's *Newer Every Day: Songs for Kiri* on poetry by Emily Dickinson. The program will also include competition winner Caleb Slabaugh in Ferdinand David's *Concertino* for trombone and orchestra, and Brahms' *Symphony No. 2*.

“Beginning at 6:00 pm we’ll be working with Prizm Magazine to launch our LGBTQ affinity group during a meet-and-greet with Jake,” Skiba said. Click [here](#) for more information.



Jake Heggie and Ann Moss will perform a recital on Thursday, February 7 at 8:00 pm in Gamble Auditorium, followed by a [New Opera Forum](#), an interactive discussion moderated by *Clevelandclassical.com*'s Mike Telin. Panelists will include Jake Heggie, Caridad Svich, Griffin Candey, Dawn Sonntag, Robert Rollin, Ryan Charles Ramer, Jeffrey Quick, Christopher Mirto, Ann Moss, Johnathon Field, and Hillary LaBonte.



You can hear opera in development On Friday February 8 at 8:00 pm in Gamble Auditorium. Griffin Candey's [Bernarda Alba](#) is based on Garcia Lorca's final play. The evening will feature a workshop reading of scenes with piano accompaniment from Acts I and II from the new opera with libretto by OBIE-Award-winner Caridad Svich. The cast includes Nancy Maultsby (Bernarda Alba), Joanne Uniatowski (LaPoncia), Anissa Clay (Adela), Sabina Balsamo (Angiustas), Sarah Antell (Martirio), Olivia Beal (Amelia), Ciara Newman (Magdalena), Nanette Canfield (María Josefa) and Kailyn Martino (Kitchen Maid).

{NOW} Festival will continue its partnership with the [Cleveland Composers Guild](#) on Saturday February 9 at 8:00 pm in Fynes Hall. The performance will feature excerpts from Margi Griebing-Haigh's *The White Trout*, Ryan Charles Ramer's *The Divorce Box*, Jeffrey Quick's *Little White Hen*, and Robert Rollin's *The Only Jealousy of Emer*.

[Coal Creek](#), a new opera in development by Dawn Sonntag will have its first public hearing on Sunday, February 10 at 4:00 pm in Gamble Auditorium. Directed by Scott Skiba, Dean Buck will conduct a staged workshop performance of scenes from Acts I and III with chamber ensemble. The run time is approximately 60 minutes including introduction and audience talk-back session.



The {NOW} Festival will conclude at 8:00 pm Sunday evening in Fynes Hall with Bowling Green State University's [MicroOpera](#). Composed, directed, performed and produced by BGSU students, the program will feature Jon-Luke Martin's *The Bizarre but True Story of the Rusty Hammer Donut*, excerpts from Adam Har-zvi's *The Wanderer, the Guide, and the Beasts of the Mind*, Jesse Diener's *Bennett's Need*, and Nadine Foley's *Stream of Consciousness*.

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