

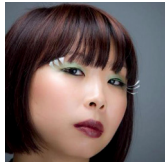
Key Panelists

MELVIN CLARIDGE, Pegasus Opera Talent Director



Melvin is instrumental in the formation of Pegasus Talent, a new artist management agency representing classical musicians of African and Asian heritage. Melvin leads the Opera Mentoring Programme, Artistic Advisory Panel (AAP), Pegasus Agency Advisory Panel (PAAP), and the Development Advisory Panel (DAP) at Pegasus Opera. Additionally, Melvin is a commercial solicitor, as well as a trustee at Oxenfoord Intern International Summer School and serves on Glyndebourne's Creative Conspirators advisory board.

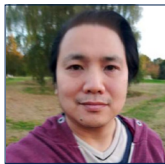
RUTH CHAN, Composer



Ruth Chan is a composer for theatre, opera, film and concert music. Credits: The Jungle Book (Chichester Festival Theatre); Untitled f*ck m*s s**gon (Royal Exchange/ Young Vic); Further than the Furthest Thing (Young Vic); The Doncastrian Chalk Circle (National Theatre); The Hatchling (The Platinum Jubilee Pageant); Beauty and the Seven Beasts (The Opera Story); Mokita (Hong Kong Arts Festival) & Snow in Midsummer (RSC - nominated for The Stage Debut Award 2017); The Triumph of Time (Thailand International Composition Festival, Pianoforte Studio Chicago) and Between

Constellations (Pittsburgh Opera Festival & Grimeborn Festival).

JONATHAN MAN, Director / Writer



Jonathan Man is a freelance theatre director and writer. He was on the National Theatre's "Step Change" arts leadership programme, and has run leading companies New Earth (theatre) and Kakilang (festivals). Writing credits include: "Turandot Reimagined" (new concept, Tete A Tete & Grimeborn festivals), "Tokyo Rose" (co-writer, Burnt Lemon theatre, national tour & New National Theatre Tokyo), and "Follow The Light" (co-writer, new musical currently in R&D).

Sponsor

"OPERA America's commitment to supporting diverse voices in opera remain steadfast. By championing these talented creators, we are enriching OPERA America's IDEA Opera Grants 2024 the cultural tapestry of the field and ensuring its relevance for future generations."

— Marc A. Scorca, President/CEO of OPERA America

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"Black artists contribute to shaping cultural narratives and advancing the ongoing struggle for equality and justice. In this way, art and artists provide our youth and communities with powerful vehicles for self-expression, cultural preservation, and social change."

— Ola Oyalegan, 100 Black Men of London

**100
BLACK
MEN
of London**

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ALISON BUCHANAN
Artistic Director

DR. LAURA SANDERS MORRIS, Curator

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Faces in the Flames

A Global Dialogue in OPERA

Wednesday, 23 October 2024

7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

St. John's Waterloo
73 Waterloo Road
London S#1 8T1

Synopsis · Faces in The Flames

Three scenes tell the story of photographer Thomas Askew, an Atlanta resident whose images captured the dignity of African Americans during a time when only stereotypical imagery of Blacks circulated. In the **first scene** of the opera, Askew journeys via wagon from Cobb County Georgia to encounter a thriving community of free blacks in the city of Atlanta. In the **second scene** the photographer now runs a thriving photo business in the middle of a middle-class city. Newly arrived W.E.B. Dubois asks Askew to send his photos to the Paris Exhibition. The photographer, over the objections of his wife, agrees to send the photographs. In the **third and final scene** Askew's studio has been destroyed by the Great Atlanta fire. Two of his photographic subjects search the ruins for images while the ghost of Askew proclaims the dignity of African American people. **Throughout the opera a chorus of African Americans reflect the aspirations of a hopeful community at the turn of the twentieth century.**

The Creators

ANITA GONZALEZ, Librettist



2023–2025 fellow with American Opera Projects' Composers and the Voice believes "art of storytelling connects people." She has written librettos for Atlanta Opera, Boston Opera Collaborative, Chicago Dramatists, and Houston Grand Opera's Songs of Houston series. Her librettos include Faces in the Flames (The Atlanta Opera's 96-Hour Opera Project), Courthouse Bells (Boston Opera Collaborative), Finding the Light (Louise Toppin and Marquita Lister), Sunset Dreams (The Vagrancy), and Home of My Ancestors (HGOco). Her musicals include Kumanana (Gala Hispanic Theater), Ybor City (Latiné Musical Theatre Lab), and Zora on My Mind (The Woodshed).

Dr. Gonzalez was inducted in 2023 as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is currently a member of the Beth Morrison Producer Academy, National Theatre Conference, the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab, board of directors member for the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. At Georgetown University Dr. Gonzalez is a professor of Performing Arts/African American Studies and Co-Founder/Leader of their Racial Justice Institute.

Over 50,000 students have taken her massive open online courses "Storytelling for Social Change" and "Black Performance as Social Protest." For more information, visit www.anitagonzalez.com.

NATHAN FELIX, Composer



Mexican American composer known for his immersive operas and experimental film has premiered 16 operas, four symphonies, and various chamber works in Spain, Australia, Bulgaria, Portugal, China, Sweden, Denmark, Mongolia, and the United States, and he has been featured on the BBC, MTV, NPR, TPR, and PBS. He often focuses on telling Latinx-themed and minority stories that highlight border issues, underserved communities, and his Hispanic heritage. In 2023, Felix participated in The Atlanta Opera's 96-Hour Opera Festival in which, along with librettist Anita Gonzalez, he won the Audience Favorite award for Faces in the Flames. He also serves as the founding director for the Opera Austin Festival. For more information, visit electrochestrals.com.

Special Performances

RONALD SAMM, Tenor



Ronald Samm was born in Port of Spain, the younger son of two Head teachers. Early musical training began at St Mary's College where he was a regular prizewinner in the island-wide biennial Music Festival. He studied voice and piano with Noelle Barker and Ian Kennedy at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and won a scholarship from the Peter Moores/Lord Pitt Foundation to pursue post-graduate study with Nicholas Powell at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.

Ronald Samm's operatic roles have included First Armed Man and Second Priest (Die Zauberflöte) for Opera North; an evening of contemporary opera at the Linbury Theatre, Covent Garden; Canio (I Pagliacci) for Welsh National Opera and English Pocket Opera and Otello for Children's Music Workshop, a role he has also covered for Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Recent engagements include Bardolph (Falstaff) for English Touring Opera and Spolelta (Tosca), Canio (I Pagliacci) and Laca (Jenufa), all for English Touring Opera; the Dancing Master in Birmingham Opera Company's production of Strauss' Ariadne auf Naxos (Prologue only); Siegmund (Die Walküre) in Lisbon; Florestan (Fidelio) for the Festival Burgarena in Austria and Sportin' Life/Porgy and Bess for Opera de Lyon and in concert for the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome and at the Teatro Lirico in Cagliari, Sardinia.

Ronald Samm's oratorio repertoire includes Handel's Messiah; Bach's Magnificat and St. John Passion; Mendelssohn's Elijah; Beethoven's Mass in C; Mozart Requiem; Verdi Requiem, and Stainer's Crucifixion. His concert appearances have taken him across the UK, to Gibraltar and Spain with conductor Karel Chichon and to Sri Lanka's Lionel Wendt Theatre.

DONNA BATEMAN, Soprano



Donna Bateman is an award-winning Soprano who has been honored as an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music. She sang her first major role, Marzelline, in Birmingham Opera Company's award-winning production of Fidelio and continues to perform with Opera Companies in the UK and abroad. Her expertise in contemporary repertoire has earned her several major world premieres, including her debut for The Royal Opera House, ROH2, in The Gentle Giant, Estella in Life is a Dream, by Jonathan Dove, Emilie in Ernest

Tochs 'Egon Und Emilie' at King's Place London and Lulu in American Lulu - Neuwirth/Berg for The Opera Group, Young Vic, Scottish Opera and Bregenz Festspiele co-production. Future and recent engagements include Katie in 'Who Cares' by Douglas Finch, The Mother in the premiere of Pleasurable Death by Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayian for HERA, Imoinda in the British premiere of Imoinda by Odaline de la Martinez, Fortuna and Melanto in Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria for The Grange Festival and Porgy and Bess for English National Opera, Dutch National Opera and Theater an der Wien Vienna.

Alongside her performing career, she enjoys supporting singers of all ages through delivering masterclasses and mentoring. She developed the educational programme 'Musical Buddies' for schools and children's Centres in London. She is also the recipient of the 'Brent Citizen' award for her work and is thrilled to be a mentor for 'Lift Up Lambeth Voices' for Pegasus Opera Company.

BEN-SAN LAU, Pianist



Ben-San Lau was born in Manchester. He trained at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, the National Opera Studio, and the Opéra National de Paris. He is currently a freelance pianist and répétiteur, working regularly for Glyndebourne and the Royal Opera. As a recitalist he has performed at the Barbican Centre, Wigmore Hall, the Oxford Lieder and Buxton Festivals, Snape Maltings, and the Internationaal Lied Festival Zeist. He was a recipient of a Musician's Company Concert Award supported by the Concordia Foundation, a prize winner in the Oxford Lieder Young Artist Platform, and a Britten-Pears Young Artist. He will return to Glyndebourne in the summer for productions of Bizet Carmen and Wagner Tristan und Isolde, and then in the autumn for Verdi La Traviata.