

**THE AMERICAN OPERA PROJECT**  
*Composers & the Voice* 2023-2025  
Program Description and Guidelines



**The American Opera Project (AOP)** is proud to announce the 12<sup>th</sup> cycle of its popular *Composers & the Voice* program for its 2023-2025 season. We will select 6 composers and up to 3 librettists for a two-year fellowship. The primary focus of *Composers & the Voice* is to give composers and librettists extensive experience working collaboratively with singers on writing for the voice and contemporary lyric stage.

**OVERVIEW**

There will be 15 workshop sessions between September 2023 and May 2024, collaborating with the company's Resident Ensemble of Singers and Artistic Team. The sessions also include courses in Libretto Writing, Acting, and Improvisation. In order to alleviate the burden of travel, 4 of the 15 sessions will be held remotely. All in-person sessions are held in New York City.

There will be two sets of public performances featuring work created during the program. In May 2024, there will be 2 concert performances (*First Glimpse*) of selected solo works written during the course of the New Works Sessions. In January 2025, there will be 2 performances of semi-staged scenes (*Six Scenes*) created during the first year and throughout summer and fall 2024.

During the 2024-25 season, AOP will provide continued mentorship and career guidance for its C&V fellows, including individual project consultations and industry introductions. Select C&V operas-in-progress may receive continued development workshops with AOP partner organizations.

**WORKSHOP SESSIONS: 2023-24**

The *Composers & the Voice* Resident Ensemble is made up of 6 singers who have been selected based on their superior technical and musical skills, as well as their commitment to developing and performing new works. The ensemble is comprised of one of each of the basic operatic/vocal categories: Coloratura Soprano, Lyric Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Baritone and Bass. The Artistic Team is led by Steven Osgood, *Composers & the Voice* founder and Artistic Director, with an esteemed support staff of Music Directors (New Works Sessions, Role Demonstrations) and Skill-Building Instructors (Libretto Writing, Acting, Improvisation), Guest Instructors, and a C&V Artistic Administrator.

The *Composers & the Voice* program has two major components: Working Sessions with Singers and Music Directors (including 2 Introductory Sessions, 6 New Works Sessions, and 6 Role Demonstrations), and Skill-Building Sessions with members of the Artistic Team (Libretto Writing, Acting, Improvisation).

In the First Introductory Session each of the 6 singers will present their own voice type. They will explain how their particular voice works throughout its range, addressing issues of tessitura, negotiating the passaggio, demands for vowel modification, and how these affect their performance of text. Each singer will present 3 arias from the modern operatic/art song repertoire, discussing in detail how each selection suits that particular voice type well. A Second Introductory Session allows each composer and librettist time to present their work to the complete Artistic Team, giving each singer a unique insight into each fellow's process as they collaborate on new material.

Over the 6 New Works Sessions, each four weeks apart, the participating composers or composer/librettist teams will work with each singer, one at a time, in rotation. The participants will have four weeks to create a solo work (3-5 minutes in length) with piano accompaniment for each singer. Each of the new compositions will receive a 25-minute period for presentation and discussion at the next New Works Session. The pieces will be performed and discussed by the entire group.

The primary focus will be on how well-suited the composition is to the voice, and clarity of text setting. Steven Osgood will lead the New Works Sessions, consulting with the composers and librettists, and moderating feedback; as well as any additional music sessions.

By May 2024, each composer or composer/librettist team will have rotated through the entire Resident Ensemble of Singers, creating a piece for each voice type. At the end of the sessions, a selection of these solo works will be performed for the public in two *First Glimpse* songs concerts in May 2024.

Skill-Building Sessions will occur approximately every 2 weeks throughout the 2023-24 season. Composers and librettists will train in Acting and Improvisation, gaining in-depth and firsthand knowledge of how singers build characters, and deliver text. Guest Instructors – singers, composers, librettists, directors, designers, producers, publishers, and more – will lead interactive sessions, bringing their unique, professional insight into the program. In the Libretto Writing sessions, fellows will analyze both traditional and contemporary scores and libretti while discussing and experimenting with word choice, rhyme, meter, story structure, character archetypes, role analysis, and more.

Throughout the year, composers and librettists work on creating the outline and synopsis for their final project – a complete 15–20-minute opera using up to three of the voice types and piano. The first draft of these final projects will be written during the summer of 2024, and will receive a workshop in September 2024. Revised scores will be due in November, with two public, semi-staged “*Six Scenes*” concerts planned for January 2025.

Each season we are also very fortunate to have established composers and librettists who serve as Artistic Chairs for our C&V fellows. We pair each C&V fellow with one Artistic Chair and work to build a personal and professional connection between them. While this is not a formal mentorship, in some cases it has developed into one. Our goal is to introduce two creators who we feel have shared artistic views, and to allow each relationship to grow naturally. Each Chair has agreed to at least one face-to-face meeting during the season, as schedules allow, and to be available as a sounding board and resource between these meetings.

## SCHEDULE

### 2023

October 2 – Skill-Building / Music Workshop  
October 16 – Skill-Building\*  
October 30 – Skill-Building / Music Workshop  
November 13 – Skill-Building\*  
December 4 – Skill-Building / Music Workshop  
December 18 – Skill-Building\*

### 2024

January 8 – Skill-Building / Music Workshop  
January 22 – Skill-Building (REMOTE)\*  
February 5 – Skill-Building / Music Workshop  
February 26 – Skill-Building (REMOTE)\*  
March 11 – Skill-Building / Music Workshop  
March 25 – Skill-Building (REMOTE)\*  
April 8 – Skill-Building / Music Workshop  
April 22 – Skill Building (REMOTE)\*  
May 6 – Skill-Building / Music Workshop

**All sessions are held on Mondays** from 1:00-9:00pm (Eastern). Starred sessions will end at 6:00pm.

All in-person sessions will be in New York City. Remote sessions will be held via Zoom.

**All participants must be present for all in-person sessions.**

*First Glimpse* Rehearsal and (2) Concerts: May 2024

*Six Scenes* Workshop and (2) Concerts: September 2024 (workshop), January 2025 (concerts)

## PROGRAM AND APPLICATION DETAILS

AOP is encouraging applications from both composers and librettists working alone, and from composer/librettist teams. Composers and librettists applying jointly need not have prior collaborative projects.

**Please note:** If a composer and librettist apply as a team, the panel reserves the right to select only one of the applicants for an individual fellowship.

AOP welcomes applications from musicians from all backgrounds interested in composing for opera and lyric theater and seeks to present a group of fellows that represent the diversity of our community and country. Applicants need not have any previous formal music education.

There is no age limit for participation.

There is no application fee or fee for participation.

Application work samples do not require music scores.

In place of cover letters, Artistic Statements (written or video) are required.

An optional demographic survey is included at the end of the application.

Applications are reviewed and fellowships are selected by the C&V Artistic Director, the AOP Artistic Director, AOP Head of Development & Greater Impact and two panels of industry professionals chosen with an emphasis on diversity.

### **LOCATION**

All participants must be in New York City for all in-person workshop dates, due to the goals of the program. Four of the workshop dates will be held online to minimize travel time and expenses, and three of the in-person sessions will end at 6:00pm (see calendar).

Given its home base of Brooklyn, NY, *Composers & the Voice* is ideal for tri-state participants. **However, we encourage ALL applicants to apply, regardless of geographic location.** While we can not commit to travel assistance for the 2023-25 cycle due to budgetary limitations, we do not know what funding possibilities may lie ahead, and encourage applicants to take advantage of this opportunity to introduce their work, so that we can explore the possibilities together.

For more information or questions, call (718) 398-4024 or email [composersandthevoice@gmail.com](mailto:composersandthevoice@gmail.com).

**The application deadline is April 3, 2023.**

**Notification of participants will be made by July 1, 2023.**