American Opera Projects (AOP) is proud to announce the return of its popular Composers & the Voice program for its 2019-2021 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 opera stage.

OVERVIEW

2019-20

Our composer and librettist fellows come together at AOP’s home in Brooklyn, NY for a total of 15 workshop sessions between October 2019 and May 2020, working with the company’s Resident Ensemble of Singers and Artistic Team on writing for the voice with additional workshop classes in acting, improvisation, and libretto development. C&V workshop sessions are closed to the public to maintain an environment of honesty and experimentation. All music in Composers & the Voice is written for piano.

There will be two public performances of work created during the series. In May 2020 there will be a concert performance of selected songs written during the course of the workshops. In September 2020 there will be a performance in New York City of semi-staged scenes from operas-in-development also written during the course of the workshops.

During the year each fellow is paired with a C&V Artistic Chair, professional composers and librettists that make themselves available for one-on-one discussions and feedback.

2020-21

In the second year of the fellowship, AOP provides continued mentoring and career guidance on a one-on-one basis. AOP’s General Director and Artistic Director schedule networking events and meetings, guest classes with industry professionals, and individual consultations on projects-in-development. Select C&V operas-in-progress have opportunities for continued development workshops with AOP and our presenting partners. C&V Fellows are not required to be in New York City for this period.
DETAILS ON WORKSHOP SESSIONS, 2019-20

The Composers & the Voice series has two major components: Music Workshop Sessions with singers and music directors and Skill Building Workshop Sessions with members of the Artistic Team. The Artistic Team includes Steven Osgood, Composers & the Voice founder and Artistic Director, a Head of Music, a Head of Drama, an additional Music Director, and instructors in libretto writing, acting, and improvisation, as well as guest artists.

Music Workshop Sessions

Fellows will learn to write for the operatic voice through detailed group feedback sessions of their work with the American Opera Projects' Resident Ensemble of professional singers. All music in Composers & the Voice is written for piano and voice.

Our 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 each of the basic operatic/vocal categories: Coloratura Soprano, Lyric Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Baritone and Bass.

In the First Introductory Session each of the 6 singers will present their own voice type. They will each explain how their particular voice works throughout its range, addressing issues of tessitura, negotiating the passagio, 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 of them suits that particular voice type well. A second Introductory Session invites each composer to present their own work to the entire group, giving each singer a unique insight into the composers' style and process as they collaborate on new material.

Over the 6 New Works Sessions, each typically 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 the feedback sessions.

The solo works created for the music sessions will be generated from a mixture of original ideas from the composers and librettists, as well as more specified writing parameters and topics assigned by the C&V Artistic Team. Librettists will have an opportunity to collaborate with the composers throughout the Music Workshop Sessions.

Skill Building Workshop Sessions

Surrounding and enhancing the Music Workshops Sessions, the C&V Skill Building Sessions explore new and traditional techniques in writing for the stage and occur approximately every 2 weeks throughout the season. Fellows will analyze both traditional and contemporary scores and libretti while discussing and experimenting with word choice, rhyme, meter, story structure, character archetypes, and more. A unique aspect of the
C&V workshop season are our classes on Improv and Acting for opera writers, physical sessions that explore new approaches to their creativity. In our Improvisation Sessions, our fellows get on their feet (and the floor and on chairs) to discover the mind-opening world of improvisational thinking. With so many forms and structures, how can artists think outside the box? How can we tap into individual creativity in a highly collaborative art form? How can a group think as one creative entity in pursuit of telling a story? Our Improv studies are a fun, exciting, and boundary-breaking journey into our creative potential. In our Acting sessions, our composers and librettists approach opera through the mind of the performer creating a character. By learning to ask the subjective questions of characters, we discover the roots of why we tell and listen to stories. What do I want? Why do I want it? How will I get it? Fellows learn to analyze text from the inside out, explore various acting techniques, and discover what the world looks like from the point of view of the stage.

Professional guest artists – composers, librettists, singers, directors, designers, and more – are invited in throughout the year to talk about their work and process in special sessions that are sometimes open to the public to allow them a glimpse into the C&V educational process.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

By May 2020, each composer and librettist will have rotated through the entire Resident Ensemble of Singers, creating a piece for each voice type. At the end of the sessions, these solo works will be performed for the public in May 2020 at AOP’s First Glimpse songs concert.

During the summer, each participant will complete their 15-20 minute scene or extended work that they have been developing throughout the year using up to three of the voice types and piano. These scenes will be rehearsed and presented by the Resident Ensemble in September 2020 as part of AOP’s Six Scenes public performance series, semi-staged by a group of guest directors.

SCHEDULE

2019-20

Workshop Schedule:
All workshop sessions are held on Wednesdays from 1:00 pm to 9:30 pm. All sessions will be in New York City.

October 1, 2019 – Meet and Greet mixer (evening)  January 22, 2020 – Skill Building Sessions
October 2, 2019 – Skill Building / Music Workshop Sessions  February 5, 2020 – Skill Building / Music Workshop Sessions
October 23, 2019 – Skill Building Sessions  February 19, 2020 – Skill Building Sessions
November 6, 2019 – Skill Building / Music Workshop Sessions  March 4, 2020 – Skill Building / Music Workshop Sessions
November 20, 2019 – Skill Building Sessions  March 18, 2020 – Skill Building Sessions
December 4, 2019 – Skill Building / Music Workshop Sessions  April 1, 2020 – Skill Building / Music Workshop Sessions
December 18, 2019 – Skill Building Sessions  April 15, 2020 – Skill Building Sessions
January 8, 2020 – Skill Building / Music Workshop Sessions  April 29, 2020 – Skill Building / Music Workshop Sessions

Participants must be present for all of the workshop sessions.

First Glimpse Songs Concert: May 29 & 30, 2020
Six Scenes Concert: September 25 & 26, 2020
PROGRAM AND APPLICATION DETAILS

Applications are available on the AOP website at www.aopopera.org/cvapply.

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 of all backgrounds interested in composing for opera and music theatre and seeks to present a group of fellows that represent the diversity of our community and country. Applicants need not have any formal music degree, though the ability to compose via the notation of scores is a prerequisite.

Applications are reviewed and fellowships are selected by the C&V Artistic Director, the Head of Drama and Head of Music, and a panel of industry professionals chosen with an emphasis on diversity.

There is no age limit for participation.

The fee for application is $50 for NEW APPLICANTS ONLY; there is no fee for participation. There is no stipend for selected composers or librettists. Fee waivers may be granted on a case by case basis upon written request.

For more information, call (718) 398-4024 or email info@operaprojects.org

The application deadline is April 26, 2019.

Notification of participants will be made by July 16, 2019.