

# National Opera Association 70th Annual Conference and National Association of Teachers of Singing Winter Workshop

The DeSoto, Savannah, Georgia, January 5–8, 2025  
“Building Together - Curating Tomorrow”  
(Draft as of 9/5/24)

PROGRAM IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

## Sunday, January 5

12:30–4:30 PM	<b>NOA Board of Directors Meeting</b>	Lafayette
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1:00–4:00 PM	<b>Pre-Conference Workshop (add-on ticket)</b> Music and Film in Action at SCAD	*SCAD
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Join us as we take an inside look at Savannah Film Studios, the largest and most comprehensive university film studio complex in the nation, where recent student-led film projects have included musical films. We will tour the newly developed backlot, view a recently completed musical short film and understand how it was produced, participate in a panel with music, theatre and film students and faculty who are using these assets in creative ways, and experience the Extended Reality (XR) stage, the newest film technology for blending virtual realities with physical elements in film productions.

Location: Savannah College of Art & Design, 2315 Louisville Road, Savannah, GA 31415

5:00–6:00 PM	<b><i>The Eleanors</i> (add-on ticket)</b> World Premiere, presented by Savannah VOICE Festival	*First Baptist Church
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World Premiere of *The Eleanors*  
Composed by Jodi Goble  
Libretto co-written with Michael Ching

Meet The Eleanors — Maxie, Ramona and Lilian! These three indomitable ladies are holding down the home front during World War II with humor, heart, the support of good friends ... and a nightly scoop of ice cream. Foxtrot down memory lane into 1940s Savannah with Jodi Goble’s swing and American Songbook-infused operatic score, set to words by Savannah VOICE Festival’s own composer-in-residence Michael Ching.

Location: First Baptist Church, 223 Bull St, Savannah, GA 31401 (three blocks from The DeSoto)

6:00–8:00 PM	<b>Dinner on Your Own</b>	
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8:00–10:00 PM	<b>Pre-Conference Mixer (add-on ticket)</b> District Live Mix and Mingle	*Plant Riverside
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Join colleagues for an opportunity to meet new people and catch up with old friends in the incredible state-of-the-art live music venue next to the iconic Savannah Riverfront. Enjoy a musical preview from three of Savannah’s leading arts organizations, American Traditions Vocal Collection, Savannah Voice Festival, and Savannah Music Festival. Light snacks and sweet treats will be provided, as well as one complimentary drink ticket.

Note: this is an offsite event, and attendees are responsible for transportation to and from (walking or rideshare recommended).

Location: District Live at Plant Riverside District, 400 W River St, Savannah, GA 31401

## Monday, January 6

7:30 AM–5:00 PM	<b>Registration</b>	Lobby
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8:00 AM	<b>Exhibitor Area Open</b>	Lobby
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8:00–8:50 AM	<b>Refining Yoga Practice for the Opera Studio</b> Robert Swedberg, presenter	Lafayette
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Yoga can contribute to the development of the singing-actor, and is an effective tool to use in facing the physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual challenges in the performing arts environment. In this session, Robert Swedberg, developer of Yoga For Performers at the University of Michigan, will share an overview of the yoga practices most useful in training performers, and demonstrate specific movement, breathing, and meditation exercises that are also the most practical for the opera studio. This session will help participants tailor yoga techniques for their particular needs.

9:00–9:50 AM

**Breakout Sessions**

**Harmony Reimagined: The Art of Reducing an Opera Orchestral Score for Chamber Ensemble** Madison

**Carl Pantle and J. Bradley Baker, presenters**

Having trouble simplifying orchestral scores for chamber ensembles? We aim to offer some insight! Explore best practices for reduction techniques, uncover opportunities for commissioning new reductions, and find pre-existing reductions to fit your requirements. Whether you're a coach, conductor, or opera director in need of resources, this session will shed light on how to make the challenges of score reduction less daunting. Let's innovate the ways in which we support our singers!

**Vowel Formation for Singers: Exploring the Existence of Companion Vowels** Pulaski

**Cheri Montgomery, presenter**

The spellings of languages reveal the existence of companion vowels. The official vowel chart removes any correlation between companion vowels. Incorrect charting of vowels and a speech-first approach to formation have fractured the studies of transcription and articulatory phonetics. A singer's approach to phonetics and a new method of charting vowels will simplify both disciplines. Group engaging activities and animated illustrations will verify the existence of companion vowels and show how the curvature and narrowing of the vocal tract impact the speed and direction of air.

**Inspiring Student and New Opera Creation: A Panel and Town Hall from Composers Throughout Their Careers** Harborview

**Andre Chiang, Lori Laitman, Beth Greenberg, Griffin Candey, Emily Clements, presenters**

10:10–11:00 AM

**Breakout Sessions**

**CHIAROSCURO: Light in Darkness** Pulaski

**Margaret Ozaki Graves and Daniela Guzmán-Égüez, presenters**

Central City Opera's new program for adolescent audiences uses opera in service of social emotional learning. Through adaptation and radical reimagining, operatic material is repurposed to present, identify, and destigmatize mental health issues as a vehicle to spark conversation and to connect audiences to mental health and social emotional learning resources from expert partners, offering new and innovative approaches to the standard presentation model.

**Speed Mentorship: Curating Tomorrow’s Opera Professionals** Harborview  
**Student Programming Committee**

**Ellen Denham, Macy Halverson, and Joshua May, presenters**

Students—are you interested in expanding your professional network and learning more about the different professions associated with opera? Join us for a student mentorship session where you’ll have a chance to meet opera professionals and ask them questions in a small group setting. Preregistration is required as the capacity is limited to 24 students. Please come prepared with at least five questions.

**Building Bridges: Leveraging Social Media for Artists and Organizations** Madison  
**Jenny Madruga Chavez, presenter**

This session will equip opera professionals with practical strategies for digital impact. Explore content creation, community engagement, and platform utilization on Instagram, and Facebook. Learn to showcase art, share insights, and engage authentically. Discover content planning, storytelling, and analytics. Whether emerging or established, “Building Bridges” provides actionable strategies for advancing opera in the digital age.

11:15 AM–1:00 PM **Plenary Session** Oglethorpe (Madison)  
**Opening Ceremonies and Keynote Address Luncheon**

**Tomer Zvulun**, General and Artistic Director of The Atlanta Opera will give the conference Keynote Address.

1:15–2:45 PM **Plenary Session** Oglethorpe (Madison)  
**All Community Voice Organizations at the Table**

**Moderator: Allen Henderson**

**Invited panelists**

**Ryan McMakin**, artistic director and **Gene Dobbs Bradford** executive director, Savannah Music Festival

**Maria Zouves**, founder, Savannah Voice Festival

**Danny Cohen**, past-president, American Traditions Vocal Competition

**Amy Williams**, executive director and **Keitaro Harada**, artistic director and conductor, Savannah Philharmonic

3:00–3:50 PM **Affinity Groups**

4:10–5:40 PM **Plenary Session** Oglethorpe  
**Masterclass with Mary Henderson Stucky**

5:40–7:30 PM **Dinner on Your Own**

7:30–9:30 PM **Plenary Session** Oglethorpe  
**Robert Hansen Collegiate Opera Scenes Competition**

This annual celebration of opera scenes is an entertaining, energetic evening featuring young artists from across the United States in undergraduate and graduate opera divisions and a musical theater division. National finalists are selected from a competitive preliminary round. This event is hosted by Jen Stephenson (Competition Co-Chair) and Paul Houghtaling (NOA Past-President).

9:30–10:30 PM **Opening Night Reception** Pulaski  
Meet up with old and new friends and welcome our new conference attendees.

## Tuesday, January 7

8:00–9:30 AM **Plenary Session** Oglethorpe  
**Building Global Connections for Young Voices Through Singing and Song**

**Karen Brunssen, Dana Lentini, Allen Henderson, Alexis Davis-Hazell, Sandra Oberoi, Amy Canchola, Diana Allan, Michael Ching, Christian Bester, Mutsumi Moteki, Cinderella Ksebati, Linda Fletcher, Lynette Pfund, Shelby VanNordstrand, presenters**

NATS has expanded its National Student Auditions to include children and youth. NATS has also added an International Region with six chapters: in South Korea, Hong Kong, South Africa, India, Ibero-American, and Eastern Europe/Central Asia. Considering both, it is an ideal time for the idea of “Building Global Connections for Young Singers Through Singing and Song.” Panelists have discussed perspectives, benefits, resources, challenges, musical traditions, languages, modalities, and storytelling for children. What could the global impact be for children and youth?

9:30–9:50 AM **Coffee Break** Lobby

9:30–12:00 PM **Poster Session** Pulaski

10:00–10:50 AM **Breakout Sessions**

**Tangible Benefits: New Opera for Young Audiences** Madison  
**Courtney Kalbacker, Tracelyn Gesteland, Gordon Ostrowski, Rachel J Peters, Lynette Pfund, Theo Popov, presenters**

Are you an opera educator, performer, or producer interested in the concrete, tangible benefits of producing opera for young people? This session is for you. The YPO committee will share strategies that have yielded proven positive results for their

organizations, including educational, artistic, and financial benefits for university programs, opera companies, and other institutional partners like public schools and local library systems. The session will also include brief excerpts from several new operas for young audiences, highlighting their compelling nature across multiple age groups.

**Navigating Collaborative Pianist Policies and Structures** Harborview  
**in Higher Education**

**J. Bradley Baker, Kathleen Kelly, Casey Robards, Kristen Roach, Lisa Sylvester, presenters**

This panel explores collaborative pianist structures within higher education. Drawing from the expertise of five seasoned pianist-coaches from diverse backgrounds, the session explores current trends, discusses challenges, and proposes practices that will promote maximum effectiveness in voice and opera programs of any size. Attendees can expect to gain an understanding of the current processes in higher ed; increase their ability to advocate for more meaningful support from administrators; and gain clarity on ways they can more effectively mentor student pianist-coaches in their programs.

11:10–12:00 PM

**Breakout Sessions**

**The Future is Female: Arias by Women Composers for All Voices** Madison  
**Teri Bickham, Lisa DeSpain, Jennifer Piazza-Pick, presenters**

In 2014, Opera America created the Discovery Grant for Female Composers to address the barriers preventing women's voices from being heard. As a result, female composers have created a substantial body of high caliber work. Yet, many of these works have not entered the canon and are absent from competitions, recitals, auditions, and scene programs. *The Future is Female: Arias by Women Composers for All Voices* is a grassroots call to action. This presentation will explore stand alone arias by female composers. Attendees will learn how they can take initiative, find composers and their works, and obtain music and rights. Together, the NOA/NATS community can bring these voices forward and make a difference!

**Creating a Three-Year Plan from Student to Professional** Harborview  
**Ann Baltz, presenter**

Every successful businessperson knows that having a well-defined product and a strong business plan are crucial to their success. Most singers have neither. In this interactive session attendees will learn to define their product, identify their career goals, and begin a three-year plan to accomplish their goals. How to set and negotiate fees can also be taught depending on the attendees and their interests. Attendees will work from multiple worksheets and handouts.

12:00–1:30 PM

**Regional Network Luncheon**

Oglethorpe

Hosted by Joshua May, NOA Vice President of Regions. Take time to meet and network with members in your region over lunch.

Student luncheon held off-site; gather in the lobby at noon to walk over together.

1:45–2:45 PM

**NOA Annual Business Meeting**

Oglethorpe

All NOA members are highly encouraged to attend. We will hear reports from officers, vote in new board members, acknowledge those who have served faithfully, and vote on essential items brought before the board.

3:00–3:50 PM

**Breakout Sessions**

**“The Miller’s Daughter: A New World Schubertiade”:** Madison  
**A New Chamber Opera Based on Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin***  
**Victoria Erickson, Jodi Goble, Chad Sonka, presenters**

An introduction to “The Miller’s Daughter: A New World Schubertiade,” a 2024 chamber opera based on the iconic song cycle by Franz Schubert with original music by Jodi Goble and a new English libretto by Goble and Victoria Erickson. The session will include brief remarks about the genesis of the project and an abridged semi-staged performance of the opera, featuring undergraduate singers from the Iowa State University Opera Studio.

**Perform like an Athlete:** Oglethorpe  
**Reconsidering the Tools for Maximizing Performance Potential and Managing Stress**  
**Benjamin Brecher, presenter**

In 1974 W. Timothy Gallwey’s book *The Inner Game of Tennis* sparked a revolution in how athletes train to achieve excellence in sports. This presentation is based on interviews with Gallwey in 2021 and will include video interviews with professional athletes. The needs of both the Twenty-first century musician and athlete have evolved and yet still have threads of consistencies that run deeply through the achievement of excellence, self-balance, and stress management. By providing tools and proven strategies this session will leave attendees with new considerations for performance and pedagogy.

**The importance of collaboration between conductor and singer:** Pulaski  
**a masterclass**  
**Nyela Basney, presenter**

This master class focuses on empowering young artists by further developing their ability to collaborate effectively with conductors, led by Nyela Basney with Casey Robards at the piano. Miss Basney will work with each singer on an aria that they prepare, conducting the aria using and explaining different conducting techniques, as they sing with piano. She will invite the young artists to experiment with conveying musical intention, helping them to gain confidence. The class environment is safe and open, enabling honest conversations.

4:10–5:40 PM

**Plenary Session**

Oglethorpe

**Welcoming our Neurodiverse Students to the Learning Space**

**Moderator: Stephanie Jensen-Moulton**

**Charlotte Bash, Thaddeus Bourne, and Emma Louise Steiner, presenters**

Description forthcoming.



5:40–7:00 PM

**Dinner on Your Own**

**\*Trolley transportation (departure 7:15pm from DeSoto): purchase \$5 round-trip trolley ride with your registration.**

8:00–9:30 PM

**Chamber Opera Performance** \*Georgia Southern University  
Armstrong Campus

***Bessie and Ma***

**Douglas Buchanan, composer and Caitlin Vincent, librettist**

Winner of the 2024-25 Dominick Argento Chamber Opera Competition

**Produced by Georgia Southern Opera**

**Rachel Eve Holmes, stage director and Terre Johnson, conductor**

## **Wednesday, January 8**

8:10–8:40 AM

**Coffee and Conversation**

Madison

**Robert Breault, conference photographer**

BYO coffee and join Robert Breault as he explores inexpensive ways to document and share high quality videos using devices you may already have. Take advantage of your own camera phone and the excellent camera phones your students use every day. Learn how to capture lessons, recitals, concerts, and, even operas without the need for expensive gear!

9:00–9:50 AM

**Breakout Sessions**

**What She Said:**

Oglethorpe

**The Sacred Opera Initiative performs works centering femme voices**

**Casey Robards, Lori Laitman, Beth Greenberg, Leah Lax, Anthony Plog,  
Ronald Kidd, Bruce Trinkley, presenters**

The Sacred in Opera Initiative performs excerpts of works by Lori Laitman/Leah Lax (Uncovered), Anthony Plog/Ronald J. Kidd (Magdalene) and Bruce Trinkley/Jason Charnesky (Eve's Odds). Uncovered is the story of Leah, a young lesbian who is drawn to the spiritual promises of the ultra-orthodox Hasidim, a Jewish sect but ultimately must choose between preserving her past or creating a new future. Magdalene tells the heartwarming stories of women moving from abuse, addiction to restoration and community. Eve's Odds is a retelling of the Genesis account of Eden, this time from Eve's point of view.

**The Italian Number Opera: A Guide for University Programs** Madison

**Melanie Helton, Rachele Jonck, presenters**

Does the thought of programming an Italian opera with recitative strike fear into your heart? Co-presenters Melanie Helton and Rachele Jonck will detail a research-driven process for teaching methods to prepare students for the operas of Mozart which can also be applied to Handel and Bel Canto. Session will include Italian verse forms and syllabification, the rhythm of Italian language poetry, advanced Italian diction (including phrasal doubling), methods of translation, going from libretto to score, appoggiaturas and ornamentation. Free materials for the process will be distributed.

**Portfolio Artistry: Skills for Future Success!** Pulaski

**Patrick Hansen, Rachel Krehm, presenters**

Join Rachel Krehm, co-founder of Opera 5, and Patrick Hansen, director of opera studies at McGill University, as they present a game-changing idea: How to create a paid internship for young singers that offers them not just experiential learning in performance but also gives them mentoring opportunities in artistic administration, stage management, music directing, marketing, and other vital skill sets that can expand into a portfolio career.

**Non-Hierarchical Opera Creation: Rethinking Collaboration** Harborview

**Rose Freeman, presenter**

How do we create and write new operas that serve both operas and communities? This seminar aims to explore how we can re-imagine the development of opera outside the traditional hierarchical methods that perpetuate composer emulation and shut down creative contributions of all members of the creative process. How can we open up the discussion of work in the workshop room to make work better through theatrical devising techniques, community organizing strategies, and vetted development strategies?

9:50–10:15 AM **Coffee Break** Lobby

10:15–11:45 AM **Plenary Session** Oglethorpe  
**ONE VOICE: Cultivating Voices for a Variety of Opportunities**

**Kevin Wilson, Patty Thom, presenters**

More than ever, vocalists are being asked to proficiently traverse diverse genres within the lifespan of their singing career. Equipping vocalists with the necessary vocal flexibility is a complex yet fundamental undertaking, demanding a foundational comprehension of vocal mechanics, an appreciation for aesthetic intricacies across various styles, and preserving artistic autonomy and integrity. This session is intended to provide teachers and vocalists with a grasp of genre subtleties, essential vocal foundation principles, and pragmatic

techniques to nurture and adeptly navigate their vocal abilities for a successful and enduring career in the present-day music industry.

11:45 AM–2:00 PM

**Lunch on Your Own**

12:00–5:00 PM

**Carolyn Bailey Argento Vocal Competition**

Madison

Watch as the finalists in the Scholarship and Artist Divisions compete for \$8,500 in prizes, plus the inaugural Carolyn Bailey Argento Fellowship for Vocal Performance, providing up to \$50,000 per year for graduate study. Hosted by Christopher Michel and Lisa Sylvester, competition chairs.

2:00–2:50 PM

**Plenary Session  
Conversation with Florence Quivar**

Pulaski

3:10–4:00 PM

**Breakout Sessions**

**Robert Owens Arias from the Archives**  
**Jamie Reimer, Stacie Haneline, presenters**

Oglethorpe

This presentation will introduce newly discovered stage works found in the Robert Owens Archive at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, including two unfinished *Singspiels*, an *opernparadie*, and an unclassified stage work in manuscript form. One of the most prolific African-American composers of art song, Owens' contribution to the operatic genre is not yet fully explored. The presenters will contextualize these works in Owen's life, as well as discuss the forthcoming publication of unpublished art songs and arias. The presentation culminates in a recital of selected arias from the Archives.

**Scholarly Paper Presentation**  
**Presenter TBD, selected from annual competition**

Harborview

**Alba Acting Technique: An Introduction**  
**Samuel Mungo, presenter**

Pulaski

The Alba Method for emotional induction is an amazing way to allow singers to access true emotion, while also singing with all the physical tools necessary for that task. Developed by research psychologist Dr. Susana Bloch, this scientific method of identifying, and regulating, true emotional connection can unlock singers who may block their emotions while they sing, and allow for what we all crave: true feeling combined with beautiful singing. This introduction to the method will explore its history, the science, examples of efficacy, intensity modulation, and applications for opera training.

4:10–5:10	<b>Student Meetup</b>	location TBD
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4:10–5:10	<b>NOA/NATS Future Leaders Meetup</b>	Harborview
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Are you interested in becoming involved in NOA or NATS leadership? Join NOA and NATS leadership for this informal networking opportunity.

5:10–6:30 PM	<b>Break</b>	
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6:30–7:30 PM	<b>Pre-Banquet Gathering</b>	Lobby
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Meet up with old friends and welcome our newcomers. Winners of the 2023–2024 Opera Production Competition will also be celebrated at this time with receipt of their certificates. *Cash bar.*

7:30–9:30 PM	<b>Awards Ceremony and Closing Banquet</b>	Oglethorpe
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We invite you to join us as we announce and hear from the winners of the Vocal Competition, recognize the inaugural winners of the Carolyn Bailey Argento Fellowship for Vocal Performance and the Dominick Argento Fellowship for Opera Composition, and present the “Lift Every Voice” Legacy Award and NOA Lifetime Achievement Award.

## Thursday, January 9

8:00–8:30 AM	<b>NOA Board of Directors Breakfast</b>	Lafayette
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8:30–11:30 AM	<b>NOA Board of Directors Meeting (including Retiring and New Directors)</b>	Lafayette
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