National Opera Association 72nd Annual Conference

Renaissance Minneapolis Hotel, The Depot January 6–9, 2027
"Opening Doors: Exchanging Practices and Expanding Possibilities."
(Updated 10/8/2026)

PROGRAM IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Wednesday, January 6

2:00–5:30 PM	**NOA Board of Directors Meeting**	Hiawatha 1

2:00-6:00 PM	**Pre-conference Workshop (*Ticketed Event)** Nautilus Music-Theater, St. Paul	

Wesley Balk: A Framework for Integrated Singing-Acting
Ben Krywosz, Facilitator

What happens when a performer stops treating singing, acting, and movement as separate skills, and begins to practice them as one integrated expressive act? That question sits at the heart of the Wesley Balk Opera/Music-Theater Institute. For nearly 50 years, the Institute has built upon the foundational skills of singing, acting, and movement, bringing them together into fully integrated performance, or what Dr. H. Wesley Balk called "The Complete Singer-Actor." Since its inception, the Institute has had a profound impact on hundreds of participants, and its principles have proven applicable across a wide range of performance styles, from traditional opera to Broadway musicals to new and experimental music-theater.

In this hands-on, experiential workshop (oriented toward teachers and directors), participants will have a rare opportunity to engage directly with Balk's Performing Power framework for integrated performance through active, embodied practice. Led by Ben Krywosz (Artistic Director of Nautilus Music-Theater and director of the Balk Institute) and composer/coach Michael Ching, the session will be supported by Institute colleagues and Nautilus performers through guided exercises that move beyond discussion into physical exploration, bringing the principles of integrated singing-acting into immediate practice in the room.

This limited-capacity workshop, with 24 participants, is designed to allow for depth, responsiveness, and individual attention. Participants should come prepared with a well-rehearsed song to explore and play with during the workshop; please email a copy of the score in advance of the session. They are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing suitable for movement and to arrive ready for a focused, energizing, and uncommon opportunity to work directly within this evolving approach to performance. A Certificate of Study will be issued to all participants upon completion.

Address: Nautilus Music-Theater, 308 E Prince St #190, St Paul, MN 55101

6:10–6:30 PM **Buses to the Chamber Opera Performance**

Departing from The Depot hotel, meet at the rear cul-de-sac for transportation to the University of Minnesota for the Dominick Argento Chamber Opera Competition performance.

7:00 PM **Chamber Opera Performance**
Ted Mann Hall, University of Minnesota

So You May Breathe in Light
Theo Chandler, composer; Lydia Hwang and Theo Chandler, librettists
Winner of the 2026–27 Dominick Argento Chamber Opera Competition

Produced by the University of Minnesota, School of Music
Karin Wolverton, stage director and TBD, conductor
Venue location: Ted Mann Hall, 2128 S 4th St, Minneapolis, MN 55455

8:00 PM **Reception and Meet & Greet** Ted Mann Lobby

Meet the cast and creative team behind the production, greet friends and colleagues, and enjoy a light reception with a cash bar in the theater lobby

Return buses will shuttle attendees back to The Depot hotel every 15 minutes until final bus at 9:15pm.

Thursday, January 7

8:00–5:00 PM **Registration** Great Northern Foyer

8:30–5:00 PM **Exhibitor Area Open** Great Northern Foyer

8:30–9:20 AM **Breakout Sessions**

Show Me the Drama! Using art song as training for the operatic stage Zephyr
Casey Robards, Scott MacLeod, Timothy Takach, Jocelyn Hagen, presenters

Presenters will share practical suggestions for voice teachers, stage directors, coaches and conductors to use art song to train students for opera. Casey Robards (conductor/coach/pianist) and Scott MacLeod (singer/voice teacher/stage director) co-taught a pilot class at the University of Illinois that utilized art songs of Timothy C. Takach and Jocelyn Hagen to prepare singers and pianists for opera to experiment with ways of training more students for opera, beyond preparation for a scenes class or show and to delve intentionally into drama, movement, and being conducted.

More than a Voice: Transferable Skills for a Sustainable Career in Music Southern Pacific
Lindsay Kate Brown, John Daugherty, presenters

More than a Voice: Transferable Skills for a Sustainable Career in Music is an interactive session for undergraduate and emerging singers transitioning into professional life. It explores how musical training builds transferable skills (communication, discipline, creativity, and critical thinking) that support careers in and beyond performance. The session also considers how early

work experiences outside music can strengthen artistry through time management, collaboration, and communication, while offering strategies

They Sing. They Build. They Lead. Rock Island

Jen Stephenson, presenter

Today's opera students must be more than performers—they must be adaptable, collaborative, and entrepreneurial. This session reframes rehearsal as a laboratory for growth mindset, agency, and real-world skills. Participants will explore strategies for shifting to student-driven processes that foster psychological safety, creative risk-taking, and accountability. Topics include reframing failure as feedback, shared leadership, and student-led work in marketing, media, design, and directing to prepare artists for impact onstage and beyond.

9:35–10:25 AM **Plenary Session** Southern Pacific

Opera, Baby! Opera for the very young: real, research-supported, and growing fast

Courtney Calbacker, Jenny Madrugo Chavez, Sorrel Bohanan McCarthy, Gordon Ostrowski, Theo Popov, Rachel Peters, presenters

Youth Persons Opera Committee

Opera for babies is GROWING! This presentation showcases successful and innovative musical programs for the very young in the U.S. and abroad and introduces a practical 20-minute "baby opera blueprint" adaptable for universities, opera companies, libraries, and preschools. You will learn how this subgenre can engage caregivers (age 20–40) in the opera world, expand early childhood artistic programming with community partners, and provide excellent training for student performers. Baby opera is a low-cost, flexible, and easily implemented initiative with minimal rehearsal needs. Come play with us!

10:40–11:30 AM **Breakout Sessions**

Reclaiming Speech in Song: Performance Practice in the Recitar Cantando Era Zephyr

J. Bradley Baker, presenter

This session considers performance practice in the early 17th-century recitar cantando style, emphasizing speech-based delivery and expressive text setting. Drawing on writings by Claudio Monteverdi, Giulio Caccini, and their contemporaries, it addresses flexible rhythm, rhetorical phrasing, and the collaborative role of continuo. Examples from early opera repertoire show how historically informed approaches can support clarity, nuance, and immediacy in performance.

Reviving the Pastiche: Collaborative Opera Creation for the 21st Century Rock Island

Dawn Pierce, presenter

What can an 18th-century operatic form teach today's universities? This session explores the baroque pastiche opera as a dynamic model for inclusive, collaborative, and student-centered opera-making. Using Penn State's *Non più nascoste* as a case study, participants will discover how over 100 artists and scholars united to revive works by 11 female baroque composers alongside canonical voices. Practical strategies for repertoire, partnerships, research integration, and large-scale production planning will be shared.

Argento Fellowship Speaker Southern Pacific

Rodrigo Camargo, 2026 Argento Fellow Winner
Michael Ching, Moderator

Dominick Argento Fellow for Opera Composition Rodrigo Camargo (DMA UMKC 2027) will present excerpts from his vocal works — operas and songs — in a dialogue with Argento Composition Committee Chair, Michael Ching, who will also present updates from previous fellows Mikeila McQueston and Marc Migó, and current fellow Stephanie Leotsakos.

11:45 AM–1:30 PM **Plenary Session** Great Northern Ballroom

Opening Ceremonies and Keynote Address Luncheon

Welcomes:
Christopher Pfund, President
Ann Marie Wilcox-Daehn, VP for Conferences
Ryan Taylor, President and General Director of Minnesota Opera
Kirk Severtson, Executive Director
Keynote Address: Frederica von Stade

1:45–3:00 PM **Affinity Group Meet-up**

Make your way to one of the Affinity Groups, designed for members to meet up with each other along lines of personal and professional interest. Groups will be lightly moderated so bring your ideas and questions for discussion of best practices, current challenges, and ideas for future discussions together.

Small Programs / One-Person Shops **TBD**

Share the joys and challenges of teaching voice or running an opera program mostly yourself or with a small team.

Programs with Graduate Focus **TBD**

Share about the complexities and opportunities of graduate centered programs or working with a large team.

Pianists, Coaches & Conductors **TBD**

Join other pianists, coaches, and conductors in camaraderie and idea sharing

Enthusiasts for Young Persons Opera **TBD**

Meet up with others who educate, create, and program for younger audiences.

Expanding the Repertoire **TBD**

Connect with other creators and producers of new works to share ideas, develop strategies, and foster collaborations.

Student Attendees **TBD**

Meet up with students from other universities and learn about NOA's programming and resources for students.

3:15–4:30 PM **Plenary Session** Great Northern Ballroom

Dominick Argento at 100: the Voice of American Lyric Opera
Special guests include Frederica von Stade, Libby Larsen, Juliana Hall, Philip Brunelle, Margo Garrett, Katherine Ciesinski, and Ben Krywosz
Christopher Pfund, moderator

Join President Christopher Pfund and our illustrious special guests in celebrating and learning about Dominick Argento's (1927–2019) influence on the stage, the voice, arts in MN, and the mentorship he provided to composers.

4:45–5:35 PM **Breakout Sessions**

The Monodrama: A Neglected Genre of Lyric Theatre Zephyr
Tracelyn Gesteland, Juan Carlos Mendoza, Amanda Johnston, presenters

The monodrama offers singers and composers a unique platform for intense exploration of character, thematic content, musical and dramatic expression, and storytelling via the framework of one central figure. Programming monodramas within university opera programs minimizes production costs while featuring advanced singers/directors. Monodramas forge an intimate setting, allowing for extended dramatic characterizations within a full role, and can be performed at opera galas, donor events, or on recruitment trips. We will perform two monodramas and detail key works/composers and staging options.

From Survey to Stage: Southern Pacific
Dance and Sonata as Performance Tools in Mozart Opera
Rebecca Plack, presenter

Voice students are routinely introduced to instrumental structures such as Baroque dances and sonata form in music history curricula, yet their connections to operatic works are rarely made explicit. This presentation brings those connections to the fore by showing how dance types and sonata principles function as expressive frameworks in the operas of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Focusing on *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Die Zauberflöte*, I demonstrate how melodic material interacts with dance rhythms and formal structures to distinguish adaptability from rigidity, convey dramatic subtext, and illuminate Enlightenment ideals.

5:35–7:30 PM **Dinner on Your Own**

7:30–9:30 PM **Plenary Session** Great Northern Ballroom

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 Marc Callahan, David Ronis (Competition Co-Chairs) and Paul Houghtaling (NOA Past-President).

9:30–10:30 PM **Opening Night Reception** Conservatory

Meet up with old and new friends and welcome our new conference attendees. Desserts and cash bar.

Friday, January 8

8:30–11:00 AM **Poster Session** Conservatory

8:30–5:00 PM **Exhibitor Area Open** Great Northern Foyer

9:00–9:50 AM **Breakout Sessions**

Transforming the Performing Ecosystem by Unlocking Hidden Voices Southern Pacific

Karen Bryan, Aundi Moore, Christine Jobson McMillian, Terry Eberhardt, presenters

"Transforming the Performing Ecosystem by Unlocking Hidden Voices" is a roundtable presentation led by the Executive Director and the Program Coordinators of the Denyce Graves Foundation. Anchored at the intersection of social justice, American history, and the arts, DGF seeks to expand the public's understanding of the rich, multicultural history of classical music while setting the stage for true representation in American vocal arts by providing opportunities, access and exposure that all singers need to take ownership of their talent and shape their own fulfilling careers.

Alexander Technique: An Essential Element of Opera Training Zephyr

Sara Goldstein, Harry Hobbs, presenters

This session is based on Sara Goldstein and Harry Hobbs' work as Alexander Technique teachers in the voice and opera programs at Boston Conservatory at Berklee and Boston University's Opera Institute. They will share data from a survey of students who have studied the Alexander Technique as part of their training. The presenters will work with singers to demonstrate how the Alexander Technique improves resonance, increases somatic awareness and overall freedom leading to expanded possibilities for singers in performance. This session will highlight the importance of including Alexander Technique in voice and opera training.

9:15–10:15 AM **Coffee Break** Conservatory

10:30 – 11:20 AM **Breakout Sessions**

Let's Get HIPP with Mozart! Zephyr
(Opening Doors and Possibilities with Historically Informed Performance practices)
Patrick Hansen, presenter

Patrick Hansen will blow the door wide open with way too many appoggiaturas, ornaments, and cadenzas to show how HIPP (Historically Informed Performance Practices) can empower the next generation of singers to authentically make Mozart come alive for the 21st century. Using sung examples from beloved Mozart arias, he will tackle fermate, appoggiatura, embellishing, creating cadenzas, and other exciting ways to understand how and why Mozart expected it all to happen! Attendees will be guided into a new embellished space and leave inspired to go forth and ornament!

Scholarly Paper Presentation Rock Island

Join us for the Scholarly Paper Presentation winner's paper presentation.

Refueling Your Pedagogical Tank Southern Pacific
Ann Baltz, presenter

Wesley Balk defined a singer's instrument as their voice, body, and mind. This concept evolved into the holistic education that became the hallmark of OperaWorks' programs for nearly 40 years. Attendees will engage in group activities to expand their physical, musical and dramatic vocabularies. Teaching and Learning styles will be introduced with ways to incorporate them into a teacher's pedagogy. The words we use can create a culture of openness and can have a profound effect on a singer's voice, confidence, and performance.

11:40 AM–12:20 PM **NOA Annual Business Meeting** Southern Pacific

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

11:30–1:00 PM **Student Luncheon** EaTo Restaurant

Luncheon for student registrants; gather in the hotel lobby at 11:30 to walk across the street to the restaurant.
Location: EaTo, 305 Washington Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55415

12:30–1:30 PM **Regional Network Luncheon** Great Northern Ballroom

Hosted by Joshua May, NOA Vice President of Regions. Take time to meet and network with members in your region over lunch.
All professional attendees are welcome. Go through the luncheon buffet and follow signs for the location of your regional gathering.

NOA Regions
Cal Western (AZ, CA, HI, NV, UT)
Central (IA, IL, MO)
Eastern (DE, NJ, NY, PA, WV, E. ON)

Great Lakes (IN, KY, MI, OH, W. ON)
Mid-Atlantic (MD, NC, SC, VA, DC)
New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT, QC, Maritimes)
North Central (MN, ND, SD, WI, MB, SK)
Northwestern (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA, AB, BC)
Southeastern (AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, PR, TN)
Texoma (NM, OK, TX)
West Central (CO, KS, NE, WY)

1:50–2:40 PM **Breakout Sessions**

Training the 21st-Century Operatic Mind: Southern Pacific
Neurocognition, Anxiety, and Teaching Strategies for Today's College Singer
Jon Truitt and Ryan Hourigan, presenters

Today's college singers face rising anxiety, digital distraction, and cognitive overload that shape how they learn and perform. This session connects current research, including *The Anxious Generation* (Jonathan Haidt) and *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Daniel Kahneman), to practical tools for structuring opera training that supports focus, resilience, and artistic risk while responding to 21st-century student realities.

Verb Your Aria: Using Chekhov's Psychological Gestures Rock Island
Ellen Denham and James Haffner, presenters

Do you ever wonder what to do with your hands during an aria? What if you had a movement vocabulary that you could draw upon? Michael Chekhov's acting technique incorporates psychological gestures: movements that embody the psychology and objective of a character. This hands-on workshop will teach participants the forms of some of the psychological gestures and give them the opportunity to practice these in dialogue with a partner, using spoken text from one of their arias. Participants are invited to come prepared with aria texts that could benefit from a gesture and to be ready for fully-embodied movement.

Slip-Casting: a new solution to the barriers of casting in collegiate opera Zephyr
Casey Joiner-Isaacs, presenter

"I wish we could do that show, but we don't have the people." Collegiate opera directors nationwide face the often-troubling barrier of providing edifying educational experiences for their opera students while also walking the perilous tightrope of casting resource availability. Slip-casting is a quantifiable method through which alternate casting options for major operatic roles can be identified and verified. Provide your students with experiences beyond our previous comprehension and illuminate the world of opera to all singers, both new and practiced!

3:00–4:30 PM **Plenary Session** Great Northern Ballroom

Technology Toolbox 101:
21st Century Tools for the Singer, Director, Person Bringing it All Together
Alan Hollinger, Lydia Bechtel, and Alonso Fierro, presenters

Meeting technical needs is one of the many challenges facing opera and other performance programs, especially when resources are limited. This practical workshop brings together three experts to share accessible strategies for sound and lighting, digital backdrops, and audio/video production.

Maestro Alonso Fierro will introduce the fundamentals of sound and lighting, including equipment selection, technical planning, and communicating basic lighting and sound concepts. Participants will also learn practical skills for executing a successful production—from planning a setup to rolling a cable.

Lydia Bechtel will demonstrate how digital backdrops and creative collaborations can provide an affordable alternative to traditional scenery. Drawing on a university partnership with graphic design students, she will show how projections can establish setting, enhance productions, reduce costs, and provide valuable real-world experience.

Alan Hollinger will cover audio/video fundamentals for opera singers, with an emphasis on maximizing the value of recordings while minimizing time and expense. Participants will learn how to plan effectively for audition videos and performance recordings, understand essential A/V equipment and terminology, and apply these principles through a live demonstration.

4:30–6:30 PM **Dinner on your own**

6:30 PM ***Bus transport to hotel or to MN Opera**

Departing from The Depot hotel, meet at the rear cul-de-sac for transportation to the Ordway in St. Paul for Minnesota Opera's performance of *My Name is Florence*. Ticketed attendees should board these buses for a prompt departure (single departure time only!).

7:30 PM ***Minnesota Opera: My Name is Florence (Ticketed Event)**

A Minnesota Opera New Works Initiative Production

Following its acclaimed world premiere at Minnesota Opera in January 2026, *My Name is Florence* returns for two special encore concert performances featuring the full original cast, MN Opera Orchestra, and MN Opera Chorus. Experience this beautiful and moving new work in the Ordway Concert Hall. The performances will be captured live and produced by Lexicon Classics.

Address: Ordway Concert Hall, 345 Washington St, St Paul, MN 55102

***Attendees must pre-purchase tickets as an add-on in conference registration (bus transport is included).**

9:15 PM **Buses return to the hotel**

Saturday, January 9

8:00–10:30 AM **New Work Expo** Conservatory

8:30–4:00 PM **Exhibitor Area Open** Great Northern Foyer

9:00–9:50 AM **Breakout Sessions**

Expanding the Canon: Practical Pathways for Programming Zarzuela Zephyr

Lily Guererro, Jourdan Laine Howell, Lucas Moncada Zoll, presenters

As Spanish-language opera continues to gain prominence on professional stages, collegiate programs have an opportunity to prepare students through repertoire that is both artistically rich and culturally relevant. This session explores practical pathways for bringing zarzuela into the opera curriculum, from locating scores and navigating translations to selecting scenes that fit a variety of voice types, skill levels, and production needs. Through musical examples and a curated collection of repertoire, presenters will demonstrate how these works can enrich opera workshops, scenes programs, and fully staged productions. Participants will leave with a digital resource packet and the confidence to make their first zarzuela production possible.

The Showing of Love by Brooke Joyce: Great Northern Ballroom

A mix of Medieval and Modern

Brooke Joyce, Susan McBerry, Kelley Nassief, presenters

The Sacred in Opera Committee

The Showing of Love, by Brooke Joyce, is a contemporary experiential opera inspired by the 14th-century mystical writings of Julian of Norwich. Combining mezzo-soprano, dance, chant-like vocal writing, and electro-acoustic sound, the work transforms Julian's visions into a mystical and timeless theatrical experience. Led by the composer, this session will explore Julian's spiritual legacy, the composer's inspiration, practical approaches to producing the work, and its possibilities for theaters, sanctuaries, and university settings. Sung excerpts will be included.

9:50–10:30 AM	**Coffee Break**	Conservatory
10:30 AM–12:00 PM	**Plenary Session**	Great Northern Ballroom

Wellbeing and Community Engagement in the Arts - The MN Opera Model.

Karen Quisenberry, Marit Appeldoom, Annie Enneking, Allison Lewis, presenters

Minnesota Opera has long been a leader in the development of new works and educational outreach and have been working to protect their artists in innovative ways. The work of musical storytelling through opera, including stories that portray violence, is deeply meaningful and culturally essential. As institutions bring these narratives to life on the stage, there is growing recognition of the value of integrating trauma and mental health-informed practices into the creative process. MN Opera has done by incorporating the emerging role of the Resilience Advisor, a position designed to support the wellbeing of artists and production teams while strengthening artistic outcomes. The MN Opera team will also share how the integration of the community is central to the commissioning and development of new operas. This is key in order to challenge historically exclusionary policies and traditions embedded within the U.S. opera system.

12:00–1:30 PM	**Lunch on your own**	
1:00–5:30 PM	**Carolyn Bailey Argento Vocal Competition**	Great Northern Ballroom

Watch as finalists in the Scholarship and Artist Divisions compete for more than $15,000 in prizes. This year, the Carolyn Bailey Argento Fellowship for Vocal Performance, providing up to

$50,000 per year for graduate study, takes on special significance as we celebrate the centennial of composer Dominick Argento. Hosted by competition chairs Christopher Michel and Lisa Sylvester.

2:10–3:00 PM	**Breakout Sessions**	

Galant Gems: 18th-Century Operas for Young Singers You Didn't Know You Needed Zephyr

Kristin Ditlow, Nicole Kenley-Miller, presenters

This program explores the unique pedagogical value of lesser-known 18th-century operas for young singers, focusing on works by Galuppi, Paisiello, and Spontini. With few or no recordings available, performers must rely on primary sources and historically informed practice. Reconstructing overtures, filling in missing orchestral parts, and making thoughtful cuts reveal valuable insights into 18th- and early 19th-century style. These works also provide exceptional training for young singers in comic acting and the precision of Italian secco recitative, making them powerful pedagogical tools.

Developing the Radiant Performer: Wesley Balk in the Studio Rock Island

Ben Krywosz, presenter

More than 50 years after Dr. H. Wesley Balk began developing his ideas about the fully integrated singer-actor, his work is still circulating in the field, sometimes as wisdom, sometimes as rumor, and occasionally in forms he might not recognize. This session offers a chance to go back to the source: to look at what Balk actually proposed, how his thinking evolved, and why it may have something important to say to performers, teachers, and directors today.

Navigating the Room: Adapting to the Professional Operatic Ecosystem Southern Pacific

Carl Pantle, Nyela Basney, presenters

Navigating the Room: Adapting to the Professional Operatic Ecosystem. During an operatic production, who do you call if you're running late? When should you approach the conductor with a question? What does a répétiteur actually do? Navigating the Room is an inviting panel discussion for students and young artists learning how to move through the professional rehearsal room. Panelists will offer specific advice on roles, etiquette, self-advocacy, asking the right person the right question, and reconciling differing musical and dramatic notes, with time for audience questions.

3:15–4:05 PM	**Plenary Session**	Rock Island

Special Panel with our Legacy Honorees

The Legacy Committee

4:20–5:00	**Student Meetup**	Hiawatha 1

4:20–5:00	**Learn about NOA Leadership Opportunities**	Zephyr

5:00–6:30 PM	**Break**	

6:30–7:30 PM	**Pre-Banquet Gathering**	Conservatory

Meet up with old friends and welcome our newcomers. Winners of the 2025–2026 Opera Production Competition can pick up their certificates and pose for photos. *Cash bar.*

7:30–9:30 PM	**Awards Ceremony and Closing Banquet** Great Northern Ballroom	

Join us for a memorable evening celebrating the artistry and achievements of our colleagues and students. We will announce and hear from the winners of the Vocal Competition, celebrate the recipient of the Carolyn Bailey Argento Fellowship for Vocal Performance, honor two extraordinary artists and advocates for American opera, NOA Lifetime Achievement Award recipients Libby Larsen and Frederica von Stade, and recognize this year's Legacy Award recipients. It will be a fitting celebration of artistry, achievement, and the people who help shape the future of opera.

Sunday, January 10

8:00–8:30 AM	**Officer and Board of Directors Breakfast**	**Hiawatha 1**
8:30–11:30 AM	**Officer and Board of Directors Meeting**	**Hiawatha 1**