



NORTH CAROLINA OPERA AWARDED GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

RALEIGH, NC—Jun. 22, 2020—North Carolina Opera has been awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to produce a staged version of Paul Moravec and Mark Campbell’s acclaimed oratorio *Sanctuary Road*.

Sanctuary Road is based on William Still’s book *The Underground Railroad Records*. Still (1821-1902) was a noted African American abolitionist, businessman, civil rights leader, and historian, who was a prominent conductor on the Underground Railroad. He aided fugitive slaves to freedom and also meticulously documented their plight. Campbell’s libretto includes first-hand stories from the road based on Still’s interviews and writings. These harrowing and touching accounts, set against Moravec’s cinematic, operatically accessible music, cut back and forth from terrifying chase scenes to quiet moments of reflection to the joys of freedom.

NCO’s General Director **Eric Mitchko** commented: “Moravec’s and Campbell’s work interprets these important historical episodes in beautiful and exciting song. *Sanctuary Road* a piece that can speak to all of us, and we are grateful to the NEA for its generous support.” North Carolina Opera has worked with Opera Memphis in the development of this project.

The production will be directed by Dennis Whitehead Darling. Performance information for NCO’s production of *Sanctuary Road* will be announced at a later date.

PAUL MORAVEC (Composer)

Paul Moravec, recipient of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize in Music, is the composer of numerous orchestral, chamber, choral, operatic, and lyric pieces. Other honors include Rome Prize Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, three awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation. A graduate of Harvard College and Columbia University, he has taught at Columbia, Dartmouth, and Hunter College and currently holds the special position of University Professor at Adelphi University. His opera with librettist Terry Teachout, *The Letter* (based on the 1927 play by W. Somerset Maugham), received its world premiere 2009 at The Santa Fe Opera. His opera with Mark Campbell, *The Shining* (based on the Stephen King novel), received its world premiere in 2016 at Minnesota Opera and will be performed by Opera Colorado in June 2021.

www.paulmoravec.com.

MARK CAMPBELL (librettist)

Mark Campbell's work as a librettist is at the forefront of the current contemporary opera scene in this country. His nearly 40 operatic librettos demonstrate a versatility in subject matter, style, and tone, an adeptness at creating successful work for both large and intimate venues. The composers with whom he collaborates represent a roster of the most eminent composers in classical music, including three Pulitzer Prize winners.

Mr. Campbell's works include *Silent Night*, *The Shining*, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, *As One*, *Later the Same Evening*, *Stonewall*, and *Elizabeth Cree*. He was the librettist (along with Davis Miller) for D.J. Sparr's *Approaching Ali*, which North Carolina Opera presented in 2015. *Silent Night* received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music and is one of the most frequently performed contemporary operas in recent history. After its premiere at Minnesota Opera, the work was broadcast on PBS and continues to be produced by opera companies in the United States, Canada and Europe. www.markcampbellwords.com.

DENNIS WHITEHEAD DARLING (Stage Director)

Dennis Whitehead Darling earned degrees in music theater and directing from both Texas State and the University of Memphis. He has directed pieces for Opera Memphis, Hattiloo Theatre, Circuit Playhouse, and Spazio Teatro in Milan. He has also served as music director for productions with Playhouse on the Square, Austin Playhouse, and others. He is an African American stage and music director who is passionate about presenting transformative art that addresses issues of marginalization and challenges oppression, bigotry, and racism. He was the first McCleave Fellow in Directing for Opera Memphis. www.denniswhiteheaddarling.com.

NORTH CAROLINA OPERA

North Carolina Opera was formed in 2010 from the merger of The Opera Company of North Carolina and Capital Opera Raleigh. NCO's mission is to enhance the cultural life of North Carolina by presenting artistically significant opera productions of the highest quality, strengthening and expanding audiences for opera in the region, and providing regional artists opportunities to participate in operatic productions and events.

During its first decade, NCO has produced fully staged opera productions from the standard repertory and performed works of Wagner, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, and Bellini in concert and semi-staged formats. The company's acclaimed Wagner series has included a semi-staged production of the complete *Das Rheingold* as well as acts in concert from *Die Walküre*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Siegfried*. NCO was part of the consortium of opera companies that commissioned Jennifer Higdon and Gene Scheer's opera *Cold Mountain* based on the novel by Charles Frazier. NCO presented the opera's Southern U.S. premiere in collaboration with Carolina Performing Arts at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Other contemporary offerings include Philip Glass's *Les Enfants Terribles*, Tyshawn Sorey's *Cycles of My Being* (with texts by Terrance Hayes), John Supko's *All Souls*, D.J. Sparr's *Approaching Ali* (with libretto by Mark Campbell and Davis Miller), Patrick Morganelli's *Hercules vs. Vampires*, and Daniel Thomas Davis's *Family Secrets*.

The company also has presented concerts and vocal recitals by Metropolitan Opera singers such as Michael Fabiano, Lawrence Brownlee, Anthony Roth Costanzo, and Leah Crocetto. NCO's education programs bring opera to schools across Wake County and surrounding counties. NCO is a resident performing arts organization at the Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts in Raleigh and also performs at other venues throughout the Triangle. North Carolina Opera is funded in part by the City of Raleigh based on recommendations of the Raleigh Arts Commission. www.ncopera.org.

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NORTH CAROLINA OPERA CONTACT

Bruce Loving, bruce.loving@ncopera.org, +1 (202) 870-9572