

Opera  
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POSITION PROFILE

# General Director

Opera Philadelphia

Philadelphia, PA





# ABOUT OPERA PHILADELPHIA

Opera Philadelphia is at the forefront of the future of opera.

Since its inception in 1975, Opera Philadelphia has brought classic, canonical opera to the Philadelphia stage. In recent years, Opera Philadelphia has also established its reputation as a hub to incubate, foster, and showcase new works relevant to the multi-cultural Philadelphia region.

Opera Philadelphia is a hallmark of Philadelphia's artistic community and is globally recognized as a leader in classic artistry, as well as in the development and innovation of the art form for the 21st century.

## MISSION

Delivering outstanding productions of traditional and new repertoire that engage our public and propel our genre forward.

Identifying extraordinary artists, both established and emerging, and provide opportunities for them to create their most imaginative and inspired work.

Presenting innovative programming relevant to the multi-cultural Philadelphia region that broadens and diversifies the opera audience.



The heart and soul of Opera Philadelphia is its Orchestra and Chorus, led by Jack Mulroney Music Director **Corrado Rovaris** and Chorus Master **Elizabeth Braden**. The Opera Philadelphia Orchestra is comprised of musicians from the greater Philadelphia region, many of whom also play with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Philadelphia Ballet, and The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia. The Opera Philadelphia Chorus is an all-professional ensemble made up of singers from the greater Philadelphia region, hailing from many of the nation’s finest music programs.

As opera has evolved to adapt to a changing landscape and shifting audiences in recent decades, Opera Philadelphia is leading the field in honoring the legacy of the art form alongside the development of new opera. With the launch of the American Repertoire Program in 2011, Opera Philadelphia solidified its role as a national leader in the creation of new works. In the time since, Opera Philadelphia has commissioned or co-commissioned eight new operas as well as new productions of renowned works. Its new works practice is anchored by a commitment to fostering a new generation of opera creators and telling authentic stories. Recent new works have included the following world-premiere operas:

*Breaking the Waves*, a chamber opera by composer-in-residence **Missy Mazzoli** and librettist **Royce Vavrek**, is based on the 1996 Academy Award-nominated film by Lars von Trier. *Breaking the Waves* was the winner of the 2017 award for Best New Opera from the Music Critics Association of North America.

*We Shall Not Be Moved*, a chamber opera by acclaimed composer and performer **Daniel Bernard Roumain**, whose work defies genre, and librettist **Marc Bamuthi Joseph**, an arts activist known for spoken-word performance. The work was described as “ambitiously interdisciplinary,” by director **Bill T. Jones**, who is also renowned as a celebrated choreographer, dramaturge, and dancer, and was named one of the “Best Classical Music Performances of 2017” by *The New York Times*.

*10 Days in a Madhouse*, an opera from composer **Rene Orth** and librettist **Hannah Moscovitch**, starring **Kiera Duffy** (*Breaking the Waves*) as Nellie, mezzo **Raehann Bryce-Davis** in her company debut as Lizzie, and baritone **Will Liverman** as Dr. Blackwell. **Daniela Candillari** made her company debut at the podium, and **Joanna Settle** (*Sky on Swings*) directed the production. The set was designed by **Andrew Lieberman**. Widely acclaimed, *10 Days in a Madhouse* made the *Washington Post*’s best classical music of 2023 list – featured at number 1.



Key partners in the development of new works have included the **Apollo Theater**, which co-produced *We Shall Not Be Moved* as well as [\*Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD\*](#), a chamber opera by composer **Daniel Schnyder** and librettist **Bridgette A. Wimberly**, starring **Lawrence Brownlee** as Charlie Parker, and featuring soprano **Angela Brown** and baritone **Will Liverman**. *YARDBIRD* marked the first time opera was performed on the legendary Apollo Theater stage, and the first time Opera Philadelphia produced in New York. Opera Philadelphia also has a strong, years-long partnership with the **Academy of Vocal Arts** and **The Barnes Foundation** in fostering emerging artists.

More recently, the 2022-2023 season included a bold take on [\*La bohème\*](#) from director and MacArthur “Genius” **Yuval Sharon**. The work was co-produced alongside Detroit Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, and Spoleto Festival USA. Opera Philadelphia’s institutional funders and supporters have also included the **Allen R. and Judith Brick Freedman Venture Fund for New Opera**, **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, and the **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**, among many others.



In strengthening its commitment to fostering new work, Opera Philadelphia's programs include, but are not limited to:

**Composer in Residence:** Opera Philadelphia is proud to offer the nation's first comprehensive, operatic Composer in Residence program. Funded by the Mellon Foundation, the Composer in Residence (CIR) program provides a highly individualized professional development path for today's most promising opera composers, selected on a competitive basis. Now in its 11th year, the well-established program fosters tomorrow's masterpieces of opera through individualized creative development. To date, the program has featured **Lembit Beecher, Courtney Bryan, David Hertzberg, David T. Little, Missy Mazzoli, Andrew Norman, Rene Orth, and Tyshawn Sorey**. Among them, they have been nominated for the 2024 Grammy Awards, are critically acclaimed, have been recognized with a 2023 MacArthur Fellowship, and lauded as emerging forces breaking new ground in the opera and classical music landscapes.

**Emerging Artists Program:** The Opera Philadelphia stage has a history as a welcoming environment where rising vocal talents are nurtured. In celebration of the company's ongoing commitment to emerging talent, Opera Philadelphia is strengthening its mission of cultivating future stars through the Emerging Artists Program.

**Festival O:** Opera Philadelphia recently completed its fifth incarnation of Festival O, which launched in 2017 with the vision of gathering the many great and diverse aspects of opera into one experience: stars singing opera's great compositions in the historic Academy of Music; world premieres brought to life by some of today's great composers and librettists; and an exploration of what the art form has been and should be in the future. *Simon Boccanegra* was recently featured in Festival O23. A new production with a powerhouse cast, baritone **Quinn Kelsey** starred as Simon Boccanegra, alongside sopranos **Ana María Martínez** and **Jennifer Rowley**, who portrayed his long-lost daughter Amelia.

Known for making world-class opera more accessible and inviting new audiences, Opera Philadelphia has served as a convener and connector among Philadelphia's vibrant artistic and cultural institutions. Opera Philadelphia's audiences enjoy its productions at multiple venues across the city, including, but not limited to:

### Academy of Music

Part of the Kimmel Cultural Campus, this magnificent 19th century opera house is the oldest venue in the United States still used for its original purpose. In April 2024, Opera Philadelphia's production of *Madame Butterfly* will be featured at the Academy.

### The Wilma Theater

Beginning as a feminist theater collective of Philadelphia artists in 1973, the Wilma Theater has since grown into one of the Avenue of the Arts' many shining jewels, and recently presented the World Premiere of *10 Days in a Madhouse* in September 2023.

### The Suzanne Roberts Theatre

The Suzanne Roberts Theatre is a theater on Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts. The theater opened in October 2007 and is home to Philadelphia Theatre Company. The Philadelphia Premiere of *Unholy Wars* was presented at the Suzanne Roberts Theatre in September 2023.

In addition to the extraordinary work of its best-in-class, dedicated staff, Opera Philadelphia success is also intrinsically tied to union participation. The members, artists, craftsmen, and craftswomen of the following labor organizations greatly contribute to the company's performances:

- American Federation of Musicians, Local 77
- The American Guild of Musical Artists, the union of professional singers, dancers, and production personnel in opera, ballet, and concert, affiliated with the AFL-CIO, represents the Artists and Staging Staff for the purposes of collective bargaining.
- International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local 8
- Theatrical Wardrobe Union, Local 799, I.A.T.S.E.
- Make-up Artists and Hair Stylists Union, Local 799, I.A.T.S.E.
- United Scenic Artists, Local 829, I.A.T.S.E.
- Box Office and Front of House Employees Union, Local B29, I.A.T.S.E.
- Highway Truck Drivers and Helpers, Local 107, Teamsters

LEARN MORE ABOUT OPERA  
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[www.operaphila.org](http://www.operaphila.org)



# THE OPPORTUNITY

The Board of Directors of Opera Philadelphia seeks a strong visionary leader with a passion for opera to take the helm of a globally recognized, iconic institution and steer it into its next chapter.

Opera Philadelphia has experienced tremendous success and recognition on the world stage, creating a wonderful opportunity for the next leader to build on that momentum as the company prepares to celebrate its 50th year.

The General Director will be able to help shape Opera Philadelphia's future as a leader in opera while overseeing strategy and operations. The presence of a skilled and experienced staff will allow the new General Director to exercise vision while leveraging and empowering the team to deliver on Opera Philadelphia's mission.

Five Vice Presidents currently serve as senior management leaders reporting to the General Manager, alongside a Chief of Staff and the Jack Mulroney Music Director. Each Vice President is directly responsible for executing programs and operations, including artistic operations, community initiatives, development, marketing and communications, and people operations and inclusion.

In partnership with the Board and staff, the General Director will deepen engagement with regional and national funders, embrace the Philadelphia community, and serve as a unifying and stabilizing force for both new and legacy opera lovers alike.

As a champion of opera and Philadelphia, the General Director will develop and enhance financial resources as well as the national and global networks necessary to strengthen Opera Philadelphia's position/place as a leading opera company, thereby re-invigorating the opera landscape to engage, steward, and retain new local audiences.



The General Director will also work with the leadership and the Board to set achievable budgets, develop and implement relevant and innovative plans, and evaluate Opera Philadelphia's performance against the strategic goals approved by the Board of Directors.

Key responsibilities of the next General Director include the following:

## Strategic Leadership and Planning

- Lead strategic and long-range planning.
- Oversee the effective utilization of resources to advance and support operations alongside the leadership team.
- Provide visionary and compassionate leadership, including maintain a participatory and collaborative culture that attracts, retains, and motivates a diverse and talented staff.
- Inspire and support high staff productivity through mentoring and partnership to maximize staff talents and skills.
- Lead by prioritizing and cultivating shared purpose among staff and the Board of Directors.
- Explore new avenues of expansion and influence, including strategic collaborations and partnerships with other institutions.
- Lead and support the staff in identifying and implementing strategic initiatives that enhance Opera Philadelphia's capacity to serve the Philadelphia region and beyond.
- Facilitate and lead the continued commitment to accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and racial equity.

## Fundraising, External Relations, and Ambassadorship

- Cultivate, inspire and secure leadership gifts, in partnership with the VP of Development, to support operations, special projects, audience growth, and campaigns.
- Spearhead cultivation and stewardship efforts with major donors to secure their support for ongoing mission pursuits, campaigns, and selected initiatives.
- Provide leadership for marketing and communications activities, including advertising, public relations, social media, website, and graphic design.
- Represent Opera Philadelphia to institutional partners, peer institutions, public and governmental entities, professional associations, the media, and the general public.
- Promote Opera Philadelphia through public speaking, media interviews, opinion pieces, social media, and by attending and participating in industry conferences and events.
- Develop and maintain strategic and collaborative relationships with community members, organizations, and educational institutions. Serve and participate on external committees, boards, and professional organizations, collaborating with local, regional, national, and international partners, as appropriate.
- Work with elected officials and administrators at the local, state, and national levels.



## Management, Operational, and Financial Stewardship

- Provide ultimate leadership for a major, complex arts institution, including oversight of an approximately \$10 million annual budget encompassing artistic operations, community initiatives, development, marketing and communications, and people operations and inclusion.
- Lead an organization of 30+ full-time employees and provide direct oversight of the senior leadership team.
- Lead and support the team in developing Opera Philadelphia's annual operating budget for Board approval. Ensure the Board is provided with regular financial reports.
- Oversee activities pertaining to budgetary oversight, expenses, and revenue management, in addition to all business strategies, in partnership with the leadership team.
- Provide proactive, creative, and effective leadership related to earned revenue, ensuring optimal financial performance of all revenue-generating activities of Opera Philadelphia.

## Governance

- Exercise best practices in governance and ethics and in all ways that will best serve the mission and goals of Opera Philadelphia.
- Serve as primary staff liaison to the Board of Directors, engaging and coordinating with the Board and its committees, and adhering to specific responsibilities and authorities of the General Director as outlined in the By-Laws of Opera Philadelphia.



# CANDIDATE PROFILE

While no one candidate will possess every quality outlined for this position, strong candidates will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes:

## A Visionary and Strategic Leader

The General Director is a visionary, innovative, and strategic leader able to develop and articulate a vision in alignment with the mission for the ongoing advancement and sustainability of a complex arts institution. This leader brings an ability to leverage the talents of a committed staff and Board to lead strategic planning and guide implementation and evaluation efforts.

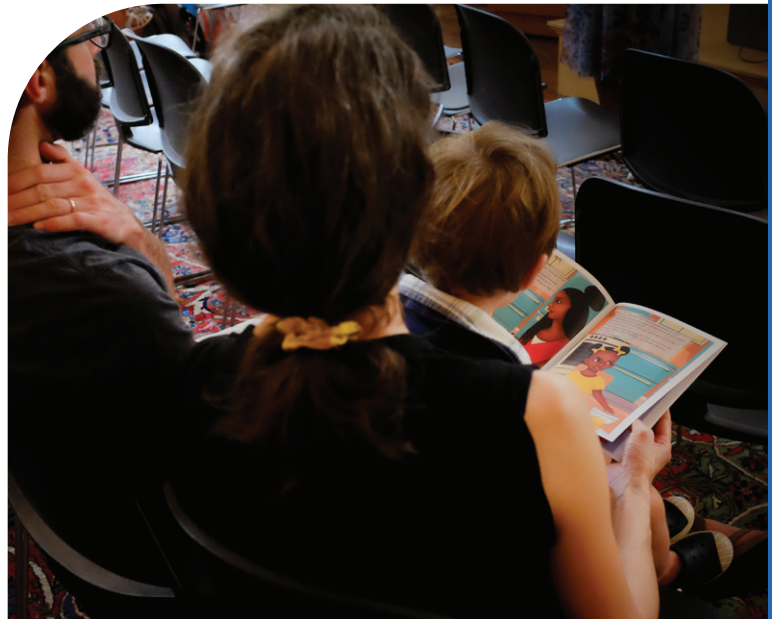
A curious investigator, this leader actively and strategically seeks out opportunities to listen to and learn from others, develop partnerships, and build coalitions to advance the mission of the institution and its strategic priorities. The General Director recognizes the uniqueness of Opera Philadelphia's position as a pillar of leadership in the local community, the Philadelphia region, and within its national and global sphere of influence.

## A Dynamic Ambassador and Fundraiser

The General Director, through a combination of educational or artistic background and/or life experiences, believes in and advocates for the power of opera to improve the lives of individuals and communities. As Opera Philadelphia's primary ambassador, the General Director is an influential leader, capable of understanding and communicating the value of opera across a wide range of audiences, including philanthropists and institutional collaborators, ranging from foundations to corporations and peer arts organizations. This leader possesses exceptional interpersonal skills with the ability to build and sustain strong support across a wide range of constituents, including Opera Philadelphia's staff, orchestra and chorus, the Board of Directors, and donors, as well as with community and audience members.

The General Director brings a natural inclination to the role for engagement with people to attract new audiences, retain legacy supporters, identify new funding opportunities, and sustain programs and operations. An experienced leader, the General Director will bring a strong track record of success in fundraising and will be energized by the prospect of partnering with the development team to identify, cultivate, and steward donors.

The ideal candidate inspires trust and confidence and excels at developing strategies to continually amplify Opera Philadelphia's brand and visibility in the Philadelphia region and beyond. The General Director brings experience to promote the importance of access, inclusion, and diversity in all areas of Opera Philadelphia's work and convey its importance with authenticity, sincerity, and passion.



### Institutional Leadership and Business Acumen

The General Director brings the ability to set clear priorities, delegate, and guide investment in people and systems. The ideal candidate has a proven track record of successful planning and oversight of an organization with complex operations and ensures fiduciary responsibility, transparent financial management practices, and accountability. A natural leader, the General Director has the ability to inspire staff, the Board of Directors, donors, partners, and volunteers to work together to achieve new heights for Opera Philadelphia.

The General Director has an understanding of the needs of Philadelphia and its audiences. The candidate also brings demonstrated success building a culture of collaboration and support, motivating and inspiring others to achieve impact through creativity, fostering teamwork, and leveraging individual strengths to meet organizational goals. The General Director possesses the ability to leverage the talents of a dynamic staff and provide a productive work environment with professional growth opportunities that result in team cohesion and camaraderie.

### A Passion for Opera Philadelphia's Mission

Fully embracing the mission, the General Director is a bold thinker, knowledgeable about or affinitive toward opera and the arts more holistically. The ideal candidate brings a sincere passion for opera. The ability to be inclusive, take ownership, work in partnership with others, and foster a culture of shared purpose and belonging is critical. Most importantly, the General Director is known for leading with sincerity and empathy, honesty and credibility, and the highest levels of personal and professional integrity and ethics.





# COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Salary for the role is anticipated to range from \$230,000 to \$250,000, commensurate with experience. Opera Philadelphia offers comprehensive benefits, including medical and dental insurance, paid parental leave, a retirement match, short- and long-term disability insurance, life insurance, and a generous paid time off policy.

# CONTACT

Koya Partners | Diversified Search Group has been exclusively retained for this engagement, which is being led by Chartise Clark and Stephen Milbauer. Submit a compelling cover letter and resume by [filling out our Talent Profile](#). All inquiries are strictly confidential.

Koya Partners | Diversified Search Group is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to individuals living with disabilities. If you are a qualified individual living with a disability and need assistance expressing interest online, please email [nonprofitsearchops@divsearch.com](mailto:nonprofitsearchops@divsearch.com). If you are selected for an interview, you will receive additional information regarding how to request an accommodation for the interview process.

*Opera Philadelphia is an Equal Opportunity Employer and prohibits discrimination and harassment of any kind. We are committed to the principle of anti-racism and to providing employees with a work environment free of discrimination and harassment. Read more about Opera Philadelphia's Commitment to Racial Equity [here](#).*

## ABOUT KOYA PARTNERS | DIVERSIFIED SEARCH GROUP

Koya Partners, a Diversified Search Group company, is the nation's premier search firm dedicated to mission-driven leadership. Since its founding in 2004, Koya has had an exclusive focus on mission-driven clients and was founded on the belief that the right leader can transform an organization and have a deep and measurable impact on our world. Koya works with nonprofits & NGOs, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

Diversified Search Group is consistently recognized by Forbes on its top 10 list of "America's Best Executive Recruiting Firms" and is an industry leader in recruiting transformational leaders for a changing world. The firm is deliberately different in its approach, with best-in-class teams who have decades of experience in cultivating inclusive leaders, understanding the dimensions of diversity, and building equitable teams.

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