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Austin Opera’s first World Premiere commission, *Ofrenda*, will open the company’s new Butler Performance Center in October 2026

Bilingual opera by composer Jorge Sosa and librettist John de los Santos has developed over several years in residency with Austin Opera

Austin Opera’s first production in its new **Butler Performance Center** will be the October 2026 world premiere of ***Ofrenda***, a 90-minute chamber opera performed in English and Spanish and funded by the **Butler Fund for Spanish Programming**. Developed over years of partnership with composer **Jorge Sosa** and librettist **John de los Santos**, this new work is a celebration of family, cultural memory, and Día de los Muertos traditions. *Ofrenda* will open the 2026–2027 season, representing a major milestone for the company—it is Austin Opera’s first commissioned work and the culmination of years of investment in developing new voices and stories that reflect Latinx communities, family, and tradition.

“I cannot think of a more ideal work to help us open the Butler Performance Center than *Ofrenda*, which has grown right here in Austin over the past three years through Jorge and John’s work in the Residency for Latinx Creatives,” said **Annie Burridge**, Austin Opera’s General Director & CEO. “Presenting this world premiere is both a celebration of artistic innovation and an act of community representation, highlighting the power of opera to honor heritage, inspire empathy, and bring people together across cultures.”

“The idea for *Ofrenda* came to me during COVID,” said composer **Jorge Sosa**. “I wanted to write a work that centered around healing and celebrated essential workers. I was thinking about the curanderas (traditional healers) in México and the mysticism that surrounds them. John de los Santos has been an incredible creative partner in developing the idiosyncrasies of the characters and the bilingual libretto. The opera reads like a hospital procedural show, mixed with a healthy dose of magical realism and high drama. The main character is Macaria, a custodian at a hospital who has an encounter with death (Señora). Moved by Macaria’s kindness, Señora sheds a tear of life into Macaria’s water bottle, giving her the power to heal anyone. But the price for such power will eventually catch up with her.”

“In *Ofrenda*, themes of remembrance, love, and healing are woven through a narrative that honors life’s enduring connections,” said **Claudia Chapa**, Austin Opera’s Associate

Director of Artistic Operations and Curator of Hispanic & Latinx Programming. “The work resonates deeply in Austin, where more than one-third of residents identify as Hispanic or Latinx, and where Austin Opera has cultivated long-term relationships with the community through programs such as *Concerts at the Consulate* and the Residency for Latinx Creatives. As communities seek shared experiences that foster understanding and connection, *Ofrenda* offers a poignant reflection on the ties that bind families and cultures across generations.”

In 2023, *Ofrenda* was selected by Austin Opera to receive financial and workshop support through its Residency for Latinx Creatives, a program funded by the Butler Fund for Spanish Programming, which focuses on nurturing new works by Latinx artists. During the residency, Austin Opera’s artistic and administrative staff worked closely with Sosa and de los Santos. The team met regularly to provide feedback on libretto development and musical composition. A duet from the work premiered in November 2025 during Austin Opera’s *Celebrate Opera!* concert, introducing audiences to the new piece. In July 2026, a weeklong workshop will be held in Austin. Austin Opera will premiere the chamber version of the opera; however, a full orchestration is also being composed.

As Austin Opera’s new home for performance, rehearsal, and creative development, the **Butler Performance Center** is designed to serve as a dynamic cultural hub for Austin’s southeast community. The venue’s flexible 185-seat configuration offers an intimate and immersive setting—ideal for premiering a contemporary work like *Ofrenda* that emphasizes storytelling, emotional connection, and audience engagement. The venue’s size and location also make it ideal for reaching new and returning audiences from Austin’s culturally diverse southeast neighborhoods.

About the artists

Composer **Jorge Sosa** is a Mexican-born composer currently residing in New York City. He is Professor of Music at Molloy University and serves on the board of American Lyric Theater. The *Boston Globe* described the score of his opera *Monkey: A Kung Fu Puppet Parable* as “agile and entertaining, as befits such a journey,” praising a “seductive slow number sung by... Mara” and “a crackling vocal duel between Guan Yin and Mara.” *Opera News* described his telematic opera *Alice in the Pandemic* as “wildly imaginative, musically powerful and technically courageous,” and noted Sosa’s “broad stylistic palette [that] incorporated lyrical impassioned melodies, kooky carnival music, and efficient recitative.”

Librettist **John de los Santos** was commissioned in 2015 by Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative with composer Christopher Weiss. The resulting piece, *Service Provider*, premiered at The Kennedy Center, and has since been performed across the country. His first collaboration with composer Clint Borzoni, *When Adonis Calls*, premiered under John’s direction at Asheville Lyric Opera. His second libretto with Borzoni, *The Copper Queen*, premiered as an award-winning feature film with Arizona Opera in

2021, and was staged by him the following year. Their third piece, *The Christmas Spider*, premiered under his direction at Opera Louisiane in 2023. He is a librettist with Minnesota Opera's New Works Initiative, where he is currently adapting Stephen King's *Misery* with composer Kamala Sankaram. As director/choreographer, he has also staged productions with Santa Fe Opera, Minnesota Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Mostly Modern Festival, and the Manhattan School of Music. He served as Librettist-in-Residence for Opera Lab at The Juilliard School and currently teaches at the Yale School of Music.

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