

AUSTIN OPERA announces the winning teams for the inaugural Opera ATX Residencies for Latinx Creatives

Carlos Castro & Alejandra Martinez and Jorge Sosa & John de los Santos

(Austin, TX—November 1, 2023) Today Austin Opera announces the creative teams that will participate in the inaugural Opera ATX Residencies for Latinx Creatives. Composer Carlos Castro and librettist Alejandra Martinez will advance their new opera, *El rebozo*, during the 2023-2024 Season; and composer Jorge Sosa and librettist John de los Santos will workshop a new one-act opera, *Ofrenda*, during the 2024-2025 Season. Both works are being developed in English and Spanish.

Winner of two GRAMMY awards, Costa Rican composer Carlos Castro is partnering with soprano and librettist Alejandra Martinez on a one-act opera in which the events of the 1930's Mexican Repatriation are experienced by an immigrant family living in Chicago. Reflecting the linguistic experiences of immigrant families, *El rebozo* will be presented in a mix of Spanish and English, with the parents singing primarily in Spanish and the children communicating in English, especially when they wish to hide information from their parents. "Accurately reflecting the experience of immigrant families is especially important to me," said Martinez, "I'm third generation, my parents are second generation, while some of their siblings are first generation along with my grandparents. That means we all see things a bit differently. While languages, attitudes, and ambitions may differ, the bond between us is unbreakable--this is a kind of complicated reality that many Latinx families in the United States are living today. Going further, although Carlos and I have different heritages, and different experiences, we are each able to draw from the personal and weave it into the work to make something that feels familiar and authentic." Castro and Martinez will be in residence with Austin Opera in March 2024, working with the company's artistic team including Sarah and Ernest Butler Music Director Timothy Myers, and artists from the company's Resident Stars program in workshops of the one-act opera.

Claudia Chapa, Austin Opera's Curator for Hispanic and Latinx Programming, served as a juror in the selection of the winners. "The inclusion of Latinx creatives and storytellers is vital in creating an operatic cannon that is more representative. *El rebozo* and *OFRENDA* both

offer unique perspectives that feature the strength and complexity of family, themes that resonate deeply with me as an immigrant myself. This residency is a testament to the growing power and visibility of Latinx artists and is an important milestone for opera.”

Composer Jorge Sosa was born in Mexico and has been commissioned by numerous entities in the U.S., including White Snake Projects, the University of North Iowa, and the Boston Children’s Chorus. Mexican-American librettist John de los Santos (*The Copper Queen*) has served as a librettist, director, and choreographer for world premieres at companies including Washington National Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and Arizona Opera. Their first opera together, *OFRENDA: A “Día de Muertos” Story*, is a multi-generational story about healing, family, kindness, and sacrifice sung in both Spanish and English. “We believe it is important to tell a range of Latinx stories, including stories that highlight our unique traditions and the strength of our family structures,” said Santos. “There are roughly 62 million people who identify as Latinx in the United States, and we are the fastest growing demographic in this country. Yet, we are massively underrepresented in the arts. This residency is an invaluable opportunity to advance the creation of our opera so that more audiences can experience works about people that look and sound like us” added Sosa. *OFRENDA* will be workshopped throughout the Austin community in collaboration with the Mexican Consulate in Austin during Austin Opera’s 2024-2025 Season.

The Opera ATX Residency for Latinx Creatives was created to provide a unique workshopping space for Latinx composer/librettist teams working on projects that will ultimately extend the scope of operatic storytelling. Austin Opera General Director & CEO Annie Burrige said “We don’t have nearly enough Spanish-language operas and works reflecting the culture of Latin America circulating on U.S. opera stages. This residency is an important step toward fulfilling our goal to share stories and musical experiences representative of the Austin community, as well as our desire to serve as a champion for these works so they can make their way to stages throughout the country.”

“I believe that to convey the Latinx experience in an operatic setting the music should have a nuanced, cross-cultural dialogue between the musical subjectivities of the characters, their place in space and time, and the specificities of the narrative. Alejandra’s libretto for *El rebozo* offers a beautiful and powerful setting for me to explore deeply these musical cross fertilizations which are part of my heritage and musical language. We are deeply grateful to Austin Opera for opening spaces to pursue these vital and necessary artistic objectives for the Latinx community,” says Carlos Castro.

The 2023-2024 Residency has been supported by a special gift from Carol Walsh-Knutson and Kelley Knutson. In 2022 Austin Opera announced the Butler Fund for Spanish Programming, a \$3 million endowment funded by Austin philanthropists Sarah and Ernest Butler to support Spanish-language programming at the company in perpetuity. The historic gift also funded the appointment of Claudia Chapa as the company’s first-ever Curator for Hispanic and Latinx Programming.

About Austin Opera

Serving Central Texas since 1986, Austin Opera inspires audiences with its trademark blend of innovation and artistic excellence. With the leadership of General Director & CEO Annie Burridge and the Sarah and Ernest Butler Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor Timothy Myers, Austin Opera presents a curated season of grand opera productions at the Long Center, the crown jewel of Austin performing arts venues. Combining the finest American and international stars with the outstanding local talent of our Orchestra and Chorus, Austin Opera’s productions include accessible takes on classic operas as well as challenging new works that reinforce the continuing relevance of opera.

Opera ATX, powered by Austin Opera, brings groundbreaking new works, emerging artists, exciting composers, and dynamic directors to Austin. By tapping into the city’s live music DNA, Opera ATX reflects the spirit of the city and the pioneering image it is known for. The Company creates the conditions for operatic experiences completely new to Austin—and perhaps completely new to the art form—by exploring alternative venues and unique local partnerships. Driven by Austin Opera’s love of opera, love of audiences, and love of Austin, Opera ATX shows how Austin is shaping its opera company and inspiring innovative experiences.

Live from Indy Terrace, Austin Opera’s digital channel is the home of original content free to patrons and includes recitals, interviews, fan-favorite programs like Conductor Cues and Opera Overtures, and broadcasts of the company’s new series *Concerts at the Consulate*. *Concerts at the Consulate*, programmed in partnership with the Consulate General of Mexico in Austin, spotlight Latinx composers and performers and celebrate Hispanic culture.

Austin Opera is also a force in hundreds of classrooms across Central Texas, nurturing the next generation of opera audiences through its award-winning education programs. Austin Opera works directly with educators, community leaders, students, and parents to make opera relevant, educational, and entertaining for students of all ages.

In 2020, Austin Opera was voted “Opera Company of the Year”—and Timothy Myers was named “Conductor of the Year”—in the [BroadwayWorld Opera Awards](#).

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