San Diego Opera Awarded Four California Arts Council Grants

Four grants totaling $77,000 and will be used to support Company’s Words and Music Program and Student Night at the Opera as well as a new Artist Residency Program in City Heights and San Ysidro Communities

San Diego, CA – The California Arts Council has awarded San Diego Opera four grants totaling $77,000 which will help support the Company’s extensive education programs. These funds will be applied to the Company’s 2021 Fiscal Year.

A new $20,000 grant will enable the Company to develop an Artist Residency Program in the City Heights and San Ysidro Communities. For this program, San Diego Opera will partner with Casa Familiar, in San Ysidro, and Lead Artist Humberto Borboa on an artist residency in the two San Diego communities. Using both original and existing material, Mr. Borboa will use his knowledge of the operatic art form to create a musical experience that draws from community members' stories told in Restorative Circles. The resulting work will reflect issues important and relevant to community members.

Two grants, each for $19,000, will support the Company’s long running Words and Music \textit{(WAM)} program at three sites in the community. The first grant is for the summer and after-school WAM program at La Maestra Center for Youth Advancement in City Heights. The second grant will support WAM at Lincoln High School and Memorial Preparatory for Scholars and Athletes, serving students at one Title I middle school and one Title I high school in historically underserved areas of San Diego.

\textit{WAM} works with students to provide instruction in composition, production, and performance; guiding students through the process of telling their own stories through music and drama. \textit{WAM} has reached thousands of elementary, middle, and high school students in 34 schools across the
San Diego County region since its inception in 2002 with weekly, standards-based arts instruction over the course of the school year. The Company expanded the program to offer weekly artist residencies in the City Heights community in 2015. Following the success of a 2017 summer program at La Maestra Center for Youth Development in this neighborhood, San Diego Opera will continue this program in the summer of 2020 as well in after-school programs for the 2020-2021 school year. San Diego Opera will continue to partner with Izcalli (a community-based Chicano theater group) and La Maestra Foundation for WAM.

San Diego Opera’s Education programs primarily target traditionally underserved students and students who would otherwise likely lack access to the arts. The Company aims to demonstrate that opera as an art form (essentially the combination of words and music) has relevance for our community, and encourages youth to create their own works of music, theater, and poetry based on their life experiences. These programs enable students to find their unique voices, and fosters self-confidence and student agency.

The City Heights community, where La Maestra Center for Youth Advancement is located, is one of the most ethnically diverse areas of San Diego, with a significant population of resettled refugees from Vietnam, Somalia, and Iraq. There is a need for area residents to understand and celebrate its youth. The project activities and performances will highlight the lives of these students and the issues most important to them.

San Diego Opera Teaching Artists, trained in Restorative Practices, create a space for youth to reflect, allowing them to open up and share their experiences with peers. Through this process, they can identify which students need connections to additional social-emotional health resources. This approach leads to respect, empathy, empowerment, and problem solving through conversation.

The final grant of $19,000 is to support the Company’s Student Night at the Opera program. Student Night at the Opera provides students and their chaperones access to the final dress performance of our mainstage productions. The program includes free tickets to the opera and the Company reimburses busing from Title I schools. Each year more than 7,500 students attend these performances through this program which enhances drama/theatre arts, music arts, visual arts, history, and language learning. The Company also provides free docent visits to the classroom that prepares students for their experience at the opera.

**San Diego Opera Mission Statement**
The mission of San Diego Opera is to deliver exceptional vocal performances and exciting, accessible programs to diverse audiences, focusing on community engagement and the transformative power of live performance.

**San Diego Opera Vision Statement**
San Diego Opera will be recognized internationally as a leading example of adaptability, innovation and sustainability in the operatic arts, promoting diversified programming and unique performance venues with world-class and emerging talent.

**San Diego Opera Core Values Statement**
Through excellence in innovative programming and education, SDO provides a lasting cultural service to the community.
- Our tradition of excellence in fully staged opera is augmented with new models of opera and venues. Our unique and deep commitment to the community propels us to explore ways of increasing affordability and accessibility.
- Through fiscal responsibility and nimble adaptation to the changing marketplace, we protect the future of San Diego Opera.
- Our educational and community involvement coupled with relevant programming will build the audience of the future.