

Advancing Excellence in Opera with Diversity and Inclusion

Introduction, History and Mission of the Florentine Opera's Diversity and Inclusion Priorities

The Florentine Opera Company ("Company") is driven by excellence in its art. We believe that equity in opportunity, diversity, and inclusion ("EDI") is necessary to promote and maintain an environment that attracts and sustains the very best talent. We are actively creating an inclusive environment for employees, artists, board members and our audience, specifically for people who may have historically not felt welcomed in the classical arts world, such as people of color.

Our actions and history speak to this commitment. Before Will Liverman made his historical premiere as the first African-American tenor to sing the role of Papageno with the Metropolitan Opera, he sang the role in the Florentine's 2018 production of the Magic Flute (2018) that included a significantly diverse cast that was featured in an exposé about the Florentine on MPTV's Black Nouveau. Milwaukee audiences have also met and celebrated artists Musa Ngqungwana (Elixir of Love 2015), Noah Stewart (La Boheme, 2014, Magic Flute 2018), Alyson Cambridge (La Boheme 2014, Merry Widow, 2017), and Luis Alejandro Orozco (Barber of Seville 2017, Tragedy of Carmen 2020), to name but a few.

The Florentine's Baumgartner Studio Artist Program is also an incubator for diverse talent, routinely welcoming and nurturing the careers of diverse young artists. As examples, alumnus Leroy Davis returned to sing a lead in the Florentine's production of Dido and Aeneas (2018) and Ariana Douglas returned to sing a lead in the Florentine's production of the Marriage of Figaro (2019). Both had previously sung roles, as Baumgartner Studio Artists, in the Florentine's world premiere production and recording of Sister Carrie in 2016.

The Company is proud of the work it has done to promote a diverse environment in the studio and in the community. For example:

- Underrepresented on-stage talent has grown from 21.75% in 2015-16 to 56% in 2021-22. The 21-22 season's creative teams also include 28% people of color and those who've been underrepresented historically. Our performances shine thanks to the diversity of talent.
- The Baumgartner Studio Artist program, going into its 13th season, has a 47% average participation rate for performers of color (2015-2021). Last season was 100%. All have performed in our school shows and mainstage productions, and have become audience favorites.

- Our robust school program serves 15,000 students a year, 90.39% of whom come from MPS schools serving at-risk students primarily of color, especially through our hands-on residency program.
- Board diversity increased to 18% this year, representing critical talents in HR, entrepreneurship, and more.
- New partnerships incorporate non-operatic BIPOC talent into our performances. "By Milwaukee" includes Ras'Ammar Nsoroma working on our Bronzeville Boheme mainstage and school show. Bronzeville expert Sheri Williams Parnell serves as mainstage dramaturg and school show director, and highlights local history to supplement the curriculum. In the 21-22 season, we are also thrilled to welcome the esteemed Della Wells as an artistic partner, and are honored by her enthusiasm for partnering with up-and-coming stage director Nadja Simmonds.
- Community Circle specifically addresses accessibility challenges, with \$10 tickets to shows (\$85 value).

EDI Mission of the Florentine Opera

The Florentine does not tolerate discrimination, and makes decisions and offers opportunities that value individuals of any gender, gender identity, race, color, ethnicity, age, national origin, creed, religion, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation or other protected basis among our staff and those who we hire for our performances. We are committed to several related objectives, including building strong relationships through our partnerships with diverse groups in our local community and throughout the country. Through our work, we seek to advance and promote an organizational culture that embraces and sustains EDI.

Our Core Values and Commitments

The Florentine seeks to provide the best possible opera experience to our patrons, staff and performers. It is imperative to create a work environment that fosters the recruitment, hiring, development, and retention of diverse talent, both administratively and artistically. Breadth of perspective and participation helps our opera thrive.

Our Values in EDI

- The Florentine values a diverse workforce that embraces individuals of different perspectives and experiences, including based on gender, race, national origin, age, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation, including those with disabilities.
- The Florentine values an organizational culture that invests in the professional development and success of all staff and artists.
- The Florentine values diversity of talent, which provides the greatest experience for our patrons by improving artistic innovation, expression and representation from different perspectives.

Our Commitments to EDI

- The Florentine is committed to the development, maintenance, and application of policies that together ensure access to opportunities and provide a sense of connection between our staff, artists and the Florentine's values and commitments, to attract and retain engaged, diverse, and skillful staff and performers.

- The Florentine is committed to the professional development of its staff and artists, and to ensuring that developing administrators and artists have access to quality work opportunities.
- We commit to relationship building within the greater Milwaukee and broader artistic community. The Florentine is committed to maintaining and fostering bidirectional communication around our EDI mission and work in furtherance thereof.
- The Florentine is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for its entire staff and artists, and commits to continuous learning in the EDI arena to maintain that environment. This includes ensuring proper training and hiring of production support to accommodate all performers' unique needs.

In furtherance of advancing our core values and commitments, we acknowledge that this process requires ongoing review and effort.

Sustaining our Values and Fulfilling our Commitments

The Executive and Governance Committees have established the EDI Sub-Committee Working Group within the Governance Committee. This Working Group shall assist leadership with the following:

Communication and Coordination

- Communication of policy, initiatives, and progress is an important function of our EDI mission. The Sub-Committee Working Group shall offer learning opportunities, provide progress assessments, and report on anticipated and active initiatives.
- The Chairs of the Governance, Artistic, Education and Community, and HR committees will collaborate with the Sub-Committee Working Group for the purpose of advancing the EDI mission. Such collaboration will include providing feedback and input for advancing excellence in our art with the recruitment of new and lateral diverse staff and artists, fostering equity in opportunities available to staff and artists, the development and retention of diverse staff and artists, and the recognition of exceptional efforts demonstrated by staff and artists who promote and support our EDI efforts.

Programming, Policies, and Initiatives

- The Sub-Committee Working Group is expected to identify and recommend educational programming and training to enhance our Company's awareness of the factors affecting a successful EDI effort.
- Likewise it will assist in identifying and recommending memberships and participation in local, state, and national organizations that further our EDI efforts.

Developing and Cultivating a Pipeline for the Company

- Through the Baumgartner Studio Artist Program, engagement with our communities and other arts programs, and internally with the Board of Directors, the Company will foster relationships that inspire the attention of diverse candidates to our Company. The Sub-Committee Working Group will be a resource to the Board of Directors in developing Company leadership paths for qualified diverse staff.
- The subcommittee will explore the creation of a formal sponsorship program for diverse staff and artists.

- The Sub-Committee Working Group will coordinate with Human Resources to develop strategies for providing equality of opportunity for the recruitment, growth, development, and retention of a diverse workforce to offset historical imbalances in the arts.
- The Sub-Committee Working Group will support and collaborate with external affinity groups, such as LGBTQ+ Affinity Groups, African American Leadership Association of Milwaukee, Tempo, Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee, Milwaukee Urban League, etc. The Sub-Committee Working Group will listen to the Company's workforce and other organizations, and will explore the participation in other such groups.

Establishment, Monitoring, and Reporting of Goals and Metrics

- The Sub-Committee Working Group will assess and report to the Board of Directors goals and metrics (both qualitative and quantitative) for measuring success in the Company's EDI efforts.
- Such goals and metrics will be assessed and re-evaluated every two years by the Company.