

LILA PALMER APPOINTED GENERAL AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF NEW ORLEANS OPERA



Photo by Daniel Welch

NEW ORLEANS, LA (January 17, 2024) – Following a comprehensive search, the board of **New Orleans Opera Association** (NOOA) has announced Anglo-American producer and librettist **Lila Palmer** as its new General and Artistic Director. Her term begins on May 15, 2024.

Palmer will be NOOA's ninth chief executive, succeeding Clare Burovac, whose three-year tenure followed 23 seasons of stalwart leadership – including a company-saving effort following Hurricane Katrina – by Robert Lyall, who passed away earlier this year. Palmer will be responsible for setting the artistic vision for the company and overseeing all aspects of operations. In collaboration with the staff and board, Palmer will also seek to broaden the company's impact, develop business partnerships, and deepen community involvement.

Palmer joins NOOA from New York's American Lyric Theater, a highly regarded new music incubator, where she has served as Interim Managing Director and Associate Director for Promotions and Partnerships. An accomplished producer, Palmer has also led arts programming in heritage spaces, including The Museum of London, The London Transport Museum, Trebah Gardens, and the Bethlem Gallery and Trust, building relationships with varied stakeholders across fields. Palmer's earlier experience as a lyric mezzo-soprano and cultural commentator for radio and television, combined with her education at Cambridge University and the Royal Opera House London's Guildhall Opera Makers MA program, have led to her firm commitment to expand the perspectives of stories on opera stages.

As a librettist, Palmer has been recognized with an Edinburgh Fringe Lustrum Award, Aix-en-Provence Festival Women in Opera Professional Artist nomination, and Album of the Year by The Times of London. Her work has recently been performed at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Glimmerglass Festival, and her song cycle *This Be Her Verse* received international premieres in Canada, Scotland, Switzerland, and France. Palmer will continue her creative practice as a librettist, and has upcoming artistic collaborations with Mark Adamo, Rene Orth, and La Fura dels Baus.

This wide-ranging professional background will serve Palmer well in New Orleans, often dubbed the country's "First City of Opera" and known for the many tremendous musicians who have considered it home, including Louis Armstrong, Wynton Marsalis, Terence Blanchard, and renowned opera singer Norman Treigle. Over the 80 seasons since its founding in 1943, NOOA has built a reputation as a talent-spotter, providing early career opportunities for singers like Lisette Oropesa, Kathryn Lewek, and Alfred Walker, now performing on stages worldwide.

Recent productions at NOOA have included sold-out performances of *An Homage to Josephine Baker* and Daniel Schnyder's *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*, as well as Jeanine Tesori's *Blue*, and a new English translation of Tchaikovsky's *Joan of Arc*, also known as *The Maid of Orleans*. Locally focused productions of *Il tabarro*, set on a barge in the Mississippi River, and *María de Buenos Aires* in collaboration with Casa Argentina, have more closely connected the company with the community it serves. During production periods, NOOA is one of the largest employers of artists in the state of Louisiana, with roughly 400 people working on each mainstage production. The H. Lloyd Hawkins Scenic Studio has constructed dozens of new sets for productions in New Orleans, which are subsequently rented to performing arts organizations across the country.

"To be asked to lead a company with the lineage of New Orleans Opera Association is a tremendous gift and a humbling responsibility," said incoming **General and Artistic Director Lila Palmer**. "The company and its antecedents formed the cradle of *bel canto* in America and the city has shown an unbroken legacy of love for both opera and the transformative, life-giving power of music. New Orleans continues to prove itself a resilient, vibrant, and joyful city, and it belongs at the forefront of the newly dawning golden age of American opera."

"I am truly excited to welcome Lila Palmer to New Orleans Opera," said NOOA **Board Chair Emmet Geary**. "Her extraordinary energy and insight, as well as her vast experience in opera as a performer, librettist, and producer, make her an ideal fit. Lila's deep respect for both classic and contemporary repertoire will give the city an exciting menu of operatic performances, and I look forward to working with her to further our goal of connecting as many people as possible to the joy of opera."

"When I first met Lila as a resident artist in the ALT program I teach for opera creators, I immediately recognized her as a gifted artist and born collaborator," said **composer and librettist Mark Adamo**. "It has been a pleasure to see her develop those talents while also becoming a seasoned executive and visionary advocate for the art of opera. I see great things ahead for New Orleans Opera under her leadership."

"I am thrilled to learn that Lila will join the growing ranks of women General Directors helping to redefine and enhance our beloved art form," said **Francesca Zambello, Artistic Director of Washington National Opera** and internationally acclaimed stage director. "Having worked on several creative producing projects with Lila, I know she will bring a unique voice of leadership to the storied New Orleans Opera."

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About New Orleans Opera Association

Now in its 81st season, New Orleans Opera Association (NOOA) is committed to enriching the lives of all people by producing operas of the highest artistic quality and providing educational opportunities through traditional and innovative approaches. NOOA aspires to connect people to the arts and each other through the joy of opera.
www.neworleansopera.org

About Lila Palmer

Lila Palmer is an Anglo-American librettist, producer, and arts administrator, most recently serving as a member of the senior executive team at American Lyric Theatre (ALT), where she leads strategic planning and executive recruitment while overseeing marketing, public relations, and media strategies. She has served as an Artist Leader and Dramaturgy Mentor in new works development for companies including Boston Opera Collaborative and Canada's Loose Tea Music Theater and sits on the National Opera Association's Dominick Argento Competition

Panel. She has been an invited speaker on contemporary opera, gender, and concealed stories at both OPERA America and NOA national conferences. A lifelong advocate for the arts across the public sphere, her blogs, program notes, criticism, and essays have been featured by the The Scotsman, The I, Carl Nielsen Competition, English National Opera, Leeds Piano competition, and other outlets. An accomplished producer, Lila has led expanded arts programming in non-traditional and heritage spaces, including The Museum of London, The London Transport Museum, Trebah Gardens, and the Bethlem Gallery and Trust.

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