

# FRINGE ARTS

Communications Manager  
Sabrina@FringeArts.com  
267.225.4340

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## **FringeArts Receives Grant for Operatic Project *Awakening***

*New Co-commission Collaborates with Philadelphia Communities in its Take on Generational Legacy*

FringeArts has received \$300,000 in project-based funding and an additional 20% (\$60,000) in unrestricted general operating funds from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage to support an upcoming operatic work titled *Awakening*. It is co-commissioned by the International Contemporary Ensemble (with generous commissioning support from Arlene and Larry Dunn) for composer Courtney Bryan, with a creative team composed of director Charlotte Brathwaite, librettist Sharan Strange, art director Cauleen Smith, and lead performer Helga Davis. Dramaturgs Sunder Ganglani and Matthew Morrison will support the project along with a project-specific Community Engagement Manager, to be identified. *Awakening* hopes to stimulate the contemporary operatic field with its unprecedented focus on the Black female experience. This two-year project will be rooted in Philadelphia residences and directly include the surrounding community in the artistic process through song sharing and contextual dialogue.

*Awakening* channels the legacies of Black women such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman to advance dialogues around power, gender, and race, with Philly's own Rebecca Cox Jackson, founder of the Black Shaker movement, as the central historical figure. In this one-act opera, an imagined contemporary woman transforms herself out of an oppressive situation with the guidance of these three spiritual leaders.

The artistic team will be hosting workshops to teach local audiences newly-crafted songs, sharing a generative practice and encouraging participants to consider their role in advancing Philadelphia's legacy of social change. Community members are invited to explore themes of freedom, spirit, love, home, and sanctuary in these workshops, propelling reflections and conversations about modern power structures forward. As Charlotte Brathwaite and Helga Davis have stated, "imagination is a space of absolute power when you can stand up in it."

The completed work will be co-presented as part of the 2022 Philadelphia Fringe Festival and Opera Philadelphia's O22 Festival.

### **About FringeArts**

FringeArts is Philadelphia's home for contemporary performance, presenting progressive, world-class art that expands the imagination and boldly defies expectation. Its programming exposes audiences to genre-defying dance, theater, and music performances by accomplished and emerging innovators who push the boundaries of art-making and redefine the artistic landscape worldwide.

### **About The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage**

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage is a multidisciplinary grantmaker and hub for knowledge-sharing, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, dedicated to fostering a vibrant cultural community in Greater Philadelphia. The Center invests in ambitious, imaginative, and catalytic work that showcases the region's cultural vitality and enhances public life, and engages in an exchange of ideas concerning artistic and interpretive practice with a broad network of cultural practitioners and leaders.

### **About International Contemporary Ensemble**

The International Contemporary Ensemble (ICEensemble) is an artist collective that is transforming the way music is created and experienced. As performer, curator, and educator, the International Contemporary Ensemble explores how new music intersects with communities across the world. Works by emerging composers define the Ensemble's programming since its founding in 2001, and the group's archive highlights the many voices that weave music's present.

### **About Opera Philadelphia**

Opera Philadelphia (OP), the only American finalist for the 2020 International Opera Award for Best Festival, is "one of North America's premiere generators of valid new operas" (Opera News). Committed to embracing innovation and developing opera for the 21st century, OP presents grand opera through productions of traditional and contemporary repertoire as part of its annual O Festival each fall and year-round season.

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### **To request more information, contact:**

Sabrina Carter, Communications Manager | [Sabrina@FringeArts.com](mailto:Sabrina@FringeArts.com)