

Opera America announces Cuban composer Odaline de la Martinez as one of the winners of their opera grant for female composers



Opera America – the US national service organization for Opera – awarded Odaline de la Martinez a Discovery Grant for *Imoinda* – Part I of her Slavery Opera Trilogy. Martinez is one of seven winners of the 2015 Female Composers Discovery Grant – which is funded by The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation – totalling \$100,000 to be divided equally between the seven winners. The Opera Grants for Female Composers was launched in 2013 and is implemented every two years. Alongside Odaline de la Martinez the other winners are Kitty Brazelton, Laura Karpman, Patricia Leonard, Jing Jing Luo, Kamala Sankaram, and Su Lian Tan. The panel included director Sam Helfrich, composer Laura Kaminsky, composer Libby Larsen, mezzo-soprano Margaret Lattimore, conductor Anne Manson and coach/conductor Laurie Rogers.

Imoinda is a 60-minute opera in one Act with five main characters and a chorus/dancers. The grant will allow Martinez to make a video of scenes from *Imoinda*, giving an overview of the opera as a whole. The video will then be sent to opera companies with the purpose of future performance. New York City based Opera Ebony will be creating the video with Hope Clarke directing and Martinez conducting.

The Slavery Opera Trilogy by Martinez, with libretto by Joan Anim Addo, is loosely based on a short novel by 17th century author Aphra Behn, titled *Oroonoko*. Part I – *Imoinda* – was commissioned by The Caribbean Women Writers' Alliance with funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund, England. Part II – *The Crossing* – was commissioned by the Sophie Newcomb Institute of Tulane University in New Orleans and was premiered there in April 2013 before it's UK premiere in November 2014. Part III – working title *Plantation* – is still in development. The whole trilogy will be performed by Scott Stroman and the Highbury Opera Theatre in October 2016 as part of the 6th London Festival of American Music and Black History Month.

"The rhythmic impulsion of *The Crossing* spoke to me of Cuban dance rhythms, to such an extent that I found myself virtually dancing in the pew and wanting to clap along with the wood block on the fourth beat of the bar."

Opera Britannia

Odaline de la Martinez

Cuban American composer and conductor Odaline de la Martinez pursues a demanding and successful career composing – particularly opera, conducting repertoire from Mozart symphonies to the latest contemporary

music, and recording CDs often with LORELT (Lontano Records) which she founded in 1992. Martinez studied at Tulane University (USA) and the Royal Academy of Music, where she founded her ensemble Lontano in 1976. With Lontano she has travelled the world. Martinez was the first woman in history to conduct a BBC Prom at the Royal Albert Hall.

"Energy crackles around the Cuban-born conductor and composer like an electric field"

Sunday Times Magazine

She has received numerous awards including a Marshall Scholarship from the British Government and a Guggenheim Fellowship (USA). Her first opera *Sister Aimee: An American Legend* (1984) was premiered at Tulane University in 1984, followed by two other productions at the Royal College of Music (1987) and in Marin County College, California (1995). Her second opera *Imoinda* (from her Slavery Opera Trilogy) (2005-2008), was commissioned by the Caribbean Women Writers' Alliance (CWWA) with funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund, England. *The Crossing* also from her Trilogy was commissioned by Tulane University and premiered in New Orleans in April 2013, while there as composer in residence. This work received its UK Premiere in November 2014 at the opening concert of The Fifth London Festival of American Music.

"Her music has as much energy, grace and joyfulness as the conductor that we have come to know, admire and love."

Opera Britannia

Odaline de la Martinez is in demand throughout the world both as an orchestra and opera conductor and with her ensemble Lontano. She has recorded numerous CDs for LORELT, her own record label, as well as Summit, BMI, and Albany Records in the United States, Chandos, Metier and Conifer Classics in the UK and Da Capo in Denmark. As a musician she has acquired a remarkable reputation for her versatile and eclectic vision, and supreme ability to work with others to make the vision a reality.

"The playing [...] under Odaline de la Martinez... was powerfully authoritative in effect".

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