



US Opera Company Responses to “Pledge for Racial Equity and Systemic Change in Opera”

Insight Report – April 2021

Executive Summary – Key Findings

- 106 opera companies in the US were sent Black Opera Alliance’s “Pledge for Racial Equity and Systemic Change in Opera.” (The Pledge)
- 44% of US opera companies have responded “Yes” to The Pledge and 1% has responded “No.”
- The US regions of the East and Great Lakes account for the greatest proportion of “Yes” responses. The Southwest region is home to the only “No” response.
- The most racially diverse US regions are the regions that have the highest percentages of “No Response” to The Pledge.

Introduction

Black Opera Alliance (BOA) and TRG Arts have partnered to further BOA’s mission to expose racial inequity and under-representation of the African diaspora in all facets of the opera sector and promote reform. To achieve this, BOA and TRG Arts are tracking the progress that opera companies in the US are making towards the eight areas of needed transformation defined in The Pledge released in September of 2020.

As the opera field seeks out truer equity, inclusion, and racial justice, this framework provides specific requirements and timelines. BOA is eager to understand the impact and progress of The Pledge.

To share how progress is being made, BOA and TRG will be releasing on-going insight reports in 2021. Historically, the lack of industry-wide accountability has been a prime culprit in stalling substantive industry evolution in the EDI space. These reports will shine a spotlight on how and where the sector is making gains. BOA and TRG Arts are also committed to helping the opera sector understand how to apply these data points in 2021 to aid in journeys of improvement. To facilitate industry-wide learning, BOA and TRG Arts will also host webinars to review each insight report and discuss take-aways and action items.

Scope of this Report and Data Sources

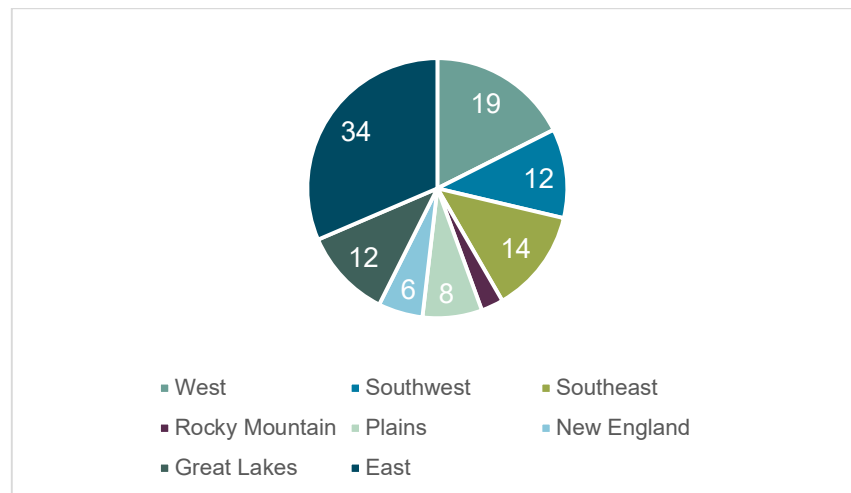
BOA and TRG Arts' reporting is informed by two data sets. The first tracks responses from opera companies regarding their commitment to The Pledge. The second is US Census Data and US Bureau of Economic Analysis associated with specified regions, cities, and communities.

The first data set focuses on 106 opera companies in the US and their pledge status since March 10, 2021. The third data set is comprised of community populations, core-based statistical areas, and metropolitan statistical areas as informed by 2019's American Community Survey.

Trends and Insights

Concentration of Opera Companies by Region

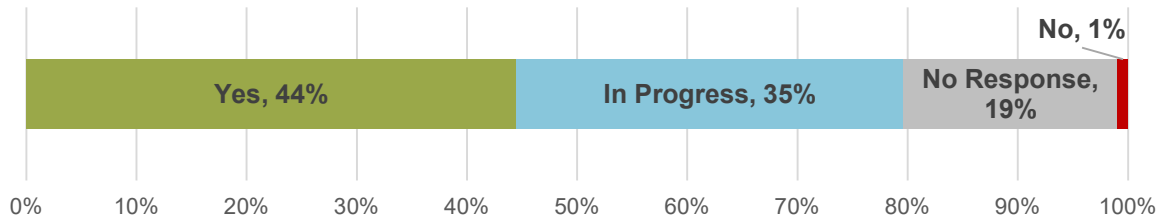
Regions Include: West, Southwest, Southeast, Rocky Mountain, Plains, New England, Great Lakes, East



106 opera companies in the US were sent The Pledge. The largest concentration of opera companies exists in the East region, with 34 organizations. The smallest exists in the Rocky Mountain region with 3 organizations.

Pledge Status

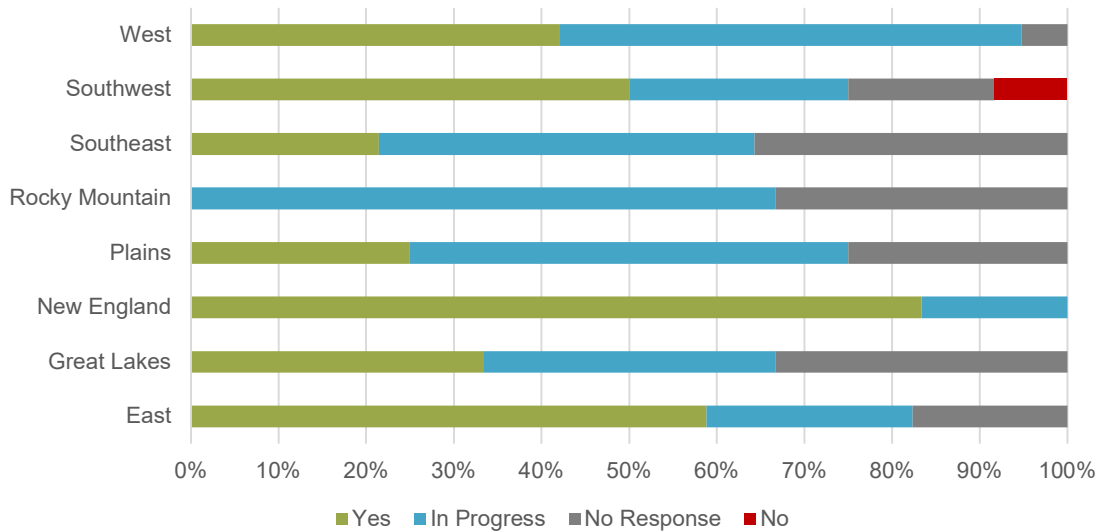
Levels of commitment to The Pledge



Of those 106 opera companies, the largest portion of responses, 44%, have confirmed commitment. The second largest group, 35%, have responded, but have not yet committed. 19% have not responded. One opera company has declined to commit.

Aggregate Response from 7 US Regions

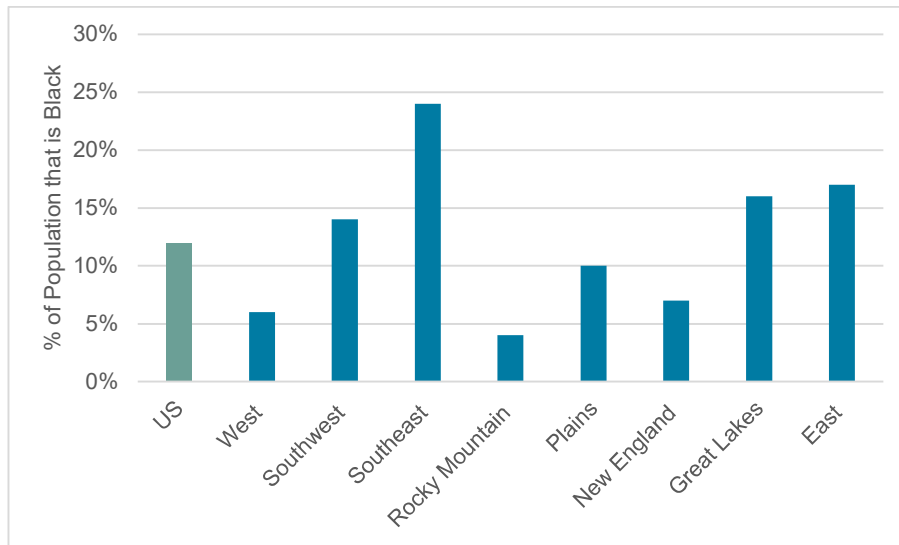
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Within each region, New England has the largest proportion of “Yes” responses, 83%. 67% of the Rocky Mountain region is “In Progress.” The Southeast region leads in “In Progress” at 36%. The only “No” so far has come from the Southwest, which represents 8% of responses from that region.

Black Population Representation

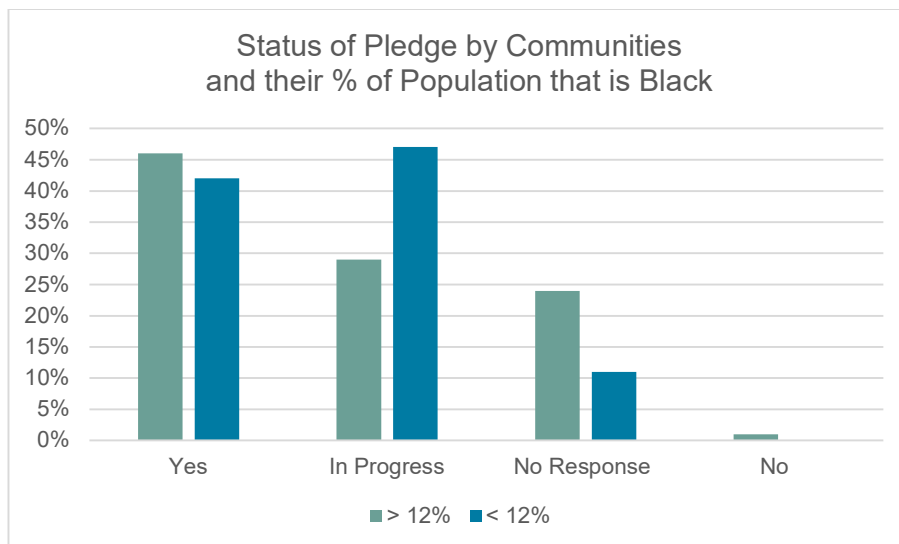
Entire US compared to Communities Featuring Opera Companies by Region



The US population is 12% Black. The Southeast, Southwest, Great Lakes, and East regions contain communities that, on average, have populations that are more than 12% Black. The Rocky Mountain, West, New England, and Plains regions contain communities that, on average, have populations that are less than 12% Black.

Correlation Between Black Population Representation and Pledge Response

Comparing Regions with a Greater National Average of Black Populations and Regions with a Lower National Average of Black Populations



Regions whose populations average more than 12% Black were slightly more likely to respond “Yes” to The Pledge (46%) and are more likely to have responses of “No Response” or “No” (25%) (Southeast, Southwest, Great Lakes, and East). Regions whose communities, on average, have populations that are less than 12% Black were slightly less likely to answer “Yes” to The Pledge (42%) and much more likely

to have a response of “In Progress” (47%) (Rocky Mountain, West, New England, and Plains).

Conclusions and Next Steps

This analysis was undertaken to give a better understanding of participation with The Pledge and to start a data-informed conversation with the opera sector regarding accountability and action steps so change can be realized.

Support for these efforts from opera companies has been encouraging. Here is feedback BOA has received in response to The Pledge.

“Seattle Opera stands in solidarity with Black Opera Alliance as it advances anti-racist work in opera that centers Black artists and administrators. We are grateful for the labor taken on by members of the BOA Council to present specific ways in which opera companies can address issues impacting Black professionals in opera.”

- Christina Scheppelman, General Director, Seattle Opera

“Thank you so much for your work to advance equity for the Black community in our field through your advocacy and your Pledge for Racial Equity and Systemic Change. We are grateful for your work to move the opera industry forward and appreciate the recommendations you have given us in regard to our work at Austin Opera.”

- Annie Burrige, General Director & CEO, Austin Opera

“On behalf of The Metropolitan Opera, I want to thank you for the essential work you are doing to help dismantle the racial inequities within our art form. [W]e recognize the importance of addressing the issues you lay out in your pledge, both at the Met and throughout the broader opera community.

- Peter Gelb, General Manager, The Metropolitan Opera

“Thank you so much for the time, work, and thoughtfulness you have dedicated to moving the opera field forward in racial equity by advocating for systemic change.”

- Timothy O'Leary, General Director, Washington National Opera

Going forward, a top priority for BOA is to quantify opera companies' current racial equity standing and progress toward the eight areas of needed transformation outlined in The Pledge.

In collaboration with TRG Arts, BOA has created a data collection methodology to baseline these trends. BOA will be sending a data request to opera companies that outlines the methodology and provides a way for opera companies to report their data. Participation by responding to the request will help spotlight the needs of the opera field and inform the best ways in which BOA can support opera companies as they make the necessary changes to support equity.

BOA and TRG Arts are also committed to providing support and partnership with the opera sector to aid with synthesis, understanding, and learning from these insights.

On Tuesday, April 13 members of BOA and TRG Arts held a webinar to walk through the data from this report and discuss how it can be applied. A recording of that webinar can be found on BOA and TRG's websites.

About Black Opera Alliance

The mission of the Black Opera Alliance (BOA) is to empower Black classical artists and administrators by exposing systems of racial inequity and under-representation of the African diaspora in all facets of the industry and challenging institutions to implement drastic reform. BOA was founded in the midst of the current pandemic out of a need for support and action when opera professionals around the world are out of work and the Black population is disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and economic hardship. Alongside the protests of the Black Lives Matter movement, Black opera professionals and others who support equity have decided that the time for change is now. Visit us at <https://www.blackoperaalliance.org/>.

About TRG Arts

TRG Arts (The Results Group for the Arts) is an international, data-driven change agency consulting with arts and cultural executive leaders, marketers, and fundraisers on a patron loyalty-based approach to increasing sustainable revenue. Experts in the arts sector for 25 years, TRG Arts has earned a reputation unsurpassed for achieving results and building successful business models for non-profit and commercial arts and cultural organizations. TRG Arts is an industry pioneer in areas including audience loyalty development, membership and the subscription model, and dynamic pricing. TRG Arts believes in the transformative power of arts and culture, and that positive, profound change in the business model of arts organizations can lead to artistic innovation and the ability to inspire entire communities. Visit <https://trgarts.com/>.

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