



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

Insight Report – August 2021

Executive Summary – Key Findings

- 113 opera companies in the US were sent Black Opera Alliance’s “Pledge for Racial Equity and Systemic Change in Opera.” (The Pledge)
- 48% of US opera companies have responded “Yes” to The Pledge and 1% has responded “No.”
- 23% of opera companies who received data workbooks detailing artistic hires by type of role and by race returned information, but 59% of the data returned is incomplete.
- Where race data was provided, representation concerns are illuminated; Black artists hired for 3% of Production roles and 10% of all Principal singer roles
- The most likely steps opera companies have taken toward equity is hiring an EDI consultant and/or adopting new policies.

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 ongoing insight reports in 2021 and 2022. 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 to aid in journeys of improvement. To facilitate industry-wide learning, BOA and TRG Arts also will 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 three data sets.

- Responses from opera companies regarding their commitment to The Pledge.
- Data from the US Census and US Bureau of Economic Analysis.
- Demographic make-up of artistic, administrative, and board teams of opera companies. To obtain this data, BOA and TRG created a data workbook that was sent to opera companies with a request that they fill it out and send it back to BOA. Not every workbook returned to BOA has been filled in completely. To address these, BOA has conducted research to fill in blanks, when possible.

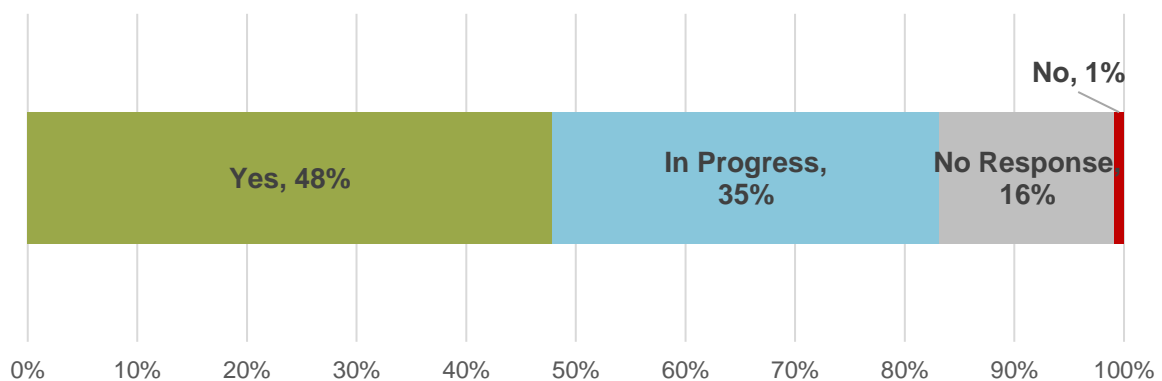
The first data set represents 113 opera companies across the US. The second data set is comprised of community populations, core-based statistical areas, and metropolitan statistical areas as informed by the US Census 2019 American Community Survey. The third represents data from 34 opera companies, 19 of which returned data to BOA and 15 companies unresponsive to the pledge where BOA members complied requested data points.

Trends and Insights

Pledge Status

Levels of commitment to The Pledge

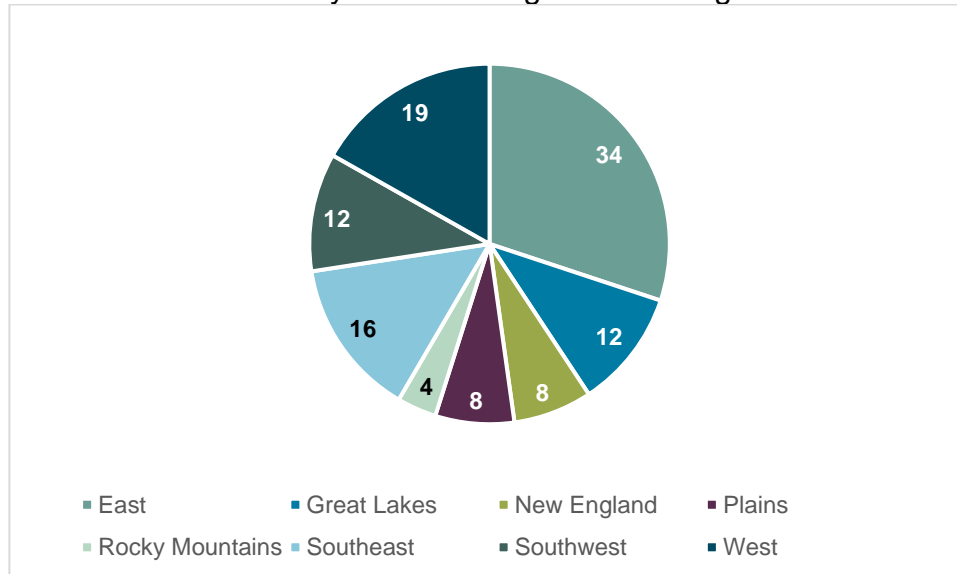
Of the 113 opera companies, the largest portion of responses, 48%, have confirmed commitment. This is an increase from 44% from when this data was last reported in March of 2021. The second largest group, 35%, have responded, but have not yet committed. 16% have not responded, down from 19% in the March report. One opera company has declined to commit.



Opera Companies by Region

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

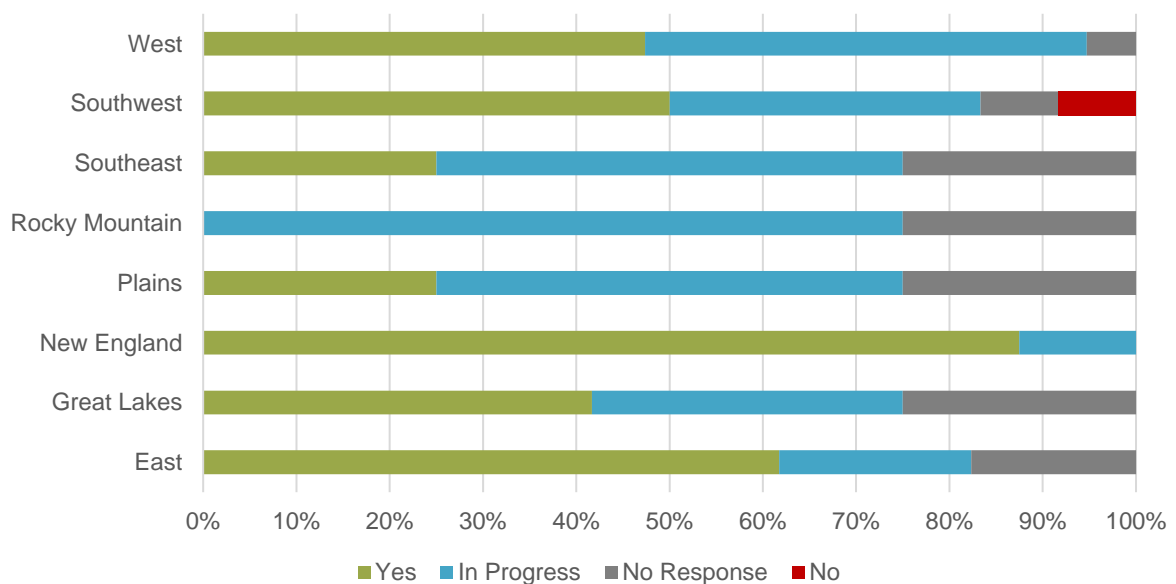
116 opera companies in the US have been sent The Pledge. The largest concentration of opera companies exists in the East region, with 34 organizations. The smallest exists in the Rocky Mountain region with 4 organizations.



Aggregate Response from 7 US Regions

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

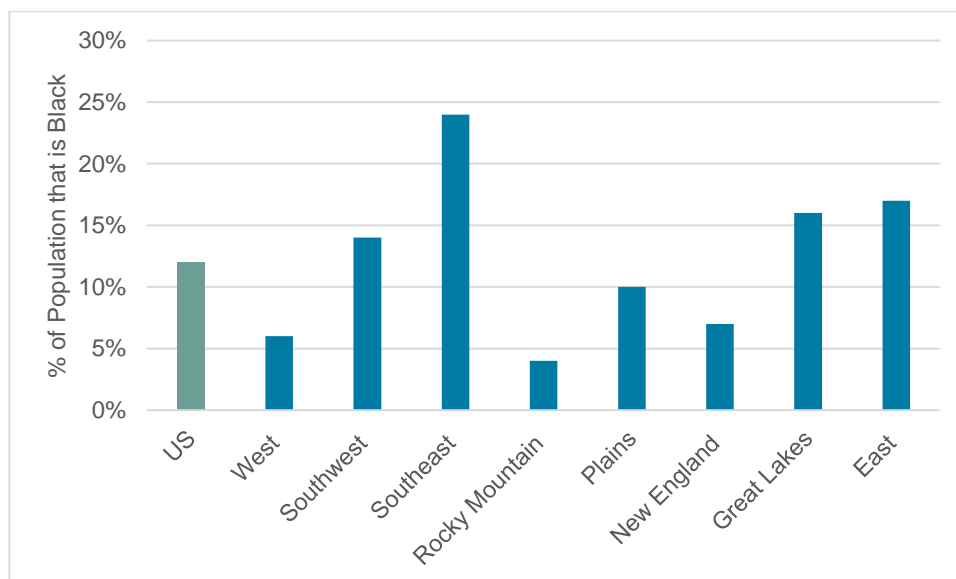
Within each region, New England has the largest proportion of “Yes” responses, 88%. 75% of the Rocky Mountain region is “In Progress.” The Southeast, Rocky Mountain, Plains, and Great Lakes regions all have 25% “No Response.” The only “No” so far has come from the Southwest.



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.

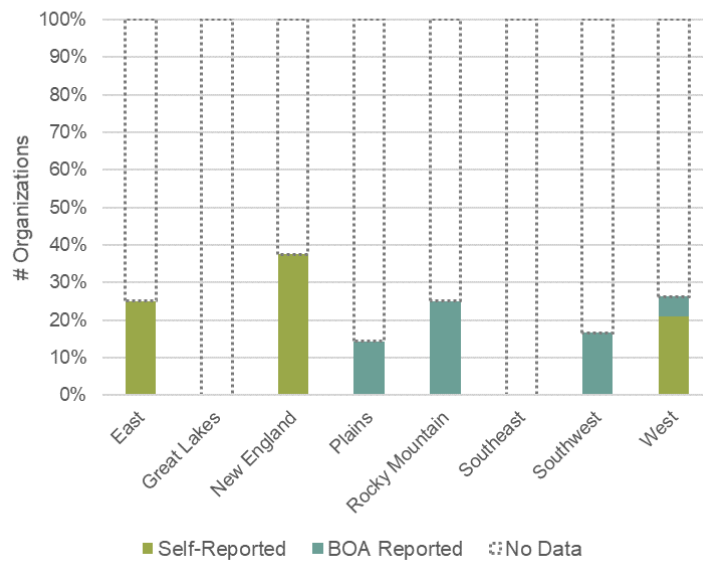


Correlation Between Black Population Representation and Returned Data Workbooks

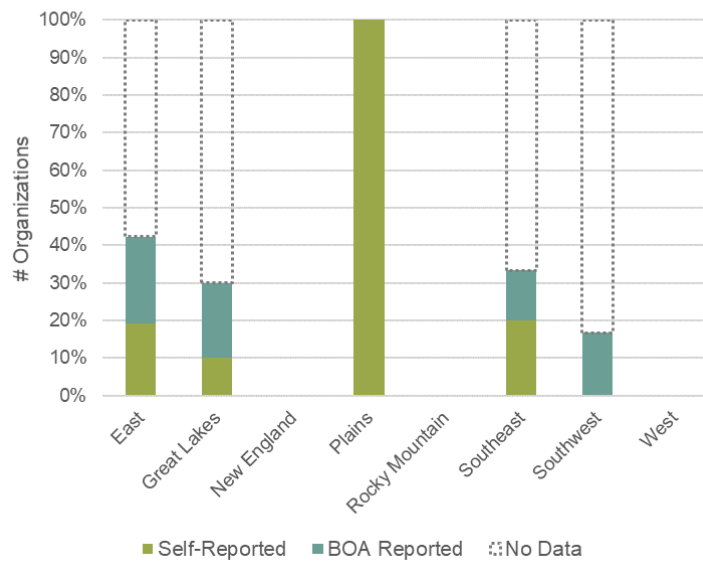
Comparing Regions with a Greater National Average of Black Populations and Regions with a Lower National Average of Black Populations

Opera companies in regions with Black populations that are higher than the national average were more likely to return data workbooks to BOA. In the above charts, “Self-Reported” refers to the percentage of workbooks sent in by opera companies. “BOA Reported” refers to the percentage of those workbooks in which BOA conducted research to begin completing workbooks. BOA members focused their research on obtaining information on companies that have been unresponsive to the Pledge. “No Data” represents the percentage of workbooks that were not sent back to BOA from opera companies within that region.

Surveys Returned, by Region
Communities with Populations <12% Black

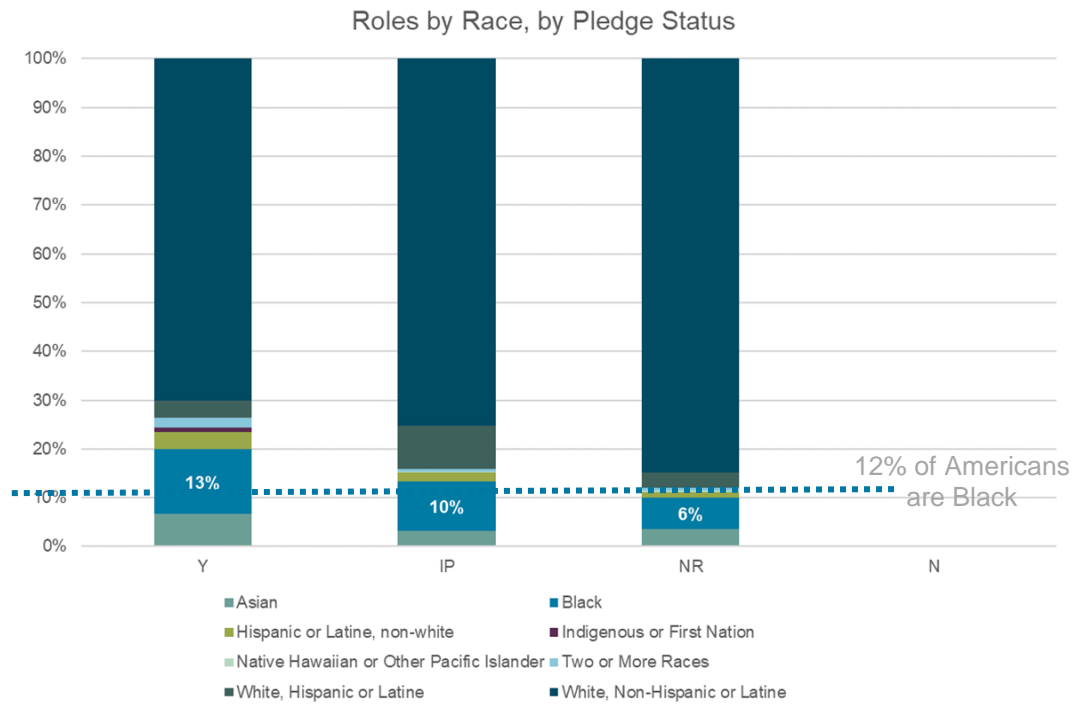


Surveys Returned, by Region
Communities with Populations >12% Black



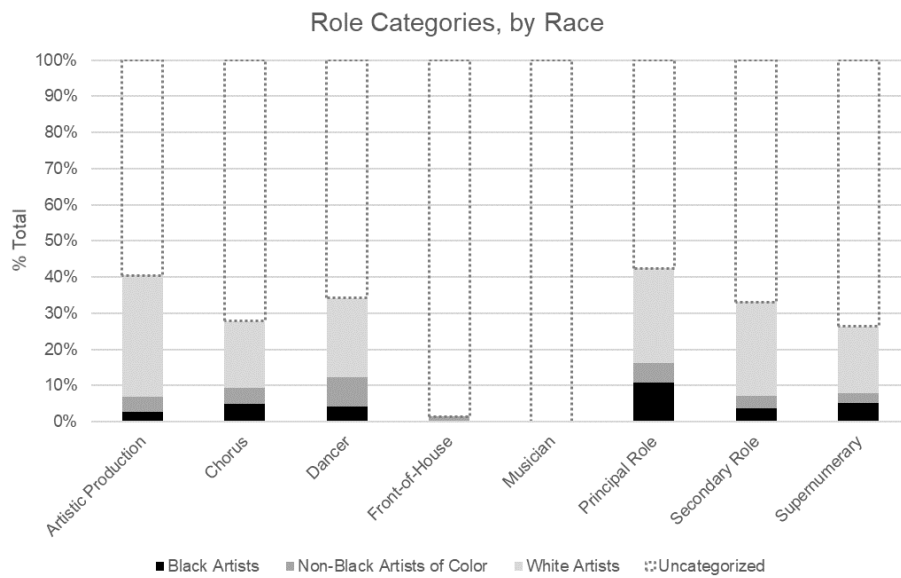
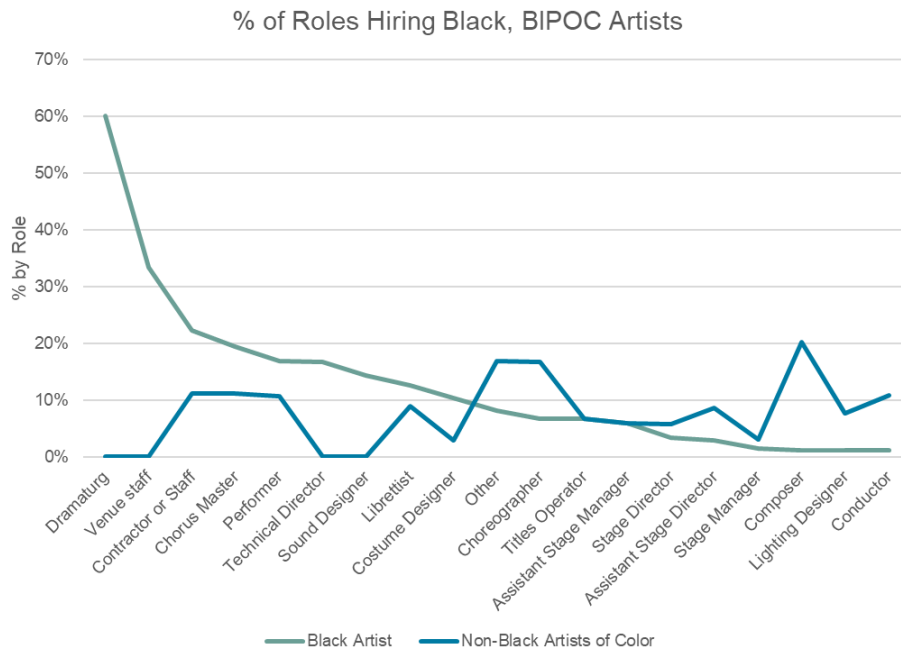
White Artists Represent Highest Proportion of All Artists Hired
Positive correlation between pledge status and hiring of Black artists.

Where race data was supplied by companies for artists, those companies that have signed The Pledge (Yes: Y) are more likely to hire Black and racially diverse artists. Opera companies who have not signed the pledge (IP: In Progress or NR: No Response) have less diversity in their artist hires.



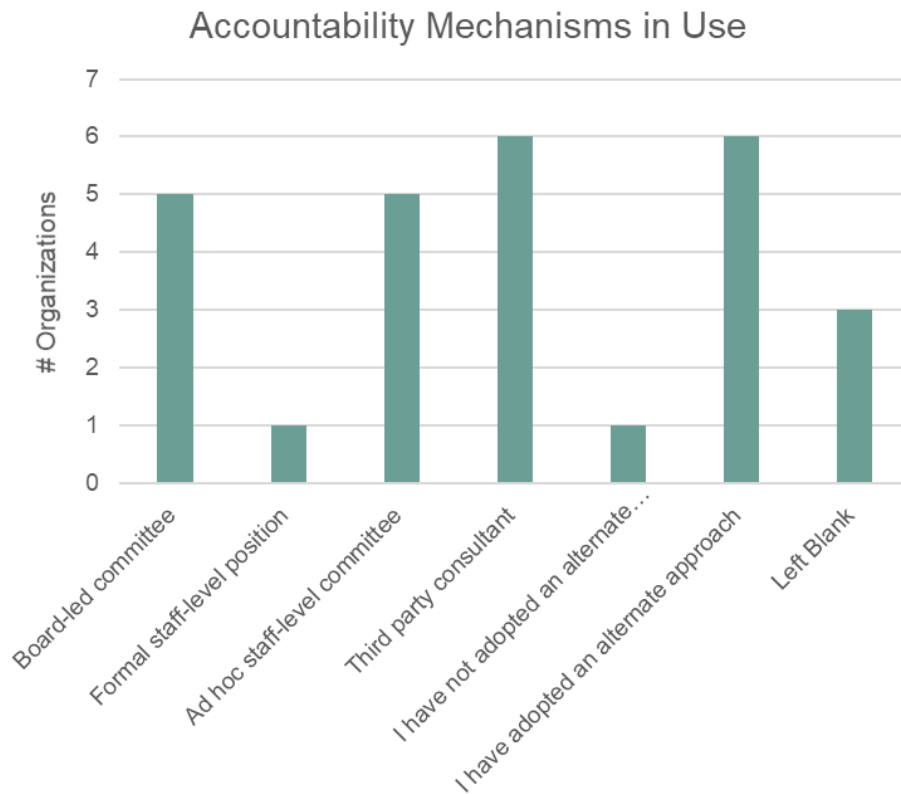
Black artists hired for 3% of Production roles and 10% of all Principal roles
Black artists under-represented in roles with curatorial “power”

Across all production data returned with race categories assigned, Black artists account for only 7% of all hires. Among the roles most responsible for curating the artistic vision of a production – notably, Stage Directors, Composers, Lighting Designers and Conductors – Black artists represent less than 5% of artists hired. The two largest categories of roles hired are Production and Principal Singer; of these two categories, Black artists are dramatically under-represented, accounting for 3% of Production roles and 10% of Principal Singer roles.



Opera companies are starting to put accountability measures in place.
19 opera companies provided feedback in their returned workbooks.

The greatest proportions are working with a third-party EDI consultant and adopting new approaches and policies. Only 5 organizations have EDI efforts being led by the Board, with another 5 companies mantling efforts with ad hoc committees led by staff.



Conclusions and Next Steps

This analysis was undertaken to give a better understanding of participation with The Pledge and progress towards its eight areas of needed transformation. BOA intends to use the analysis to start a data-informed conversation with the opera sector regarding accountability and action steps so change can be realized.

A top priority for BOA is quantifying opera companies' current racial equity standing and action. The data collection workbooks created by BOA and TRG provide a framework for collecting this data.

While BOA and TRG are grateful for the workbooks that have been returned, most companies did not complete every element of requested data. Many companies have not returned data to BOA. To paint a picture of the field's practices today and to create an accurate benchmark of progress toward racial equity, 100% participation is required by opera companies, with complete data supplied when requested.

BOA and TRG Arts are committed to providing support and partnership with the opera sector to aid with synthesis, understanding, and learning from these insights. On Tuesday, August 24 members of BOA and TRG Arts are holding 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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