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Brandon Shaw McKnight will be Opera Columbus' 2023-24 Season Crane Directing Fellow

Opera Columbus is proud to announce that Brandon Shaw McKnight will be its third Crane Directing Fellow, a fellowship program supported by The Crane Group.

Opera Columbus' Crane Directing Fellowship is elated to welcome Brandon Shaw McKnight as its third directing fellow for the 2023-24 season. Inaugurated in the 2021-2022 season as part of Opera Columbus' 40th anniversary season, the Crane Directing Fellowship was created to advance the careers of BIPOC stage directors by creating early career opportunities to gain hands-on experience assisting and directing mainstage productions at Opera Columbus. "We are so proud of the success of this program," says Julia Noulain-Mérat, General Director + CEO of Opera Columbus. "Our first two fellows, Luther (Lewis III) and Sarah (Dahnke) came to this program with so much passion for their work and showed so much growth from one production to the next. We are so excited to have Brandon join the OC family and can't wait to experience their unique artistic perspective."

Shaw McKnight comes to Opera Columbus with a wealth of knowledge and experience from all facets of the performing arts – both on and behind the stage. Their breadth of experience and creativity will be an invaluable asset to the artistic teams for our upcoming season. "We all have the same goal, no matter what style of performance - to tell compelling stories," says Shaw McKnight. "Having fallen in love with opera as a student, it means a lot to work directly with the education programs and bring opera to life for kids."

The Crane Directing Fellowship, sponsored by The Crane Group, seeks to increase the number of creative leaders from diverse backgrounds in the opera industry by advancing and supporting talented individuals who will have an impact beyond Opera Columbus. In their role, Shaw McKnight will work with directors Sarah Dahnke, Rosetta Cucchi, and Allegra Libonati during the 2023-2024 season including mainstage productions *Carmen*, *Eugene Onegin*, and *A Magic Flute Experience: The Temple*. They will also direct the Opera Columbus education tour.

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About Brandon Shaw McKnight



Brandon Shaw McKnight passionately believes that art has the power to inspire, reflect, educate, and empower. Well-versed in multiple genres of the performing arts, they most recently served as the assistant director for *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Annapolis Opera and *Dreamgirls*, Morgan State University. In 2019, Shaw McKnight produced and directed a staged version of Handel's *Messiah*, which they have since performed annually.

An exceptional artist who can be found on and behind the stage, Shaw McKnight has been a part of productions on Broadway, Jazz at Lincoln Center with Teatro Nuovo, The Kennedy Center, Toledo Opera, Annapolis Opera, Opera Baltimore and in Italy. They are often seen performing in his hometown of Baltimore, MD.

Shaw McKnight has been a young artist with programs such as La Musica Lirica, New York City Lyric Opera Theatre, and Utopia Arts. Their love of opera began as a student at Morgan State University.

In addition to joining Opera Columbus as the Crane Directing Fellow, Shaw McKnight is currently a directing resident artist with Opera North.

About Program History

Now in its 3rd season, Opera Columbus launched the Crane Directing Fellowship in the 2021-22 season during the celebration of its 40th Anniversary. Designed specifically to create early career opportunities for BIPOC stage directors, Opera Columbus welcomed Luther Lewis III, a multidisciplinary artist, singer, teacher, and director as its inaugural Fellow. Lewis' residency included assistant directing for the 2021-2022 season's mainstage productions of *Tosca* and *Fellow Travelers*, staging OC's touring education productions with the OCCU Resident Artists, and closing the season as the stage director for *Vanqui*. Following the Opera Columbus residency, Lewis joined Opera Saratoga as the assistant director for *Sweeney Todd*. Lewis continued his artistic development, beginning a directing residency at Lyric Opera of Chicago's, Ryan Opera Center as part of the 2022-2023 Ensemble.

In the 2022-23 season, Opera Columbus welcomed choreographer, dance artist, and arts educator Sarah Dahnke as its second Crane Directing Fellow. Dahnke, the artistic director of *Dances for Solidarity* who received commissions from PEN America and A Studio in the Woods, worked closely with our 2022-23 directors on *La Cenerentola*, *Maria de Buenos Aires*, and *Rigoletto*. She will return for Opera Columbus' 2023-24 Season as the stage director for *Carmen*.

About Crane Group



Focused on building companies and growing investments, Crane Group is a private, family-owned holding and management company based in Columbus, Ohio. Crane Group partners with businesses and investors that demonstrate sustainable growth and an exciting vision for the future. The investment philosophy is centered around providing patient capital and adopting a long-term approach.

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About Opera Columbus



Under the vision of General Director + CEO, Julia Noulin-Mérat, Opera Columbus is redefining and reimagining the concept of regional opera with world-class productions that celebrate extraordinary talent and artistic partnerships, engaging a new, diverse audience for this most magnificent of artforms. From groundbreaking collaborations to innovative and breathtaking productions, Opera Columbus is passionate about creating artistic moments for each and every patron. Opera Columbus’s slogan, “Make It Yours,” demonstrates the company’s commitment to inclusivity, and invites everyone in the community to join with us.

For more information, visit www.OperaColumbus.org

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Join the conversation by using #MakeItYours

Opera Columbus is additionally grateful for the support of Cardinal Health, The Columbus Foundation, Cult Marketing, Greater Columbus Arts Council, Nationwide, Ohio Arts Council, and The Ohio State Wexner Medical Center-Voice Center.