



SAN FRANCISCO  
OPERA

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ESTABLISHES  
DEPARTMENT OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND COMMUNITY  
NEW DEPARTMENT TO BE LED BY CHARLES CHIP MC NEAL**



Charles Chip Mc Neal; photo San Francisco Opera.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (June 10, 2019) – General Director Matthew Shilvock today announced the establishment of the Department of Diversity, Equity and Community at San Francisco Opera. Charles Chip Mc Neal, currently Senior Curriculum & Program Manager in the San Francisco Opera Education Department, will lead the new department, becoming the Company’s first Director of Diversity, Equity and Community effective August 1, 2019.

San Francisco Opera’s Department of Diversity, Equity and Community will have three core focuses:

- An institutional commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) both within the organization and externally.
- Continuation of the Opera’s ARIA (Arts Resources in Action) Residency program, which connects K–8 students and teachers to the process of opera creation across multiple visits, as well as the ARIA Dress Rehearsal and Professional Development programs.
- Continuation of select CUE (Community. Understanding. Engagement.) programs, the Company’s suite of programs for the broader community of adults, families and youth, building conversation and engagement around the stories being told on the War Memorial Opera House stage.

Beginning this fall, Charles Chip Mc Neal and his team of two full-time staff members will work to develop the new department, while also continuing CUE programming and ARIA Residency programs. In the area of DEI, Mr. Mc Neal will begin by establishing strategies to build organizational capacity, structures and policies to help ensure San Francisco Opera is a welcoming, inclusive place to work and to experience opera.

San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock stated: “Great opera is about telling universal stories that bind us in shared humanity. San Francisco Opera is committed to building trust in our community that we are a place where all people can come together and feel welcome and included. We’re committed to championing an equity in the stories we are telling, the people who are telling them, and the audiences with whom we are sharing them. With the creation of a Department of Diversity, Equity and Community we are taking a critical step to deepen our relationship with our community, furthering the already vital work of our ARIA and CUE programs. We are so proud to be on this journey with Chip Mc Neal. He brings tremendous thoughtfulness to his work as an educator, a leader, and a listener, and he deeply respects the power of opera to connect communities.”

Charles Chip Mc Neal is an educator, researcher, civic leader and activist with over two decades of transdisciplinary practice across artforms and genres focusing on arts integration, educational equity, community engagement and cultural competency. He joined San Francisco Opera in 2014, developing leading-edge curricula for the Company’s in-school programs. Previously, Mr. Mc Neal was the Director of Education for San Francisco Ballet, where he established the San Francisco Ballet Center for Dance Education.

“By establishing a Department of Diversity, Equity and Community, San Francisco Opera is making a bold move in a time of critical change in our country’s history, and certainly in the State of California,” said Charles Chip Mc Neal. “We know that in order to remain relevant, it is imperative that arts organizations large and small make intentional efforts to better engage diverse communities meaningfully as we develop strategies to address racial and cultural inequity in the arts. The arts and culture sectors have always been at the forefront of social change and evolving sociocultural identity. We must leverage that power in responsible and responsive ways. We are part of a local, statewide and global movement to address cultural equity and inclusion. We will lead with diversity, embrace equity and strive for inclusivity in all our work, onstage and in community.”

“Prioritizing equity through authentic engagement and representation is essential to building community resiliency through the arts. San Francisco Opera’s new Department of Diversity, Equity and Community illustrates the responsibility of large, legacy organizations in responding to historic and systemic barriers to arts participation,” stated Anne Bown-Crawford, Executive Director, California Arts Council. “This responsibility is shared by government institutions as well, including here at the California Arts Council. I am thrilled to see our longtime arts education colleague and community advocate Chip Mc Neal at the helm of this effort. Chip’s experience, passion and

persistence make him the perfect person for this position. His leadership will no doubt lead to culturally responsive initiatives that will build bridges and effect positive change.”

“The San Francisco Arts Commission applauds San Francisco Opera for taking the initiative to establish a new Department of Diversity, Equity and Community,” said Tom DeCaigny, Director of Cultural Affairs, San Francisco Arts Commission. “Historically the arts have been a powerful vehicle for social change and for building bridges between communities. Institutionalizing racial equity work is critical to making sure that our arts organizations are inclusive and sustainable. San Francisco Opera could not have picked a more inspired person to lead this effort than Charles Chip Mc Neal.”

The establishment of the Department of Diversity, Equity and Community is the result of a reframing of San Francisco Opera’s Education Department. This change is part of a larger restructuring of the Company’s operations, including expense budget reductions, instituted earlier this year in alignment with the Company’s new [Strategic Framework](#). This mission, vision and strategic framework, adopted by the board of San Francisco Opera in June 2018, includes a number of key, community-focused values:

- Fostering a positive, collaborative, diverse, inclusive organization.
- Developing new audiences and creating dynamic audience relationships.
- Creating impactful reciprocal connections with the community through education and engagement.

As a result of budgetary reductions within the Education Department and the Company, San Francisco Opera’s Director of Education, Ruth Nott, will be leaving the Company at the end of July 2019. “Ruth Nott has given extraordinarily dedicated service to the Opera and to the broader community for over 11 years, creating vanguard programs that have become a model for arts education across the country,” stated Matthew Shilvock. “She has led with heart, integrity and vision, and her legacy here will be lasting. Through her time at San Francisco Opera, Ruth has been a champion of the importance of DEI in her programming and in the department she has built. Chip Mc Neal will carry forward the education work led by Ruth over the course of the last decade, and he will honor that work through an integrated approach that will connect the Company to our community through a lasting, purposeful and meaningful commitment to DEI.”

Since 2008, San Francisco Opera has provided education programs in collaboration with programs provided by the [San Francisco Opera Guild](#). Since 1939, the Opera Guild has provided extensive school and student outreach programs across the Bay Area, currently reaching 64,000 students in over 200 schools. “San Francisco Opera is very fortunate in this work to have the partnership of the San Francisco Opera Guild, which has provided award-winning education and engagement programs to the Bay Area for the last 80 years,” said Matthew Shilvock. “We will be working with the Opera Guild to ensure we can collectively continue to reach as many students as possible. The ongoing

partnership of the Opera and the Opera Guild makes for a very exciting potential, giving thrilling opportunities for so many to explore emotion, humanity and creativity through an operatic lens.”

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### **About Charles Chip Mc Neal, M.Ed.**

**Director of Diversity, Equity and Community, San Francisco Opera** (effective August 1, 2019)

Charles Chip Mc Neal joined San Francisco Opera’s Education Department in 2014, where he has developed program curation, developed novel initiatives and advised on culturally responsive pedagogy, creative collaboration and more. He becomes the Company’s first Director of Diversity, Equity and Community effective August 1, 2019.

Mc Neal is an award-winning, international educator, researcher, civic leader and activist engaging in transdisciplinary practice across artforms and genres, with focus on arts integration, educational equity, community engagement and cultural competency. He guides government agencies, non-profits, and schools on change-management, creative collaboration, program creation, equitable arts policies and diversity initiatives. A frequent conference presenter on arts and cultural equity, he has trained in multiple culturally responsive practices including restorative justice techniques, social-emotional learning, and Teaching Tolerance curriculum (from the Southern Poverty Law Center). He is also an accredited Integrated Learning Specialist and certified Oral Historian, and lectures on arts, education, social justice, creativity and multiculturalism for the Edinburgh International Festival, UC Berkeley, Stanford University and Harvard Graduate School of Education.

A celebrated dance educator, Mr. Mc Neal is the former Director of Education for San Francisco Ballet where he established the San Francisco Ballet Center for Dance Education which engaged over 30,000 people annually through 1,500 culturally diverse events. He consults as a Transformative Leadership Coach and Arts Integration Learning Specialist for Alameda County Office of Education where he advances culturally responsive, inquiry-based, social justice curriculum. He is also a founding member of the San Francisco Unified School District’s Arts Education Master Plan Advisory Committee. Mc Neal was appointed to the Leadership Council of Create California, a statewide-advocacy consortium, where he co-chairs the Equity Committee, working with the California Arts Council to create a sustainable, equitable, arts learning eco-system for the state of California. Most recently, he is a member of the Community Working Group on Racial Equity in the Arts sponsored by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission.

Mc Neal’s honors include the Levi Strauss Award for Excellence in Arts Management; recognition by the California State Legislature for outstanding community service; and Yale Distinguished Music Educator. He holds two bachelor’s degrees—in psychology and sociology—from Excelsior College, and a master’s degree in education from Lesley University. He is currently a Ph.D. scholar in transformative theory and educational equity at California Institute for Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, where his research focuses on the juncture of arts, cultural competency and educational equity, as he devises solutions to the pressing issues of education reform and racial equity in the arts.

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**Downloadable photos of Charles Chip Mc Neal are available at [San Francisco Opera Press Photos](#).**

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