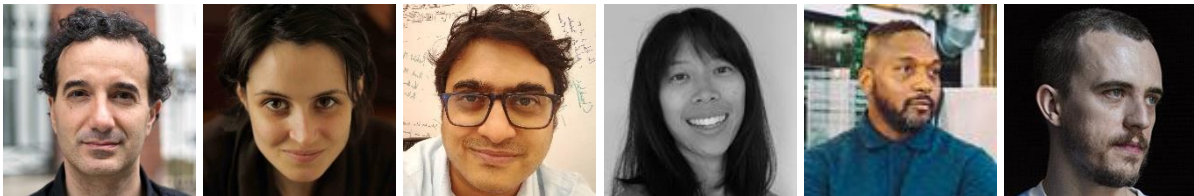




SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ANNOUNCES *INSTIGATORS*

Jad Abumrad, Samantha Gorman, Abhishek Majumdar,
Paula Te, Bryant Terry and Peter Zuspan Launch Company's
Bold, New Multidisciplinary Initiative



Jad Abumrad, Samantha Gorman, Abhishek Majumdar, Paula Te, Bryant Terry, Peter Zuspan

San Francisco, CA (June 9, 2022) — As the Company is poised to celebrate its 2022–23 Centennial Season, San Francisco Opera today unveiled *Instigators*, a bold new multidisciplinary program that brings a group of remarkable thinkers and artists into the world of opera.

The initiative, designed to pioneer future directions for San Francisco Opera and the art form, launches this week with six Instigators who will take part in conversations, rehearsals, performances and immersive activities both on and off the Company's campus in the heart of the Bay Area.

San Francisco Opera's inaugural cohort of Instigators includes storyteller-musician-journalist Jad Abumrad, creator of *Radiolab* and other podcasts; writer-director Samantha Gorman (co-director/founder of Tender Claws), whose stories unfold using emerging media such as AR/VR; writer-scenographer-director Abhishek Majumdar, artistic director of Bangalore's Nalanda Arts Studio; design technologist Paula Te, researching the intersection of the digital and the physical in culture and education; chef-educator-author Bryant Terry, James Beard and NAACP Image Award-

winning activist; and architect-designer-software engineer Peter Zuspan of Bureau V, a queer architecture and design studio.

Over the course of a one- or two-year relationship with the Company, the Instigators will immerse themselves in the art form, exchanging knowledge, experience and creative ideas with the San Francisco Opera community, tapping the Company's resources and developing new approaches around the future of opera.

Each Instigator, based on their individual artistic practice and expertise, will pursue an avenue of inquiry in a lab-like framework, supported by the Company. In identifying, exploring and developing ideas, their work may take many forms, from research and experiments to workshops and presentations, with the ultimate goal of bringing new perspectives and innovations to the art form.

San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock said: "As we begin San Francisco Opera's second century, I'm thrilled to welcome the Instigators into our artistic family. Creativity is in this Company's DNA, and this bold initiative will allow us to surge forward with a group of innovators leading our R&D lab. Just as they push the boundaries of their own diverse disciplines, they will bring their rigor, intelligence and curiosity to opera. They will help us to envision future directions for our opera community and art form—ones we can't even imagine at this moment. The donors to our Creative Edge Fund believe in the vital importance of exploration and risk, and I'm so grateful for their partnership as we embark on this new chapter."

During this inaugural week of the program, the Instigators will have the opportunity to meet artists, observe musical, technical and production preparation and techniques, and explore ideas with key leadership, artistic and production personnel. In addition to activities on the War Memorial campus, the Instigators will travel to the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto to meet with futurists and take part in interactive work in their Emerging Media Lab.

Future convenings will follow in the fall and spring, with independent work taking place both in San Francisco and remote locations. The Company will provide updates as the inquiries unfold.



San Francisco Opera Instigators and team (front row) Jad Abumrad, Elena Park, Samantha Gorman, Paula Te, Jocelyn Clarke; (back row) Matthew Shilvock, Peter Zuspan, Lee Helms, Bryant Terry (Abishek Majumdar not pictured).

Photo: Kristen Loken/San Francisco Opera

The initiative will be led by San Francisco Opera's Director of Innovation Programs, Lee Helms, *Instigators* Curator Elena Park and *Instigators* Creative Advisor Jocelyn Clarke. "We were looking for individuals doing singular and exciting work in fields outside of opera, who would bring fresh perspectives to the Company, and challenge and provoke us to dream about new pathways for the future," said Park.

"So we welcome this group of Instigators—all of whom have adventurous minds, expansive curiosities and a love for the unexpected," she continued. "Their individual paths of inquiry will enable us to learn and collaborate together, to deepen and advance our understanding of what the art form can be and to broaden our community of artists and audiences—creating an even more vibrant future for opera."

Learn more at sfopera.com/instigators. For more information about San Francisco Opera's 2022–23 Centennial Season, visit sfopera.com/100.

Instigators is one of San Francisco Opera's many Innovation Programs made possible, in part, by the Creative Edge Fund with major support from Carol and Dixon Doll, Peter Fenton and Kate Greer, and Bob Ellis.

Innovation Program sponsorships are available. If interested in learning more or making a gift, please contact San Francisco Opera Chief Philanthropy Officer Lisa Bury at lbury@sfopera.com or (415) 551-6226.

San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by Jerome L. and Thao N. Dodson, The Dolby Family, Carol and Dixon Doll, Bertie Bialek Elliott, Peter Fenton and Kate Greer, Keith and Priscilla Geeslin, Gordon Getty, John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn, Burgess and Elizabeth Jamieson, Franklin and Catherine Johnson, Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund, Steven M. Menzies, Bernard and Barbro Osher, Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem, Dianne and Tad Taube, Phyllis C. Wattis Endowment Funds, Diane B. Wilsey, and Barbara A. Wolfe.

Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera.

San Francisco Opera is supported, in part, by a grant from Grants for the Arts.



OFFICIAL AIRLINE



San Francisco Opera is a member of



###

Instigator biographies are attached; photos are available at sfopera.com/press.

For further press information, please contact San Francisco Opera Communications:

Julia Inouye (415) 565-6430 / jinouye@sfopera.com

Jeffery McMillan (415) 565-6451 / jmcmillan@sfopera.com

Teresa Concepcion (415) 565-6470 / tconcepcion@sfopera.com



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

INSTIGATORS

- Storyteller-musician-journalist Jad Abumrad, creator of *Radiolab* and other podcasts.
- Writer-director Samantha Gorman (co-director/founder of Tender Claws), whose stories unfold using emerging media such as AR/VR.
- Writer-scenographer-director Abhishek Majumdar, artistic director of Bangalore's Nalanda Arts Studio.
- Design technologist Paula Te, researching the intersection of the digital and the physical in culture and education.
- Chef-educator-author Bryant Terry, James Beard & NAACP Image Award-winning activist.
- Architect-designer-software engineer Peter Zuspan of Bureau V, a queer architecture and design studio.



Jad Abumrad is the creator of *Radiolab*, *More Perfect*, *Dolly Parton's America* and the *Vanishing of Harry Pace*, which collectively are downloaded over 120 million times a year. He has been called a "master of the radio craft" for his unique ability to combine cutting edge sound-design, cinematic storytelling and a personal approach to explaining complex topics, from the stochasticity of tumor cells to the mathematics of morality.

Jad studied creative writing and music composition at Oberlin College in Ohio. He composed much of the music for *Radiolab* and in the past has composed music for film, theater and dance. Jad has received three Peabody Awards, the highest honor in

broadcasting and two DuPont Awards. In 2011, he received the prestigious MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship. He is a Distinguished Professor of Research at Vanderbilt University.



Samantha Gorman is the co-director/founder of Tender Claws, a game, art and tech studio that walks the line between art/innovation and entertainment. She specializes in writing for interactive media and performance/theater across genres including expanded cinema, games and virtual reality. Through her research and experience, Samantha has developed a methodology for hybrid long-form VR and remote immersive theater games with live performers inhabiting the world, as seen in *The Under Presents* (VR and Immersive Theater hybrid with live, remote cast) and *Tempest* (live ticketed remote adaption in VR). She is known for projects that make critical, creative interventions in form while also functioning as entertainment and providing R&D for emerging platforms and partnerships, including *PRY* (hybrid ios game/film/novella), *Virtual Virtual Reality* and *Virtual Virtual Reality 2* (VR narrative satire games) and *Tendar* (AR virtual pet with computer vision and machine learning). Her narratives often center on speculative design futures; to this end, the close marriage of critical narrative and interaction mechanics is meant to foster a reflective/informed viewership of the technology being consumed.

As an academic, Samantha studies the history of Immersive Media. She is an Assistant Professor of Video Games, Art and Theater at Northeastern University and holds a BA/MFA from Brown University in Literary Arts and a PhD. from Cinematic Arts at USC in Media Arts + Practice.



Abhishek Majumdar is a playwright, scenographer, essayist and director. He is the artistic director of Nalanda Arts Studio, a Bangalore-based theater company that focuses on making new work in multiple Indian languages and is invested in collaborations with other Asian and African artists. He is also the creative producer at New Voices Arts Project and Visiting Associate Professor at New York University in Abu Dhabi. His work has been performed in festivals and theaters around the world and translated into several languages. He is the recipient of the International Theatremakers Award 2021 by Playwrights Realm New York and the Segal Center Award for Civic Engagement in the Arts 2021. His book, *Theatre across borders*, which is part of Bloomsbury's Theatre Makers series, is about to be published in 2022. His first film, *Water Station*, an adaptation of the eponymous play by Ota Shogo, is to be released in 2022 by the New York University Abu Dhabi Arts Center and was created as part of the New York University Abu Dhabi Theater Program. He is currently creating new work for Royal

Court Theatre London, PlayCo New York, Bloomsbury International, Tibet Theater, and Nalanda Arts Studio to name a few.



Paula Te is an interface designer and researcher focused on the intersection of crafting, learning and culture. She explores interactive artifacts and environments at the intersection of the digital and physical that push beyond the boundaries of the norms and explore alternative visions of the future. Her practice centers community and people from diverse backgrounds, welcoming folks to co-create and contribute their vision of the future, allowing for multiplicities of experiences to unfold.

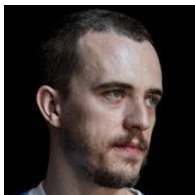
She was previously a researcher at Dynamicland, investigating a new computational medium woven into physical space, and prior to that was an interaction designer at Xerox PARC. Her work on digital fabrication and interfaces has been featured in Ars Electronica, SIGCHI Interaction Design & Children and Eyeo Festival.

She is a collaborator on a-forest-of-frames.net, a series of interface explorations made by women and BIPOC, and at 50years.today, connecting with narratives on the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora.



Bryant Terry is a James Beard and NAACP Image Award-winning chef, educator and author renowned for his activism to create a healthy, just and sustainable food system. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of 4 Color Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House and Ten Speed Press. For the 2022–23 academic year, Bryant will be an Artist Fellow at UC

Berkeley as a member of the second cohort of Abolition Democracy Fellows. Bryant's sixth book, *Black Food*, was the most critically acclaimed American cookbook published in 2021, and it won the Art of Eating Prize which is awarded annually to the year's best book about food. *San Francisco Magazine* included Bryant among 11 Smartest People in the Bay Area Food Scene, and *Fast Company* named him one of 9 People Who Are Changing the Future of Food. In regard to his work, Bryant's mentor Alice Waters says, "Bryant Terry knows that good food should be an everyday right and not a privilege."

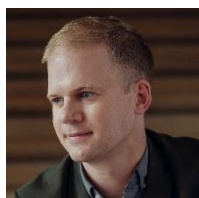


Peter Zuspan is the principal of Bureau V Architecture (BVA). Trained as an architect, software engineer and an opera singer, Peter's work hovers between architecture, design, technology and performance. His collaborative performance and design work has been performed or exhibited at venues such as the Venice Biennale of Art, the Gwangju Biennale, Inhotim, the Cooper Hewitt, the Storefront for Art and Architecture, and MoMA

PS1.

BVA's work focuses on the design of architecture for the arts. BVA's design of the nonprofit chamber music hall National Sawdust has won numerous national and international awards and was hailed by the *New York Times* as "the city's most vital new music hall." The studio's recent clients range from arts entities such as Creative Time, the Goat Farm Arts Center, Chapter NY, JTT Gallery and the Brooklyn Public Library, to governmental institutions such as Miami-Dade Arts in Public Places, to artists such as Assume Vivid Astro Focus and Jason Moran.

INSTIGATORS team



Lee Helms, Director of Innovation Programs, San Francisco Opera

As Director of Innovation Programs, Lee Helms leads a portfolio of initiatives inspired by San Francisco Opera's 100th season. Having started with the Company as an Assistant Stage Manager and then Production Operations Manager, Lee was most recently Managing Director: Operations, overseeing the resident orchestra, chorus and dancer employee groups, multi-year planning and strategy, and union negotiations with the American Guild of Musical Artists and the American Federation of Musicians. Other positions have included Production Manager for the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Hollywood Bowl, and on tour; Associate General Manager for Theatre for a New Audience, an Off Broadway classical theater company; Company Manager for Lincoln Center Festival; as well as positions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Barrington Stage Company and Brevard Music Center. Lee holds a BFA from Southern Methodist University and Trinity College Dublin and is currently in the Executive MBA class of 2024 at UC Berkeley Haas School of Business.



Elena Park, Curator

Director, producer and creative consultant Elena Park looks for ways to explore ideas and connect the worlds of arts, culture, media, technology and current affairs. With an abiding belief in equity, she seeks to uplift a range of remarkable artists through live and digital programs, created for institutional heavyweights but also for smaller, nimble outfits with an appetite for risk-taking. Her NationalSawdust+ series taps artists such as Laurie Anderson, Nico Muhly, Caroline Shaw, Patti Smith, Esperanza Spalding and Carrie Mae Weems, and she has curated events for Guggenheim Works + Process and the Kennedy Center. Recent video directing credits include San Francisco Opera's *In Song* portrait series; the Cleveland Orchestra conducted by Dame Jane Glover; and Jake Heggie's *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope* for the Cabrillo Festival. Elena has served as Executive Producer for

Cleveland Orchestra's *In Focus* series, Stanford Live's digital programs and WNYC Radio; Supervising Producer for *The Met: Live in HD*; and Strategic Advisor for San Francisco Opera, Meyer Sound and Cambodian Living Arts. TV and film credits include Creative Consultant, *Mozart in the Jungle* and Music Producer, *Bel Canto* (feature film starring Julianne Moore, voiced by Renée Fleming).



Jocelyn Clarke, Creative Advisor

Jocelyn Clarke is a dramaturg and writer for stage and screen. He is Senior Dramaturg at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. He was Theatre Advisor to the Arts Council of Ireland for ten years and Literary Manager of the Abbey, Ireland's national theater. He is an Associate Artist with Theatre Mitu and with The Civilians. As a dramaturg, Clarke has worked with writers such as Katori Hall, Taylor Mac, Lydia Diamond, Abhishek Majumdar, Eduardo Machado, Charles Randolph Wright, Lisa Kron, Seamus Heaney, Tazewell Thompson, Craig Lucas, Carl Hancock Rux, Kenneth Lin, Mary Kathryn Nagle, Tanya Saracho, Aaron Posner and Karen Zacarias. He was executive story editor on all three seasons of the BBC/RTE TV series *Young Offenders*, and he is a writer producer on the second season of *P-Valley*, Katori Hall's acclaimed TV series for Starz. His new adaptation of Elizabeth Swados' musical *Beautiful Lady* will be directed by Anne Bogart at La Mama Theatre in New York in May 2023.