

Michigan Opera Theatre awarded \$750,000 National Endowment for the Humanities grant

Read about Michigan Opera Theatre and new Artistic Director Yuval Sharon in:

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In recognition of Michigan Opera Theatre's (MOT) unique cultural and educational value to Detroit, and of the role that the humanities play in the fabric of the community, the National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded a \$750,000 Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant to MOT in order to improve and modernize the Detroit Opera House. The NEH's Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grants leverage federal funding to strengthen and sustain humanities infrastructure and capacity-building activities at cultural institutions. The grant—

which, if fully matched by private donations, will be expanded at a 4:1 ratio to a full sum of \$3,750,000—will be used for renovations to the Opera House that would improve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, remedy occupant access limitations, and increase capacity for public humanities and educational programs. Once completed, these renovations will allow for greater outreach and access to the arts for all members of the Detroit community and beyond. This is the second grant that MOT has received from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2020, and second in the company's 50-year history. An earlier grant, bestowed as part of the CARES act, provided MOT with \$175,000 to support its MOT at Home digital programming campaign.

“Once matched, this major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities will provide a major boost in support of an initial phase to increase accessibility within one of Detroit's cultural landmarks,” says MOT President Wayne S Brown, as MOT approaches the centennial of the 1922 Detroit Opera House. “We are appreciative to NEH Chairman Jon Parrish Peede, national expert panelists, and the NEH staff for this opportunity to again leverage public/ private investment in our community.”

Earlier in the year, opera director, MacArthur Grant-winner, and founder of The Industry Yuval Sharon was named Michigan Opera Theatre's first-ever Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director, a five-year appointment made possible by a generous gift from MOT Board member Gary L. Wasserman. Sharon began his tenure in October with *Twilight: Gods*, an innovative and site-specific *Götterdämmerung* adaptation staged in the Detroit Opera House Parking Center. Equal parts drive-in theater and opera house event, *Twilight: Gods* gave audience members the opportunity to watch Wagner's drama unfold scene-by-scene from the safety of their cars, while the live performance (sung in English) was broadcast to car stereos—a full immersion in the world of the *Ring*. *Twilight: Gods* included new narration from Detroit-based poet Marsha Music, recontextualizing Wagner's cosmic drama against the landscape of modern Detroit.

Twilight: Gods “would have been a triumph in any season; in 2020, it felt borderline miraculous,” writes Alex Ross for *The New Yorker*'s [“Notable Performances and Recordings of 2020.”](#)

An essential component of the cultural landscape in Detroit and beyond, Michigan Opera Theatre is committed to presenting opera and dance of the highest artistic caliber. Founded In 1971 by Dr. David Dichiera, the company's mission is to serve as a major cultural resource to the state of Michigan and the city of Detroit. The

organization is led by President and CEO Wayne S. Brown and Chairman of the Board Ethan Davidson. More information is available [here](#).
