

NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY



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Opera Boston and New England Conservatory Unveil Fellows Program to Debut in 2008-09 Season

**Two NEC Students Chosen for Inaugural Year, Will Sing in Opera
Boston Ensemble and Outreach Events**

**Opportunities to Understudy, Perform Comprimario Roles
Envisioned**

Opera Boston and New England Conservatory have announced a new partnership in which selected NEC opera graduate students can gain professional experience performing with the cutting edge opera company.

The Opera Boston New England Conservatory Fellows Program will debut in September with two NEC students, soprano Catherine O'Rourke and baritone Paul Brennan, joining the opera company for its 2008-09 season. They will sing in the Opera Boston ensemble and participate in the company's outreach events.

In addition, they will receive scholarship support from NEC, guaranteed roles in NEC Opera Theater productions, and a stipend from the opera company.

After the first pilot year, the Fellows program could expand to include up to four students and to offer opportunities for understudying roles and performing comprimario parts where appropriate.

The new program is among the first initiatives of President Tony Woodcock, who took over leadership of the Conservatory in June 2007. Committed to the ideal of partnership with other arts groups in the city, Woodcock met for the first time with Opera Boston's Music Director Gil Rose and General Director Carole Charnow last fall and, over the winter, they hammered out the plan in consultation with NEC's Director of Opera Studies John Greer and Dean of the College Tom Novak.

O'Rourke and Brennan, who were selected by audition, will begin rehearsals with Opera Boston September 22 when the company starts preparing its production of Weber's *Der Freischütz*. Other works in the company's season are Shostakovich's *The Nose* and Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*.

O'Rourke, 24, and a native of North Carolina, received her M.M. in Vocal Performance from NEC on May 18. Brennan, 24, from Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, is scheduled to receive his M.M. in Vocal Performance in December. Both sang leading roles in NEC Opera Theater's 2007-08 productions of *Summer and Smoke* and *Egisto*. O'Rourke has been studying voice with NEC faculty Delores Ziegler and Brennan with James McDonald.

Charnow described the planning process as "easy," and "a natural fit" for the two institutions and expressed delight that the program is going forward. Woodcock concurred, saying that "such collaborations have long been desired for NEC's opera students. We are hopeful that the Fellows Program will lead to a continuing, strong and mutually beneficial connection to this exciting company. We are also hopeful that this is just the first of several collaborations with Boston performing arts groups."

ABOUT OPERA BOSTON

Opera Boston is Boston's most innovative opera company. Founded in 1980, the company has presented more than 70 operas, including 34 regional and two world premieres. In addition to its critically acclaimed, award-winning mainstage productions, Opera Boston offers a range of programs, including an occasional chamber opera festival, a popular informal cabaret series and an extensive educational program in Boston's schools.

ABOUT NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

Recognized nationally and internationally as a leader among music schools, New England Conservatory offers rigorous training in an intimate, nurturing community to 750 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral music students from around the world. Its faculty of 225 boasts internationally esteemed artist-teachers and scholars. Its alumni go on to fill orchestra chairs, concert hall stages, jazz clubs, recording studios, and arts management positions worldwide. Nearly half of the Boston Symphony Orchestra is composed of NEC trained musicians and faculty.

The oldest independent school of music in the United States, NEC was founded in 1867 by Eben Tourjee. Its curriculum is remarkable for its wide range of styles and traditions. On the college level, it features training in classical, jazz, Contemporary Improvisation, world and early music. Through its Preparatory School, School of Continuing Education, and Community Collaboration Programs, it provides training and performance opportunities for children, pre-college students, adults, and seniors. Through its outreach projects, it allows young musicians to engage with non-traditional audiences in schools, hospitals, and nursing homes—thereby bringing pleasure to new listeners and enlarging the universe for classical music and jazz.

NEC presents more than 600 free concerts each year, many of them in Jordan Hall, its world-renowned, 100-year old, beautifully restored concert hall. These

programs range from solo recitals to chamber music to orchestral programs to jazz and opera scenes. Every year, NEC's opera studies department also presents two fully staged opera productions at the Cutler Majestic Theatre in Boston.

NEC is co-founder and educational partner of "From the Top," a weekly radio program that celebrates outstanding young classical musicians from the entire country. With its broadcast home in Jordan Hall, the show is now carried by National Public Radio and is heard on 250 stations throughout the United States.

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