

**MEDIA
ALERT**

For Immediate Release



PRESS ROOM: www.fgo.org/press-room
 PHOTOS: www.flickr.com/photos/fgopera

Brittany Mazzurco
 Public & Media Relations Manager
 305-403-3282
bmazzurco@fgo.org

**Florida Grand Opera Launches
\$47,380 Crowdfunding Campaign**



Florida Grand Opera and Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science partner to fund Fredrick Kaufman’s composition Stars and Distances

MIAMI – September 24, 2015 – Florida Grand Opera (FGO), with the support of the Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science (Frost Science), announced today that they have launched a campaign to raise funds via a rewards / equity crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo.com to sponsor the recording of *Stars and Distances*, a “musical soundscape” composition by award-winning and internationally-renowned composer Fredrick Kaufman.

The organization sets out to raise approximately \$47,000 on Indiegogo to finish the recording and production of the composition which will serve as a special soundtrack for the new Frost Planetarium at the new location of the Frost Science in downtown Miami’s Museum Park.

“FGO and Frost Science are on a mission to turn Miami into a world-class arts, culture, and education destination,” says Susan T. Danis, General Director and CEO of Florida Grand Opera. “We are now turning to the community to help fund this project so Frost Science can reach the level of excellence Miami deserves.”

The project *Stars and Distances* was conducted by Maestro Andrew Bisantz, recorded by PARMA Records, and sung by Florida Grand Opera’s current and past Young Artists, along with several additional vocalists from Florida International University and the Miami community (a

full list is supplied at the end of this release), at Florida International University's Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center concert hall.

The crowdfunding campaign, titled "Shooting for the Stars... and Distances," will be hosted on [Indiegogo.com](https://www.indiegogo.com) and will run from today, October 1, 2015 through Sunday, October 31, 2015. Both organizations plan to heavily promote this campaign across their social media networks and other digital platforms. Additionally, a variety of giving incentives, or "perks," will be offered for donations at various levels. Perks range from a personalized "thank you" letter signed by the composer to an exclusive hard hat tour of the new Frost Planetarium.

Should the crowdfunding campaign be successful, FGO and Frost Science hope to make the recording available for commercial release and serve as one of the auditory companions to the Frost Planetarium's presentations. Additionally, FGO's current Young Artists, led again by Bisantz, would perform *Stars and Distances* live at an exclusive event in 2016.

"The Miami community is greatly anticipating the new Frost Science, which will feature a state-of-the-art, multi-million dollar planetarium. *Stars and Distances* is a stunning composition which really does provide a musical perspective to the cosmos," Danis continues. "We are truly honored that Frost Science and Fredrick Kaufman have chosen Florida Grand Opera to be part of the special soundtrack of this prestigious institution. I sincerely hope you choose to support this campaign so FGO can continue to innovate well into the future."

To learn more about the crowdfunding campaign, or to make a donation, please visit: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/shooting-for-the-stars-and-distances>

About the Partnership and Project

In the summer of 2014, FGO's General Director & CEO, Susan T. Danis, was approached by conductor Andrew Bisantz with a project proposal: to record the innovative composition *Stars and Distances* so it could become a special soundtrack to the new Frost Planetarium.

With assistance from Bisantz, composer Fredrick Kaufman, and Frost Science, FGO was able to pull together an enthusiastic team to get this project off the ground. By early fall of 2014, singers had been arranged, a recording company was scheduled to fly down, and donations to fund the project were lining up.

When the recording process began at the start of 2015, several key contributors had been identified to fund this project for the benefit of the community. Unfortunately, for unforeseen reasons, these donations did not come through. Although FGO was able to put up enough money to fund the initial recording fees, the project has since been put on hold.

About the Composition, *Stars and Distances*

Stars and Distances is an 18' work for a 16-voice vocal chamber ensemble. The piece, first conceptualized in 1976, was completed in 1982 and premiered to "great success" in 1986 by the Pacific Lutheran University Chorus. The piece has since been revised in anticipation for this project.

Kaufman on *Stars and Distances*:

Stars and Distances came to me as I lay on my back one night in Hyde Park, London, staring up at the Cosmos trying to imagine what overwhelming assemblage of specs would sound like if they indeed had a sound. The next day I came back with a telescope and charts I had borrowed from the University of London Astronomy Department.

... I decided to try to identify 15 of the brightest stars in the sky that night.

As I researched those stars I discovered that each one of them had an individual fascinating characteristic ... All of them are considerably larger than our sun and many, much more powerful.

I then set out to work writing on the composition.

As Kaufman explains, those 15 stars served as the catalyst for his composition. The piece is divided into 15 musical sections, each marked by the “individually fascinating” characteristics of the stars which inspired him. Such characteristics include sound quality, volume, complexity, and energy delivered by the 16-voice ensemble.

The text of the composition is a combination of scientific and poetic selections interspersed with sounds drawn from the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet. In Kaufman’s own words, this unique approach of vowels and consonants sung by the group “provide a textural basis for the subtle variation between dissonance and consonance, creating an atmosphere which is at once both clear as the night sky and slightly elusive.”

Specific texts used within *Stars and Distances* include “The First Three Minutes” by Steven Weinberg (1977), “Intelligent Life in the Universe” by I. S. Shklovskii and Carl Sagan (1968), “Burnt Norton” from Four Quartets by T. S. Elliot (1936), “If I Could Tell You” by W. H. Auden (1940), “The More Loving One” by W. H. Auden (1957), and “I Saw Eternity” by Henry Vaughan (17th c.).

Voices of *Stars and Distances*

Soprano 1	Laura Martinez León
Soprano 2	Riley Svatos
Soprano 3	Rebecca Henriques
Soprano 4	Amanda Crider
Alto 1	Sarah Payne
Alto 2	Betsy Diaz
Alto 3	Carla Jablonski
Alto 4	Kirsten Scott
Tenor 1	Scott Bracken-Tripp
Tenor 2	Daniel Bates
Tenor 3	Robert Dundas
Tenor 4	Edgar Miguel Abréu
Bass 1	Will Hughes
Bass 2	Isaac Bray
Bass 3	Chance Eakin
Bass 4	Eric McConnell

ABOUT FLORIDA GRAND OPERA

Florida Grand Opera (FGO), the oldest performing arts organization in Florida, celebrates its 75th year of continuously producing grand opera during the 2015-16 Season. The mainstage operas of the season include: Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*

(November 15–December 5, 2015), Bellini's *Norma* (January 23–February 11, 2016), Weinberg's *The Passenger* (April 2–9, 2016), and Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* (May 7–14, 2016).



In the fall of 2014, Florida Grand Opera (FGO) announced the launch of “Say YES! to Opera, South Florida,” a \$17.5 million comprehensive campaign to fund the future of the company. FGO is now asking all those who enjoy and support grand opera in South Florida to make their gifts or pledge today. For more information, or to make a pledge please contact Donor Data Officer Catalina Villamarín at 305.403.3317 or cvillamarin@fgo.org.

Founded in 1941 as Greater Miami Opera and later merging with The Opera Guild Inc. in 1994, FGO presents a mixture of standard repertoire and contemporary works as well as commissions and new productions – all featuring projected translations in English and Spanish. FGO is recognized for funding by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Funding is also provided, in part, by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, Cultural Affairs Council, the Mayor and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners and the Miami-Dade County Tourist Development Council. Program support is provided by the City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council. Florida Grand Opera is a Resident Company of the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County and a member company of OPERA America. Intercontinental Miami is the Official Hotel and Steinway & Sons is the Official Piano of Florida Grand Opera.

ABOUT FREDERICK KAUFMAN, COMPOSER

Fredrick Kaufman (b. 1936) is the composer of over one hundred and thirty compositions that have been performed worldwide by orchestras such as the Warsaw Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic, Czech Radio Orchestra, Lithuanian Philharmonic, Czech National Symphony Orchestra, Jerusalem Symphony, Instrumental Ensemble of Grenoble, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra Novi Musici, Dominican Republic National Orchestra, National Orchestra of Brazil, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New World Symphony the Pittsburgh Symphony orchestras, and Florida Grand Opera. Kaufman is a former Fulbright Scholar, and recipient honors and fellowships from the Endowment of the Arts, the Rockefeller, Guggenheim and Ford Foundations.

Twice nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, Kaufman's Holocaust composition Kaddish, which Bernard Holland of The New York Times described as "having the most expressive writing for strings to be heard today," has been performed over 100 times in the major concert halls of Europe, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Israel, South America, Asia and throughout the United States. His works have received prizes at international competitions and have been performed throughout the world at major music festivals. Israeli television has paid tribute to him as a composer in the thirty minute documentary

film Fredrick Kaufman-Life of an Artist.

Critics from the New York Times, Newark Star-Ledger, Philadelphia Inquirer, Miami Herald, Jerusalem Post, London Times, Perpignan Independent have described Kaufman's music as "striking...individual...an interesting combination of overwhelming pathos and infectious joy...brought one into the realm of musical genius."

His Kaminarimon (for Taiko drums and Flamenco dance) has been called "remarkable" and "stunning" and was voted as the number one classical composition of 2002 and "the most imaginative new work of the year" by music critic James Roos of The Miami Herald. String Quartet #6, The Urban was called "stunning" by The New Yorker magazine. The Quartet was nominated by Lukas Foss in 2007 for a Pulitzer Prize.

Kaufman is very excited about his new association with Florida Grand Opera and feels that their spectacular performance of his Stars & Distances will be acclaimed by the public and critics alike.

ABOUT ANDREW BISANTZ, CONDUCTOR

A versatile musician acknowledged for his passionate and commanding leadership from the podium, the exciting young American conductor Andrew Bisantz is quickly building an impressive roster of credits at leading national orchestras and opera companies throughout the country. For his debut with Boston Lyric Opera leading *The Turn of the Screw*, the Boston Globe selected it as one of the ten top Boston classical music events of 2010. He subsequently returned for productions of *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*.

Mr. Bisantz joined the music staff of Florida Grand Opera in 2002, first as Assistant Conductor, then as Resident Conductor. He made his FGO mainstage debut in the 2005-06 season, conducting Bizet's *Carmen* for the company's historic final performances at Miami-Dade County Auditorium, and he returned as the 2006-07 Henry C. Clark Conductor to conduct performances of *Manon Lescaut*. Additionally, he has conducted *La cenerentola* and *La bohème* for FGO.

In recent seasons he's led acclaimed productions of *Don Giovanni* (one of South Florida Classical Review's Ten Best Performances of 2011), *Rigoletto* in 2012, 2013's hit production of *Die Zauberflöte*, and this past season's critical favorite *The Consul*.

He served as cover conductor for over 25 productions, covering such notable conductors as Richard Bonyng, Richard Buckley, Peter Leonard, Stewart Robertson, Alberto Veronesi and Willie Anthony Waters. He served four seasons the company's Education Manager, during which time Mr. Bisantz developed several new education initiatives, including a scholarship / mentoring program for Miami-Dade high school seniors interested in pursuing a career in the arts.

ABOUT THE PATRICIA AND PHILLIP FROST MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

The Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science aims to make a difference in people's lives by inspiring them to appreciate the impact that science and technology can have on every facet of our world. In 2016, Frost Science will continue to inspire visitors in a new state-of-the-art facility designed by Grimshaw Architects currently under construction at Museum Park, in the heart of downtown Miami. The museum will be structured around a lushly landscaped indoor and outdoor Living Core Aquarium of terrestrial and aquatic environments, featuring a Gulf Stream tank experience totaling over 500,000 gallons of salt water. The facility will also feature the state-of-the-art full dome Frost Planetarium, the Knight Learning Center, Innovation Center and Cafe, and an Exploration Center featuring permanent interactive exhibits: Feathers to the Stars and The River of Grass. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and a member of the Association of Science and Technology Centers. The Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science is funded with the support of Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners. Learn more at www.frostscience.org.

The Frost Planetarium

Thanks to an additional \$10 million gift from Patricia and Phillip Frost, visitors at Frost Science will be able to explore the universe, from the depths of space to the building blocks of the cosmos, at the state-of-the-art, 250-seat Frost Planetarium.

Longtime supporters of South Florida's arts and culture, the Frosts had previously made a \$35 million donation to name the Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science. Now, they are helping to complete one of the world's most advanced planetariums. The Frost Planetarium will feature a high-resolution, 16-million-color, 8K projection system, surround sound and software that will support the latest immersive experiences and allow images and data from NASA (space), NOAA (weather), and the U.S. Geological Survey (land) to be projected on the dome.

With Frost Planetarium's raked stadium-style seating and a seamless screen tilted at 23.5 degrees to match the tilt of the Earth's axis in space, visitors will be able to look forward, rather than up, for a comfortable and immersive viewing experience. Visitors will be able to travel to distant galaxies, tour our planet from space, dive deep into the Gulf Stream, explore the inside of the human brain or discover the new world of nanotechnology.

Live broadcasts from scientists in the field, spectacular laser light shows and visuals transmitted by space probes or orbiting satellites are among the Frost Planetarium's unique experiences for visitors. In addition, the Frost Planetarium will serve as a uniquely appealing function space for events such as conferences, presentations and award ceremonies.

Immersive environments are on the rise, and it is the Frost Planetarium's purpose to open the doors of its dome to scientists, educators, and students to help them develop their own content, while contributing to their careers, and the furthering of the medium.

#