

PITTSBURGH OPERA

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Pittsburgh Opera presents Pittsburgh debut of heartfelt contemporary satire *The Last American Hammer*, Feb. 22 – March 1

What:	The Last American Hammer Music by Peter Hilliard , Libretto by Matt Boresi
Where:	Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, 2425 Liberty Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15222
When:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sat., Feb. 22, 2020 * 8:00 PM • Tues., Feb. 25, 2020 * 7:00 PM • Fri., Feb. 28, 2020 * 7:30 PM • Sun., March 1, 2020 * 2:00 PM
Run Time:	To be confirmed. Tentatively ~1 hour and 30 minutes with no intermission
Language:	Sung in English with supertitles projected above the stage
Tickets:	<p>Single tickets for adults are \$40; tickets for kids and teens ages 6-18 are half-price.</p> <p>For tickets call 412-456-6666, visit the Box Office at Theater Square, or online at pittsburghopera.org/tickets or CulturalDistrict.org.</p> <p>Group discounts, including student discounts, are available.</p>
Media Events	<p>Photo Call (Mon., Feb. 10, 12:30 PM) - location TBA</p> <p>Full Dress Rehearsal (Thurs., Feb. 20, 7:00 PM) - 2425 Liberty Ave.</p>
Related Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February Brown Bag concert (2/8) • WQED Preview (2/15 & 2/21) • FRIENDS of Pittsburgh Opera Speaker Series (2/16) • Pittsburgh Opera mobile app (real-time during all performances) • Audio Commentary (2/25) • Meet the Artists (2/25) <p>See pages 5-7 of this release.</p>

Overview of *The Last American Hammer*

Milcom Negley, a one-man militia, rages against the tyranny of federal overreach. He is hunkered down in a rural [Toby Jug](#) museum in a rust belt Ohio town where Tink Enraught, a mannered curatrix, offers him tea and cookies.

Milcom is a “Thirteenth” – a conspiracy theorist who believes an obscure, would-be Thirteenth amendment negates the authority of our government. He occupies the museum because it is the only place left in his failed town to receive federal funds – a grant for the upkeep of a rare 17th-century British pitcher known as “Sir Oswyn.”

Although Milcom expects to be swarmed by military drones, attention is paid only by Agent Reyes, a young rookie FBI field specialist. Milcom explains that the town’s only major source of employment – a hammer manufacturer – has gone under, leaving the residents lost. He is armed with “the Last American Hammer” to roll off the plant’s line and intends to hold a proxy trial against the US government using Toby jugs as physical stand-ins for a court.

The Last American Hammer will star current and former Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artists, and be performed in the intimate environs of Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, 2425 Liberty Avenue. Limited capacity.

The opera is sung in English with supertitles projected above the stage.

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Fun facts about *The Last American Hammer*



1. Toby Jugs are pottery jugs in the form of a seated person. The [highest-recorded selling price](#) for one was \$30,000. The real [American Toby Jug Museum](#) is in Evanston, Illinois.
2. These will be just the second set of performances of this opera. It premiered in Washington D.C.’s Atlas Performing Arts Center in September, 2018.
3. UrbanArias, which commissioned the piece, [describes it](#) as “a satirical but heartfelt examination of the fallout that occurs when the American Dream fails to materialize”, with “a bluegrass-infused score that brings American roots to the operatic stage.”

The story, in brief

The opera opens on Milcom Negley, a conspiracy theorist, militia man, and unemployed hammersmith. He has occupied The National Toby Jug Museum, a cozy gallery full of Toby Jugs, which are antique ceramic pitchers shaped like people. At Milcom's request, the museum's curatrix Tink Enraught has called the sheriff, who has alerted the Joint Terrorism Task Force. While the two wait for the authorities to arrive, they lament the hard times their town has fallen on.

When law enforcement finally arrives, Milcom is dismayed to discover that his demands have not been taken seriously. Instead of SWAT teams with armored vehicles and helicopters, they've sent young rookie FBI Agent Dee Dee Reyes. Her partner has holed up in a local diner eating sauerkraut balls, leaving her to deal with this "unarmed, non-hostage situation" by herself. Agent Reyes is also dismayed, realizing that what she thought could be her 'big chance' for an important assignment is essentially rookie hazing.

Tink invites Agent Reyes to join her for tea and cookies as Milcom launches into his conspiracy theory on the Thirteenth Amendment, a would-be amendment that negates the authority of the federal government. In Milcom's impassioned ranting, he expresses outrage over the fact that the little Toby Jug Museum is the only place left in his dilapidated and failed town to receive federal funding. The Museum receives a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for the upkeep of a rare 17-century British jug known as "Sir Oswyn," which is the crown jewel in the Museum's collection and the only jug of its kind still in existence. Milcom calls this an "insulting waste of taxman's plunder" and a "federally funded heap of prissy elitist crap." Deeply offended, Tink launches into a touching soliloquy where she defends her quaint museum and praises the intrinsic value of "delicate things."

Annoyed that Milcom and Tink are wasting her time, Agent Reyes starts to leave. Stopping her, Milcom reveals the content of the case he has been carrying – a steel hammer with a curved hickory handle. This is the Last American Hammer made at the now-closed factory where Milcom used to work, "a product of freedom and muscle and sweat...by an underpaid, and overlooked, and doomed American man."

Milcom then launches into a tirade against Agent Reyes, berating her for enforcing the rules of The Man, citing a long list of perceived governmental outrages against its citizens. In reply, Agent Reyes explains that she tries not to make assumptions about people and situations before having all the facts, and she wishes that Milcom would give her the same courtesy.

Agent Reyes asks Tink how she managed to get wrapped up in all of this. Tink reveals that she was a political revolutionary in her younger years. She wants Milcom to share his grievances with authorities because she can empathize with his passion, even if she thinks he's misguided.

Meanwhile, Milcom has arranged a number of Toby Jugs in a mock courtroom scene. He intends to put the corrupt, dishonest US government on trial, and is using the jugs as jurors and court officers. He himself is the prosecutor. The precious Sir Oswyn jug is the defendant. Tink grows increasingly concerned for the jugs' safety. Milcom makes Tink and Agent Reyes take the stand and answer his questions. Milcom presents an enraged closing argument for the prosecution, accusing America of abandoning its people and closing factories like his down, while spending money to fund trinkets like the Toby Jugs.

Milcom then has Agent Reyes make a closing statement on behalf of the government, but it does nothing to change his mind. He announces that the jury has found the defendant guilty on charges of tyranny, illegitimate power, and corruption of values. The sentence is destruction... "by thirty-two ounces of Bethlehem steel." Milcom destroys the Sir Oswyn jug with his hammer, as Tink and Reyes watch in horror. Milcom drops the hammer. Tink removes the other jugs from the table. Agent Reyes places the hammer back in its case and announces the sheriff will be coming. She thanks Tink for the tea, takes one last cookie, and exits. Tink sadly sweeps up the shattered remains of the prized jug, while Milcom watches with guilt.

Ticketing Information

- Single tickets for adults are \$40; tickets for kids and teens ages 6-18 are half-price. Call 412-456-6666 or visit pittsburghopera.org/tickets.
- Group discounts, including student discounts, are available. For more information about [group ticket services and discounts](#) for groups of six or more people, contact Regina Connolly at 412-281-0912, ext. 213 or groups@pittsburghopera.org.

Sponsors

- [PNC](#) is the 2019-20 Pittsburgh Opera Season Sponsor.
- [WQED-FM](#) is Pittsburgh Opera's Media Sponsor.
- [Ambridge Regional Distribution and Manufacturing Center](#) is the Tuesday performance and 'Meet the Artists' post-show event sponsor.
- Pittsburgh Opera's production is sponsored by the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.

The Last American Hammer was commissioned by [UrbanArias](#) with very generous support from Dan and Gloria Logan; and an anonymous admirer of UrbanArias in memory of Deborah Brewer.

Cast and Artistic Team: *The Last American Hammer*

Cast in order of vocal appearance:

Milcom Negley	Timothy Mix **
Tink Enraught	Caitlin Gotimer *
Agent Dee Dee Reyes	Antonia Botti-Lodovico *
Conductor	Glenn Lewis
Stage Director	Matthew Haney *
Set Designer	BinhAn Nguyen
Costume Designer	Jason Bray
Lighting Designer	Todd Nonn
Stage Manager	Alex Seidel

* Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist

** Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist alumni

Related Events for *The Last American Hammer*

[Brown Bag concert](#)

Saturday, February 8, Noon - 1:00 PM

George R. White Opera Studio, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, [2425 Liberty Avenue](#)

You're invited to our free February Brown Bag concert! Allow us to serenade your sweetheart or your good friend during the month of love. You're in charge of bringing the chocolate.

The performance takes place in the George R. White studio at Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, 2425 Liberty Avenue in the Strip. The concert is free and open to everyone. Bring a friend and bring a lunch! Meet our [Resident Artists](#) afterward at an informal reception.

Doors open at 11:30 AM. No reservations needed, except for handicapped parking in the Pittsburgh Opera garage. If you need a handicapped parking spot, please call Sue Solito at 412-281-0912, ext. 100. Handicapped parking reservations are due by 4:00 PM Friday, February 7th.

For more information: <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/february-brown-bag-concert4>

***The Last American Hammer* Previews on WQED-FM 89.3 and WQED.ORG/FM**
Saturday, February 15, 12:30 - 1:00 PM
Friday, February 21, 7:00 - 7:30 PM

Make time for this half-hour preview of Peter Hilliard & Matt Boresi's [The Last American Hammer](#), with candid commentary from singers and directors. Hosted by WQED's Anna Singer, and broadcast over the airwaves on WQED-FM 89.3, as well as the WQED website, WQED's preview gives listeners an engaging introduction to the story, music, and singers of the opera.

For more information: <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/wqed-preview-the-last-american-hammer>.

FPO Presents Speakers Series: Peter Hilliard and Matt Boresi
Sunday, February 16, time TBA
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh - Main, 4400 Forbes Ave in Oakland

Meet the creative team that nailed [The Last American Hammer](#), composer Peter Hilliard and librettist Matt Boresi. Regularly praised for their "subtlety, humor, charm, and sorrow," they will discuss what inspired them to create this work, what the process was like, and more.

In addition, this event will include Pittsburgh Opera Artistic Administrator Robert Boldin, cast members, and more, for an "Opera Up Close" style in-depth look at this opera. Please note that there will not be a separate [Opera Up Close](#) event for **The Last American Hammer**, so don't miss this wonderful event!

Pittsburgh Opera Mobile App
Real-time during each performance

Pittsburgh Opera's innovative mobile app delivers real-time supplemental content to patrons via their smartphones during the performance. Free for both iOS and Android devices. Please use responsibly and be considerate of those around you. Learn more at pittsburghopera.org/app.

Audio Commentary: *The Last American Hammer***Tuesday, February 25, 7:00 PM****George R. White Opera Studio, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, 2425 Liberty Avenue**

Ticketholders with visual impairments are invited to use [Pittsburgh Opera's Audio Description service](#) at our Tuesday performances. Trained volunteers describe the supertitles, scenery, costumes, and stage action. The listeners hear these descriptions via assistive listening devices. Those wishing to use Audio Description should reserve seats to the Tuesday, February 25th performance of **The Last American Hammer** by contacting Regina Connolly at 412-281-0912, ext. 213, or groups@pittsburghopera.org. Braille and large-print programs are available at all performances.

Meet the Artists of *The Last American Hammer***Tuesday, February 25, immediately following the performance**

Pittsburgh Opera [General Director Christopher Hahn](#) interviews the stars of the show after the Tuesday evening performance.

You can ask your own questions and mingle with the artists too! This event is free to all Tuesday ticketholders.

“Meet the Artists” is generously sponsored by Ambridge Regional Distribution and Manufacturing Center. Learn more at <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/meet-the-artists-the-last-american-hammer>

COMING UP NEXT for Pittsburgh Opera:**Bizet's irresistible *Carmen*, March 28 – April 5, 2020**

Pittsburgh Opera celebrates its 81st season in 2019-20. Established by five intrepid women in 1939, Pittsburgh Opera is viewed as one of the most vibrant opera organizations in the U.S., with a rich artistic tradition, internationally-recognized educational programs, an acclaimed artist training program, and a progressive outlook toward the future. Its green initiative culminated in LEED® Silver certification for its Strip District headquarters, and its capacity as a true community partner has increased significantly under General Director Christopher Hahn's leadership.

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