

## Kennedy Center Commission Brought to National Stage by Opera Grand Rapids

*'Penny' by Douglas Pew scheduled for national broadcast in first production since its debut*

**Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1/25/2021** – [Opera Grand Rapids](#) is turning a delay in major productions due to COVID-19 into an opportunity and bringing the national spotlight to the arts community in Grand Rapids.

The newly announced Chamber Opera Series - set to run this spring – will kick off with [Penny](#) by Douglas Pew, a chamber opera about an autistic woman discovering music.

“While we will miss our grand opera productions this spring, we are so excited to have an opportunity to pivot and integrate contemporary works into our season” said Emilee Syrewicze, executive director of Opera Grand Rapids. “We’re the first company to produce *Penny* outside of its commission with the Kennedy Center/Washington National Opera and we are able to offer this virtual production to a national audience.”

*Penny* is an opera about the power of music. In the course of this one-hour opera, the leading character - Penny Rutherford - literally and figuratively finds her voice. As Penny learns to express herself through singing, she transforms before our eyes and begins to believe in herself. Penny also happens to be an autistic person. As the saying goes, “if you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.” In this opera you’ll meet Penny, who is singular in every way. She does not typify a person with autism but is one representation of it.

“I am thrilled to be working with Opera Grand Rapids to bring *Penny* to the stage and reach patrons nationwide. I hope *Penny* inspires audiences and lifts our hearts in this time when we could all use a bit of hope” said *Penny* composer, Douglas Pew. With the production of *Penny*, Opera Grand Rapids hopes to use this platform to partner with Autism groups in an effort elevate the conversation about access to the arts for autistic people and people with disabilities. A panel discussion filmed at the Betty Van Andel Opera Center will be included with the show for ticket holders.

Tickets are on sale now for \$25 at [www.operagr.org/tickets](http://www.operagr.org/tickets). The show, which will run from March 19 to April 2, will be available for 24 hours after viewers activate a secure password. Student tickets are available for \$5.

Opera Grand Rapids is Michigan’s longest-running professional opera company and one of the top regional opera companies in North America. With rigorous education programs and a full production schedule incorporating both grand opera and contemporary work, Opera Grand Rapids also boasts one of the nation’s top Collegiate Vocal Competitions.

For more information, visit [www.operagr.org](http://www.operagr.org)

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