

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 36

BY SENATOR WILLARD-LEWIS

A RESOLUTION

To commend and congratulate the début performance of OperaCréole, the premier operatic ensemble in New Orleans.

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Creole Research Association will present OperaCréole in its inaugural concert at 6:00 p.m on Saturday, May 21, 2011, at the historic St. Mary's Church at the Old Ursuline Convent in the French Quarter; and

WHEREAS, the ensemble will feature Givonna Joseph, Aria Mason, Vickie Thomas, Tyrone Chambers, Crystal Morris, and Romel Brumley-Kerr, as well as pianist Wilfred Delphin, and organ player Marcus St. Julien; and

WHEREAS, this will be an evening where attendees will enjoy performances and celebration of Louisiana's standard operatic works, operatic works by composers of color, contemporary music of New Orleans' 19th-century Creole composers of color, and operatic works by other composers of African descent; and

WHEREAS, New Orleans is the First City of Opera, presenting the first opera, *Sylvian* by Gretry, in America on May 22, 1796, and from the early 19th-century, the city's Creoles of color have been great supporters of opera, and composed and performed the finest classical music; and

WHEREAS, the performing professional singers are international and regional soloists, and artist educators and many are also members of the professional New Orleans Opera Chorus, and have performed roles with the company; and

WHEREAS, OperaCréole singers were featured in New Orleans Opera's production of *Porgy and Bess* on October 15-17, 2010; and

WHEREAS, the event is dedicated to preserving Creole culture through historical and genealogical research, education programs, and celebrations; and

WHEREAS, the program will include the New Orleans premiere of scenes from *La Flamenca*, by Lucien Lambert, son of Charles Lucien Lambert, a New Orleans born free

Creole composer of color; aria's and duets from operas by William Grant Still, and Les Chevalier de Saint-Georges Songs by Creole composers Snaer, and Dédé; arias from *Zarzuela* (Spanish Opera); and many arias and scenes from Gershwin, Verdi, Bizet, Bellini, Rossini, and Thomas; and an organ tribute to the 19th century Creoles of color who were organists at St. Mary's; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Givonna Joseph, a Loyola University alumna, is the founder and director of OperaCréole, and is deeply committed to the culture of New Orleans, the city of her birth; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Joseph has performed in concert at such venues as The American Church In Paris, in Paris, France, and La Chiesa di Santa Susanna in Rome, Italy; been a soloist with the William Grant Still Orchestra, the Symphony Chorus of New Orleans; and served as a cantor for Blessed Teresa of Calcutta's New Orleans visit; and

WHEREAS, in the 2006-2007 season, she was a chorister with Houston Grand Opera and the creator of *WomanSong*, a one woman show, she was also heard as an opening artist for Ray Charles in concert at Jones Hall in Houston, Texas; and

WHEREAS, Aria M. Mason is a graduate of The Catholic University of America and alumna of Benjamin Franklin High School and the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, who was recently seen in the role of Annie in New Orleans Opera's production of *Porgy and Bess*, has been seen and heard on C-Span, EWTN, WLAE-TV, WWL-TV, and has performed in Boston, New York, Washington, D.C., Paris, France, and Rome, Italy, in addition to her native city of New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, Aria Mason has continued to show her commitment to the renaissance of the New Orleans community through her past service as a founding member of City Year Louisiana, and as the New Orleans Outreach Coordinator at S.J. Green and Arthur Ashe Charter School, she has demonstrated her commitment to work toward providing greater opportunities for success for the next generation of New Orleanians; and

WHEREAS, Vickie R. Thomas obtained her bachelor's degree at the University of New Orleans, did graduate work at the University of Northern Colorado, and is also an alumna of the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts in both voice and piano performance; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Thomas has performed in such productions as *Die Zauberflote*, *The Medium*, *The Consul*, *Suor Angelica*, *Big River*, *Mahalia*, *Showboat*, *Babes in Toyland*, *The Stoned Guest*, *Blood Brothers*, *Gianni Schicchi*, and *Carmen Jones*; and

WHEREAS, Tyrone Chambers II is a native of New Orleans, has been involved in music since his youth, and has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA and a Master of Music degree from the University of Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chambers has performed a few small operatic roles in *Porgy and Bess* (Gershwin) and *LaRoche* (Sharon Willis), opera scenes from Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera*, *Otello*, and *Werther*, a few roles which include Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* and Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, and Laërtes in *Mignon* at the Music Academy of the West, and in May, 2011, played the part of Padre in *Man of La Mancha*, with most recent credits including the role of Crab Man in New Orleans Opera Association's production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*; and

WHEREAS, Crystal Morris, a student at Xavier University in New Orleans, is a Junior, Music Vocal Performance Major from Jackson, Mississippi, and her previous roles include Monica in *The Medium*, which was her first fully stage operatic role, Mrs. Florentino in *Street Scene* and Eva from *An Embarrassing Position*, has been the Soprano soloist for numerous Oratorios such as John Rutter's *Requiem* and *Magnificent*, and Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* and *The Creation*; and

WHEREAS, Crystal spent the summer in Italy singing with the La Musica Lirica Opera Company singing in the Chorus of *La Traviata* and sang the role of Adina in *L'Elisir D'amore*; is a member of the New Orleans Opera Chorus where she recently opened the season as a soloist in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*; sang *Susanna* in *The Marriage of Figaro* in Xavier Opera Workshop; and is a soloist and chorus member at Trinity Episcopal Church; and

WHEREAS, Romel Brumley-Kerr is the first Afro-Costa Rican male opera singer in Costa Rican history and has been a member of the New Orleans Opera Chorus since 2004; won the second prize of the vocal competition by the Association of the Negro Business Women's Club INC of the district of New Jersey, the same association which indulged him with the honor to sing at Carnegie Hall and then proclaimed him as an emerging young artist

in February 2007; and has also performed in New York as a soloist in the *Messiah* by Handel, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Faure's *Requiem*, Theodore Du Bois' *The Last Word of Christ*, and Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah*; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Brumley-Kerr has participated in several important opera programs in New York City; was part of the prestigious Martina Arroyo Program in which he learned and performed the role of Figaro from *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart under the direction of Legendary Soprano Martina Arroyo in 2007, the same year in which he sang with the prestigious Pacific Opera in New York singing twice at Carnegie Hall and the Golden Hall in NYC; was a member of The Long Island Opera Workshop in which he performed the role of Marco in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*; and after coming to the University of New Orleans, he reprised the role in *Gianni Schicchi*, sang the role of Tom in Henry Mollicone's *Face on the Barroom Floor*, and *Hansel and Gretel*; and

WHEREAS, Wilfred Delphin, DMA, pianist, is a professor at Xavier University.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend and congratulate the début performance of OperaCréole, the premier operatic ensemble in New Orleans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to OperaCréole.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE