



## The Music Critics Association of North America bestows its inaugural Award for Best New Opera to *Breaking the Waves*

*The winner was chosen by an Awards Committee co-chaired by Heidi Waleson and George Loomis, and including Alex Ross, John Rockwell and Arthur Kaptainis*

*Both composer Missy Mazzoli and librettist Royce Vavrek will be honored at the award presentation ceremony, to take place on July 19 during the MCANA Annual Meeting in Santa Fe*

June 20, 2017 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - The **Music Critics Association of North America (MCANA)** is pleased to announce that its **inaugural Award for Best New Opera** has been given to **composer Missy Mazzoli and librettist Royce Vavrek for *Breaking the Waves***, which received its premiere on September 22, 2016 by Opera Philadelphia in conjunction with Beth Morrison Projects. The award was created to honor musical and theatrical excellence in a fully-staged opera that received its world premiere in North America during the preceding calendar year.

The Award will be presented to the winners on July 19 during the opening of the MCANA Annual Meeting in Santa Fe, NM. Mazzoli and Vavrek will also be profiled in MCANA's web publication [Classical Voice North America](#). The other finalists were ***Fellow Travelers***, by composer **Gregory Spears** and librettist **Greg Pierce**, and ***Anatomy Theater*** by composer **David Lang** and librettist **Mark Dion**.

After soliciting nominations from MCANA members, the **finalists were chosen by an Awards Committee** co-chaired by MCANA members **Heidi Waleson**, opera critic of *The Wall Street Journal*, and **George Loomis**, longtime contributor to the *Financial Times* and *Musical America*, alongside committee members **Arthur Kaptainis**, who writes for the *Montreal Gazette* and *Musical Toronto*, representing Canada; **John Rockwell**, former critic and arts editor of *The New York Times* and co-New York correspondent of *Opera (UK)*; and **Alex Ross**, music critic of *The New Yorker*.

Said MCANA president **Barbara Jepson** of the announcement: "We at MCANA view the launch of this new award as a way to commend the work of outstanding composers and librettists. The Award reflects the overarching mission of MCANA to foster excellence and, through its web publication [Classical Voice North America](#), to communicate the incredible richness of musical life in the U.S. and Canada at a time when classical music coverage in traditional print media is shrinking."

In responding to the announcement, Mazzoli said: "It's thrilling to be recognized by five critics I read regularly and respect mightily, and moving to know that *Breaking the Waves* stood out in a year full of fantastic new operas." Vavrek added: "Writing *Breaking the Waves* has truly been a dream come true – it's a libretto that erupted straight from my heart, based on a story that has clung to my imagination since seeing Lars von Trier's film at the age of fourteen. Collaborating with Missy is one of the great joys of my life, and I thank Opera Philadelphia, Beth Morrison Projects and the rest of our artistic family for their belief in our work, and to MCANA for this incredible recognition."

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## ABOUT THE MCANA

MCANA is the only North American organization for professional classical music critics. The association was incorporated in 1957, and early members included leading critics such as Paul Hume of the *Washington Post*, Irving Lowens of the *Washington Star*, Miles Kastendieck of the *New York Herald Tribune* and Harold C. Schonberg of the *New York Times*. Current members include critics at the *New York Times*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Toronto Star*; regular contributors to the *Wall Street Journal*, *Gramophone*, *Musicalamerica.com*, *Musical Toronto* and *Opera News*; as well as program annotators and broadcast journalists. The organization is a member of the National Music Council. In 2013, MCANA launched [Classical Voice North America](#), a web publication for reviews, features, and commentary with readers in 87 countries.