
creators in concert
GREGORY SPEARS

NATIONAL OPERA CENTER | February 7, 2019 | 7:00 p.m.
AMERICA

Jennifer Johnson Cano, mezzo-soprano | **Aaron Blake**, tenor
Sidney Outlaw, baritone | **Dimitri Dover**, piano

PROGRAM

"Aquehonga" (2017)

A song with words by Raphael Allison

Jennifer Johnson Cano

"Last Night" from *Fellow Travelers* (2016)

An opera based on the novel by Thomas Mallon

Libretto by Greg Pierce

Aaron Blake

"English Teacher's Aria" from *Paul's Case* (2013)

An opera based on the short story by Willa Cather

Libretto by Kathryn Walat and Gregory Spears

Jennifer Johnson Cano, Aaron Blake, Sidney Outlaw

"Our Very Own Home" from *Fellow Travelers* (2016)

An opera based on the novel by Thomas Mallon

Libretto by Greg Pierce

Sidney Outlaw

"Fearsome This Night" from *Wolf-in-Skins* (2013)

A dance-opera based on Welsh mythology

Libretto by Christopher Williams

Jennifer Johnson Cano

CONVERSATION WITH MARC A. SCORCA, PRESIDENT/CEO, OPERA AMERICA

Jennifer Johnson Cano and Aaron Blake appear courtesy of the Metropolitan Opera.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER



GREGORY SPEARS is a New York-based composer whose music has been called “astonishingly beautiful” (*The New York Times*), “coolly entrancing” (*The New Yorker*) and “some of the most beautifully unsettling music to appear in recent memory” (*The Boston Globe*). In recent seasons he has been commissioned by Lyric Opera of Chicago, Cincinnati Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seraphic Fire, The Crossing, BMI and Concert Artists Guild, Vocal Arts DC, New York Polyphony, The New York International Piano Competition, and the JACK Quartet. Spears’ most recent evening-length opera, *Fellow Travelers*, written in collaboration with Greg Pierce, premiered at Cincinnati Opera in 2016 and has since been seen at the PROTOTYPE Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago and Minnesota Opera. It was hailed as “one of the most accomplished new operas ... seen in recent years” (*Chicago Tribune*) and an opera that “seems assured of lasting appeal” (*The New York Times*). The premiere was featured in *The New York Times*’ Best in Classical Music for 2016.

Spears’ children’s opera *Jason and the Argonauts*, written with Kathryn Walat, also premiered in 2016 at Lyric Opera of Chicago and was subsequently performed for over 20,000 school children. An opera about space exploration, *O Columbia*, written with Royce Vavrek, premiered in 2015 at Houston Grand Opera. Spears’ first opera, *Paul’s Case*, described as a “masterpiece” and a “gem” (*New York Observer*) with “ravishing music” (*The New York Times*), was developed by American Opera Projects and premiered by UrbanArias in 2013. It was restaged at the PROTOTYPE Festival and presented in a new production by Pittsburgh Opera in 2014. Recent commissions include a new vocal work for New York Polyphony, made possible by a 2016 Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program grant, as well as a new work for a consortium of choirs including The Crossing, underwritten by the Ann Stookey Fund for New Music. Spears also wrote the soundtrack for the 2018 British feature film *Macbeth*, directed by Kit Monkman. Other commissions have come from the Five Boroughs Music Festival, OPERA America, poet Tracy K. Smith, Christopher Williams Dances, the Dalton School Orchestra, Houston Grand Opera (for the *The Bricklayer*), pianist Marika Bournaki, the Present Music Ensemble and the Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra. He has been an artist-in-residence at Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, the Aaron Copland House and the Rauschenberg Residency at Captiva Island, and was a participant in American Opera Projects’ Composers and the Voice program. His music is published by Schott Music and Schott PSNY.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS



A naturally gifted singer noted for her commanding stage presence and profound artistry, mezzo-soprano **JENNIFER JOHNSON CANO** has garnered critical acclaim. A native of St. Louis, Cano has given over 130 performances at the Metropolitan Opera, with roles including Bersi, Emilia, Hansel, Meg Page, Mercédès, Nicklausse, Wellgunde and Waltraute. Highlights of other recent operatic appearances have included Carmen and Donna Elvira with Boston Lyric, the Sharp-Eared Fox in *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the Cleveland Orchestra, and Orphée in *Orphée et Eurydice* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Des Moines Metro Opera. This season, she returns to the Met as Emilia in *Otello* and Meg Page in *Falstaff*, and makes her role debut as Offred in Poul Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale* with Boston Lyric Opera. She has recently worked with an impressive array of conductors, such as Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Franz Welser-Möst, Gustavo Dudamel, Manfred Honeck, Marin Alsop, Robert Spano, Louis Langrée, Osmo Vänskä and Sir Andrew Davis. Her honors include first prize winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, a Sara Tucker Study Grant, a Richard Tucker Career Grant and the George London Award.



Tenor, **AARON BLAKE**, winner of a 2017 George London Foundation Award, earned international recognition as Timothy Laughlin in the world premiere of *Fellow Travelers*. Blake recently debuted with New York City Opera in Peter Eötvös' operatic adaptation of *Angels in America*, as Louis. He has performed with Cincinnati Opera as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Pan in *La Calisto* and Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*; Komische Oper Berlin and Minnesota Opera as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*; The Dallas Opera as Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette*; Washington National Opera in *Anna Bolena*; and the Metropolitan Opera, where he debuted opposite Plácido Domingo in *La traviata*. This season he returns to the Met for *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, makes his role debut as Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* with Tulsa Opera, appears as Tamino in Australia and New Zealand with the Komische Oper Berlin, returns to the PROTOTYPE Festival as Mila in the world premiere of *Mila, Great Sorcerer*, and sings the role of Michel in Martinů's *Julietta* with the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS



Lauded by *The New York Times* as a “terrific singer” with a “deep, rich timbre” and by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as an “opera powerhouse” with a “weighty and forthright” sound, **SIDNEY OUTLAW** was the grand prize winner of the Concorso Internacional de Canto Montserrat Caballé in 2010, and he continues to delight audiences in the U.S. and abroad with his rich and versatile baritone and engaging stage presence. In the 2017–2018 season, he sang Frank Lloyd Wright in *Shining Brow* with UrbanArias and Tommy in *Fellow Travelers* with Minnesota Opera, as well as joined the Canterbury Chorale for Mahler’s Symphony No. 8, the Baltimore Symphony for Handel’s *Messiah* and the Manchester Music Festival for an opera pops concert. In the 2018–2019 season and beyond, he sings Dizzy Gillespie in *Charlie Parker’s Yardbird* with both The Atlanta Opera and Arizona Opera, returns to the Baltimore Symphony as a soloist in Handel’s *Messiah*, returns to Minnesota Opera for the world premiere of *The Fix*, debuts with Mill City Opera as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, and makes his San Francisco Opera debut. Outlaw recently added a Grammy nomination to his list of accomplishments for the Naxos recording of Darius Milhaud’s 1922 opera trilogy *L’Orestie d’Eschyle*, in which he sang the role of Apollo.



Pianist **DIMITRI DOVER** has performed as a recitalist and chamber musician in venues such as New York’s Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall and the Park Avenue Armory, as well as Zipper Hall (Los Angeles) and Segerstrom Hall (Orange County, California). He has recently appeared in New York with American Opera Projects, Brooklyn Art Song Society, Chelsea Music Festival, Cutting Edge Concerts, Joy in Singing, Met Opera Rising Stars and The Song Continues. Dover has performed in the composer’s presence the works of Thomas Adès, Valerie Coleman, George Crumb, Daniel Davis, Herschel Garfein, Jake Heggie, Libby Larsen, David Leisner, Nico Muhly, John Musto, André Previn, Shulamit Ran, Kaija Saariaho and Christopher Theofanidis, among many others. He has served as assistant conductor for the Metropolitan Opera’s productions of *Marnie*, *The Exterminating Angel*, *Bluebeard’s Castle*, *Semiramide*, *Cendrillon* and *L’amour de loin*. He holds degrees from Harvard University, Peabody Conservatory and The Juilliard School.

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EMERGING ARTIST RECITALS: CHAUTAUQUA OPERA YOUNG ARTIST PROGRAM

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2019, 7:00 P.M.

This recital features members of the Chautauqua Opera Young Artist Program, who each summer appear in three mainstage productions alongside leading professionals in the field, while also performing in concerts with the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, an opera for young audiences, a fully staged opera scenes program and other events.

EMERGING ARTIST RECITALS: OPERA SARATOGA

FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2019, 7:00 P.M.

This recital features members of the young artists from Opera Saratoga, home of the second-oldest young artist program in the country. The company's young artists sing select principal roles and supporting roles, cover roles, sing in the ensemble, and perform in multiple concerts each summer.

CONVERSATIONS: GREER GRIMSLEY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2019, 7:00 P.M.

Bass-baritone Greer Grimsley, internationally recognized as an outstanding singing actor and one of today's most prominent Wagnerian singers, will sit down with OPERA America President/CEO Marc A. Scorca to discuss his pathway to the world's greatest stages.

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