

Anthony Davis

X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X

OPERA IN THREE ACTS

LIBRETTO BY THULANI DAVIS

STORY BY CHRISTOPHER DAVIS

FRIDAY **JUNE 17, 2022** 8:00

THE STRAND THEATRE

DORCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

A PRODUCTION OF

BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

ODYSSEY OPERA OF BOSTON

Act I

Act II Scene 1

INTERMISSION

Act II Scene 2

Act III

CAST

MALCOLM X	Davóne Tines
LOUISE/BETTY	Whitney Morrison
ELLA	Ronnita Miller
STREET/ELIJAH MUHAMMAD	Victor Robertson
REGINALD	Joshua Conyers
YOUNG MALCOLM	Jonathan Harris
GARVEY PREACHER	Miguel Ángel Vásquez
SOCIAL WORKER/QUEEN MOTHER	Amber Garrett
COP	Nathan Rodriguez
REPORTER 1	Maggie Finnegan
POLICEMAN 2/REPORTER 2	Matthew Arnold
POLICEMAN 3	Andrew Miller

GIL ROSE, conductor and director

CONTENT ADVISORY

This performance includes strong language, including instances of hate speech, and implications of violence.

Media support for this performance provided by

Dorchester Reporter

"The News and Values Around the Neighborhood"

TONIGHT'S PERFORMERS

ORCHESTRA

FLUTE

Sarah Brady
Rachel Braude

OBOE

Jennifer Slowik

CLARINET

Jan Halloran
Gary Gorczyca

BASSOON

Ron Haroutunian

HORN

Kevin Owen
Whitacre Hill

TRUMPET

Eric Berlin

TROMBONE

Hans Bohn
Alexei Doohovskoy

TIMPANI

Craig McNutt

PERCUSSION

Nick Tolle
Maria Finkelmeier

VIOLIN I

Katherine Winterstein
Susan Jensen
Zoya Tsvetkova
Piotr Buczek
Matthew Vera
Rose Drucker

VIOLIN II

Colleen Brannen
Paola Caballero
Lilit Hartunian
Kay Rooney Matthews
Betsy Hinkle
David Rubin

VIOLA

Peter Sulski
Noriko Futagami
Alexander Vavilov
Abigail Cross

CELLO

David Russell
Jing Li
Nicholas Johnson
Darry Dolezal

BASS

Bebo Shiu
Randell Zigler

IMPROVISER ENSEMBLE

SAXOPHONE/FLUTE

Daniel Ian Smith

SAXOPHONE/CLARINET

Kenji Kikuchi

CONTRA ALTO CLARINET/SAXOPHONE

Peter Hess

TRUMPET

Richard Kelly

TROMBONE

Dave Harris

DRUMS

Robert Schulz

PIANO

Mike Karloff

BASS

Mark Helias

CHORUS Kenneth Griffith, Choral Conductor

SOPRANO

Amber Garrett*
Ashley Victoria Jones
Emily Mwila
Kay Patterson

ALTO

Kristin Buabin
Destiny Cooper
Alexis Peart
Arielle Rogers
Madison Smith

TENOR

Joel Edwards*
Johnny Nichols Jr.
Ehimemen Omigie*
Elliott Paige
Fred C. VanNess Jr.*
Edward Washington II

BASS

Keith Brinkley
Brandon Coleman*
Tyreese Kadle*
Wayne Paul
Miguel Ángel Vázquez*
Ron Williams*

*Denotes soloist

CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM

Pascale Florestal

Associate Director

Jolie Frazer-Madge

Stage Manager

Payton Gunner

Assistant Stage Manager

Brendon Shapiro

Rehearsal Pianist

Kat Zhou

Lighting Designer

John Oluwole ADEkoje Projection Designer

Brooke Stanton

Costume Designer

Rachel Padula

Wig Designer

Jenn DeMarco-Gregory

Makeup Artist

Luisa Earle

Stitcher

Kiara Escalera

Wardrobe Supervisor

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the inaugural performance of **AS TOLD BY: History, Race, and Justice on the Opera Stage.**

The Boston Modern Orchestra Project and Odyssey Opera are excited to kick off this ambitious five-year series of performances with deep ties to our missions and to Boston's history.

Discovering unknown or neglected music has always been a driving force of both BMOP and Odyssey Opera's missions. The seed for this initiative was planted many years ago, when I became aware of William Grant Still's opera *Troubled Island*—which, despite its place in history as the first opera by a Black composer to be produced by a major American opera company, disappeared after its premiere and has not been heard in full in 73 years. Similarly, I have long believed that Anthony Davis's *X: The Life and Time of Malcolm X* was one of the great American operas, if not THE great American opera. With these two operas in mind, I quickly realized their impact would be amplified with other works as part of a larger project that showcased their music, their connections to each other, and their broader cultural implications.

What's most exciting to me about *As Told By* is the ability to unite five great operas, each with a distinct musical voice and a unique history. We are pleased to redress the omission of Still's *Troubled Island* as well as Ulysses Kay's *Frederick Douglass* from the American opera canon; to advance and preserve, through recordings on BMOP/sound, current works like *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* and Nkeiru Okoye's *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom*; and to build the future of opera by creating a new work with Jonathan Bailey Holland's and Tracy Conyer Lee's *The Bridge*. By uniting these five works, we hope both their differences and commonalities make them shine brighter on their own and as a group.

The operas of *As Told By*, and their protagonists, have special resonance for Boston and, we hope, for today's Bostonians. Through this and future performances, companion programs developed by our partners Castle of Our Skins, and other efforts, we hope to spark conversation and connection among composers, artists, and communities. We also hope this initiative elevates this quintet of operas in the national consciousness, inspiring other companies and communities to take them on and to spark their own conversation.

I am so glad you have joined us for *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, and hope you will continue on this journey with us.

Gil Rose

SYNOPSIS

The opera traces the life of Malcolm X from his boyhood in Lansing, Michigan, through his early brushes with the law, his conversion to the teachings of Elijah Muhammed of the Nation of Islam, his own ministry and his breach with Elijah, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and his assassination.

ACT I, SCENE 1

1931. The Universal Negro Improvement Association, led by Malcolm's father, Rev. Earl Little, meets at the Little home. Rev. Little is late. A white policeman enters, claiming Rev. Little was killed in an accident. Mrs. Little believes he was killed by a Klan-like group. She suffers a breakdown. A Social Worker disperses the family.

ACT I, SCENE 2

Malcolm's half-sister Ella convinces him to live in Boston. Malcolm is mesmerized by Black city life. The charismatic Street "schools" Malcolm as a hustler: doing drugs, using women, and looting homes. After a break-in, police arrest Malcolm and his white girlfriend.

ACT I, SCENE 3

In prison, Malcolm examines his life and the forces that shaped it.

ACT II, SCENE 1

1946–48. Malcolm is visited in prison by his brother Reginald, a convert to the Nation of Islam. Malcolm becomes a believer and studies the Koran and Black history. Upon release he meets Elijah, who teaches him Allah's Law and to spread Allah's word. Malcolm Little renounces his "slave name" for an "X" and sets out to open new temples.

ACT II, SCENE 2

1954–55. Malcolm begins his ministry, setting up base in Harlem. 1963. As Malcolm answers questions after a speech, word of Kennedy's assassination spreads. A Reporter asks Malcolm's reaction, and he gives the controversial answer: "...the chickens have come home to roost."



MALCOLM X IN ROCHESTER, NEW YORK, 1965. PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

ACT III, SCENE 1

1963. Malcolm is summoned to see Elijah who accuses Malcolm of jeopardizing the Nation of Islam and censures Malcolm, silencing him for three months.

ACT III, SCENE 2

The Nation becomes divided. Many follow Malcolm, though he is in turmoil and feels betrayed. His wife Betty convinces him to make the Hajj. In Mecca, Malcolm is among believers of many nations with whom he cannot communicate but whose faith he shares. Here, a new Malcolm is born, renouncing his separatist ideas and joining the larger community of Islam.

ACT III, SCENE 3

1964–65. Malcolm returns from the Near East. Reporters accuse him of sparking violence that erupted in Harlem while he was abroad. He tries to relate what he has learned and his intention to address the UN with the grievances of Black Americans. Others warn of death threats and that he is "a threat to our Nation." Malcolm, who has changed his name to El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, is not concerned. During a speech in Harlem, he is gunned down by assassins.

PROGRAM NOTE

By Thulani Davis

THE CREATORS OF THE OPERA *X: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MALCOLM X* are thrilled to participate in its second act, which has been initiated by Detroit Opera (formerly the Michigan Opera Theatre) in May, 2022. Yuval Sharon, the Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director of Detroit Opera, first spoke with us about remounting the work in the summer of 2020 and he and Wayne S. Brown, President and CEO of Detroit Opera, have worked tirelessly to bring partners into this endeavor which now include the Metropolitan Opera, Opera Omaha, Seattle Opera, The Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. We began meeting virtually with director Robert O'Hara in the Fall of 2020, and as I write this, we are beginning rehearsals in Detroit.

X had its first performances in Philadelphia in 1985 in the American Music Theater Festival, and its world premiere was September 29, 1986 at the New York City Opera where it sold out its performances. This year marks the 36th anniversary of the premiere and over 40 years since we started work on it. It appears now in a much changed landscape, given the proliferation of new operas by people of color and notably, the production last year of Terrance Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* at the Metropolitan Opera, the first by an African American composer and an African American librettist in its history. When we auditioned singers in the early 1980s, black singers commonly told us they made their living performing *Porgy and Bess*, the 1935 work by George and Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, and *Showboat*, the 1927 musical by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II. Thomas Young had been in 13 *Porgy* productions when we hired him. These shows, of course, brought to prominence a long list of great African American singers. I saw the second generation of those stars in 1960s in productions starring Leontyne Price, Grace Bumbry, William Warfield, Shirley Verrett, and Simon Estes and later, Kathleen Battle. But what stunned me in the '80s was how many singers we saw coming in multiple times to get a spot in an untested work; hundreds came to audition for *X*. The desire to perform parts created by black artists, and even better, to originate roles, continues to be a driving force in the concert work of singers. Today there is another, larger, generation of talent, not just singers, of which there is a glorious profusion, but also of orchestra performers, conductors, designers, and, ever so slowly, black directors, hired in opera. The composers and librettists continue to emerge from various streams of American music, bringing musical and narrative innovations that enrich the sounds and stories of this most complex form of musical theater. I, for one, no longer feel odd as a black woman who cannot sing, walking into the stage door of an opera house.^[1]

Another change in the intervening years is that we know much more about the life of Malcolm X today than decades ago. Among others, two Pulitzer Prize-winning books have come out in recent years. In keeping with earlier decades, and earlier books, the contents of these works continues to be debated, and he is still news.^[2] What happened to him still matters and not just because he was a fascinating and charismatic human being, who, like others in our history, took what he knew to be a dangerous journey to speak for those who could not be heard, but because there are still so many living with similar realities and without a powerful voice articulating the needed change. What is most important then is what has not changed: the relevance of the journey taken by Malcolm Little to Malcolm X to El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. The story of this man born in Nebraska, raised in

Michigan, incarcerated and converted in Massachusetts, reborn in Africa and killed in New York still resonates in each of its phases with the stark realities of the present moment. There were people born long before Malcolm with whom the story would resonate and so many younger generations now across the world for whom the story continues to ring with familiarity. The performances of the opera today were imagined before the COVID pandemic, and before George Floyd's murder shocked a nation sitting at home with their families as the country shut down. It was being discussed as the biggest and most widespread demonstrations took place across the country despite the pandemic and the political divide that sharpened in 2020—protests in most places arising out of community and without famous leaders. We meet as protests have continued to emerge over the murder of innocent individuals in their homes or cars or sleeping on someone else's couch, and as young people invoke earlier activism. It is a gift for artists to be able to reconsider how an older work can resonate with "the changing same" of human rights struggle along with the more usual fare that connects us to the trials of love, death, the loss of possible futures, war, and the myths of human life, all of which are still playing out around us. It has been a privilege to be challenged to make opera with masks on, in digital conferences, and by email with people we have never seen in person, or at the very least, not in years. It has never been just a revival.

THE OPERA'S HISTORY

I first started research for the libretto in the summer of 1981 and that fall began meetings with Anthony Davis, and Christopher "Kip" Davis, later joined by director Rhoda Levine. We first presented some of the music at Merkin Hall in New York in 1983 after a workshop at the Kitchen, then on Broome Street in New York. In 1984 we were fortunate to work on Act I and part of Act II with 24 singers, 8 figurants, and the 10-member musical ensemble Episteme in Philadelphia, co-sponsored by the American Music Theater Festival (AMTF) and the Kitchen. In 1985 we worked on the second and third acts in a month-long workshop at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In 1985 we presented Act I and part of Act II in a concert with the Springfield Massachusetts Symphony, with the assistance of Wayne Brown and conductor Paul Freeman. That year the American Music Theater Festival presented the opera in the newly opened Walnut Street Theater (now the Prince) in Philadelphia with a 35-piece orchestra joining Episteme and the Concerto Soloists of Philadelphia. Prior to opening in New York we did showcases at the Guggenheim and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The four-week run in New York engaged 28 singers and the City Opera orchestra with 10 improvisers. It opened and closed with bus rides to festivities at the Schomburg.

The concert version known as *Xcerpts* was performed in 1987 at Aaron Davis Hall in New York, Michigan State University in East Lansing, the San Francisco Arts Festival, the New England Conservatory of Music, and at the University of Texas, Austin. In 1990-91, it was performed in Wilmington, Delaware and at Swarthmore College and Penn State University. The 1992 Gramavision recording of the work was nominated for a Grammy that year. In 1997, the opera was produced in concert by Sir Georg Solti at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, with Michael Morgan conducting, for an audience of 2,500 public school students. This was a deeply affecting experience for me as the schools had distributed copies of the text to students ahead of the concerts and, thanks to the rise of hip hop, some in the audience already knew the rhymes and rhythms of the opera text. *X* was produced by the Oakland Opera Theater in California, in the 2006-07 season, having to

extend its run due to much acclaim in the Bay Area press. I am thrilled to see and hear it again, having not done so myself since 1997.

When we came into the process of building the production at City Opera we became aware that Anthony was not in fact going to be the first African American composer to have work performed there. We were told that the “dean of black composers,” William Grant Still, at age 54, had a production of *Troubled Island* there in 1949, with a libretto by Langston Hughes and Verna Arvey. The story we heard was that Still had won a contest and City Opera was at first unaware that the winner was black. This was a myth. (Apparently Still startled several *other* music institutions by winning contests.) The story is, as might be expected, more complex—way more. Still’s efforts to get the work done in New York spanned 13 years, beginning in 1936. He submitted it to the Met in 1939 but the Met’s letter was not specific as to why they did not opt to present it. City Opera (then City Center) stalled it for some years citing financing issues. After two false starts prior to 1949, City Opera premiered the work with choreography by George Balanchine, and two white leads in blackface makeup.[3]

WHAT DID CHANGE SOUND LIKE?

Anthony and I, who were born not long after that event, were certain to bring more change. We were in our 30s and had no long-term expectations. Initially, we aimed only to get it on its feet once. Blackface was gone but most companies still did not have numbers of people of color singing for them. (Sadly works with Asian characters continued to lack Asian artists.) During that time I had even written about the inauthentic vernacular created in *Porgy*, totally accepted in the Gershwins’ day, like blackface, though the Gershwins prevented use of the latter in their opera to insure work for black performers.[4] So our use of mid-century vernaculars, jive talk, and racialized comments from blacks and whites—especially the rhetoric of black movements—was, at the very least, a departure. The voicing of authentic late-twentieth century jazz tones, rhythms, and blues bars with echoes from composers like Charles Mingus, was also new. Most notable in the case of the character Street were solos rich with improvisation. Some writers thought the overt use of political ideas was unbecoming for opera. Others thought political ideas were embedded in earlier operas. Some said Malcolm was too divisive a figure to be appropriate, though that usually obscured a conviction that he never accepted all in the human family. But this debate was to be expected for any opera candidly reflecting race in this country.

U.S. race realities were rarely portrayed in popular culture in the first half of the twentieth century. Slavery has been and is still only rarely depicted in American popular culture. *Birth of a Nation* (1915) was notoriously the foundational work (after Harriet Beecher Stowe’s much loved *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a runaway hit in print and theater), but thereafter in film the slave system was just backdrop, such as in: *Jezebel* (1938); *The Little Colonel* (1935) with Bill “Bojangles” Robinson as a highly talented dancing enslaved butler; *Gone with the Wind* (1939); and *Band of Angels* (1957), featuring Sidney Poitier as an angry but forgiving enslaved man. In mid-century, years after a number of excellent plays for TV began to focus on modern issues, working-class people, and immigrant groups, a couple of less cutting-edge movies appeared—Poitier was in all of those that I remember: *No Way Out* (1950), *The Defiant Ones* (1958), *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961), *Lilies of the Field* (1963), *A Patch of Blue* (1965), *In the Heat of the Night* (1967), *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (1967). In the age of James Baldwin’s ascendancy, these films portrayed racism as a shallow ignorance easily overcome by a patient victim such as those Poitier

portrayed. The outstanding exception to musical theater shying away from the American ethnic divide was Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim’s *West Side Story*, and the superb 1961 film made of it by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins. Only the work to implement what was called “non-traditional casting” in the late 1950s and early 1960s began to solve the failure of projects like *West Side Story* to fully embrace the idea of people of color playing their own ethnicities as well as others.

For all these reasons, *X*, as a work of music theatre that dealt with race in America during a time fresh in the minds of most audiences, was ground-breaking, and overdue. We assumed at the time that the work had an audience. However, as a result of representing change, it was anticipated with controversy, and in some cases, greeted with derision about not “belonging” in an American canon. Others considered it a balm in a context in which the evergreens with black characters were *Porgy* and *Showboat*. *The New York Times* ran several articles over two days; a preview by Tim Page on the Guggenheim program deemed the work “one of power and originality.” *The New York Times* ran a virulent review by Donal Henahan calling the work “agitprop.” Opera-goers took issue with Henahan in weekly letters into November, with the critic responding each week. John Rockwell took on the controversy in an article describing the divided views on Malcolm *X*, as well as noting Sills’ meeting with leaders in the black community to gain support. He connected the work to contemporary “vernacular music theater pieces” by Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, and Philip Glass, and the production of Duke Ellington’s *Queenie Pie*, directed by George C. Wolfe, then running at the AMTF. Most significantly he included an interview with Sills explaining that she thought the work was good and why it was important to stage. C. Gerald Fraser interviewed blacks who attended the premiere. Samuel G. Freedman followed the next week with an account of independent filmmakers and well known writers, black and white, having trouble making films on Malcolm, and of critically acclaimed plays on him produced at theaters like New Federal Theater, and New Heritage Theatre in New York City and Crossroads Theater in New Jersey, serving black communities, that enjoyed few other productions or play publication.[5]

These issues of defining audiences, redefining vernacular and arguing for what stories “belong” actually obscured some of the change made by the music in *X*. Most important perhaps was the inclusion of improvisers in the orchestra. We know early 20th century black composers were accustomed to working with improvisers in various contexts, from the first through-written works like the 1907 *Shoo-Fly Regiment* by Bob Cole, J. Rosamond Johnson, and James Weldon Johnson, which had an all-star lineup of players, to classic musicals such as 1921’s *Shuffle Along*, by Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake, Flournoy Miller, and Aubrey Lyles, another work full of music legends. Notably, pioneering jazz pianist James P. Johnson’s 1940 opera *De Organizer*, about sharecropper mobilization, had “specifications of a 45-piece orchestra,” that was “essentially a jazz band within an orchestra.”[6] Still, it seemed in 1986 to be quite an innovation for Anthony to include at least 10 improvisers in the orchestra pit for each performance. This change brought, in the short term, real discomfort within the orchestra. Still, looking back, it seems the very newness of the context of black creators, and a militant black American subject, led audiences to just roll with the original solos without astonishment or indignation. Anthony tells me that orchestras are now replete with musicians whose training includes improvisation. Even so, I am proud to list for audiences today the awesome roster of those who enriched the performances and the recording (in alphabetical order): Pheeroan akLaff, Ray Anderson, Dwight Andrews, Art Baron, Anthony Brown, Clyde Criner, Marilyn Crispell, Mark Dresser,

Marty Ehrlich, Mark Helias, Gerry Hemingway, Jay Hoggard, J. D. Parran, John Purcell, Herb Robertson, Warren Smith, and Abdul Wadud. And I must add a bow to the improvising of Avery Brooks, our first Malcolm, and Thomas Young, who originated the role of Street. The young person in that production who played Malcolm as a child with a heart-rending voice would turn out to be an important innovator and improviser in the dance world—Savion Glover. Malcolm's sister was played by the now well known playwright Zakiyyah Alexander.

We were fortunate in the work of the journalists cited above and still appreciate the esteemed critics who did take a close look at the music. The late Edward Said, the influential Palestinian scholar who wrote eloquently about music, gave us a wonderfully thoughtful piece in *The Nation*. He found the work “spellbinding,” taking very seriously the success and shortcomings he found in the blending of musical elements, “twelve-tone and jazz.” At the time I took notes on tightening the discursive text in Act II, which we have now done. The late Andrew Porter's review in the *New Yorker* found it “not just a stirring and well-fashioned opera—that already is much—but one whose music adds a new, individual voice to those previously heard in our opera houses.” He heard “as a current” in the work Malcolm's memories of hearing Lionel Hampton and Billie Holiday. And of the use of improvisation, he said, “He [Davis] here makes virtuosity serve specific dramatic ends,” and found “impressive” the composer's “metric, rhythmic, and harmonic control of structures and pacing.” Porter praised as well the vocal lines and choruses. He found the libretto well done, “in language direct enough for the stage yet poetically charged, in strong lines that move surely between narrative, reflection and rhetoric.”

It took more than a digital search to find any black music critics who wrote about X. I had to call critics who know Anthony's music and ask if they were there and if they wrote about it, and one or two did me the favor of calling others. Don Palmer said the obvious right away—none of them could get assignments from anyone to write about it. I turned to searches for archives of the black press to locate papers no longer in print. Thanks to Don, Martin Johnson told me he wrote about it for *The City Sun*, a prominent Brooklyn paper, and we hope to find a copy. Anthony tells me that Bill C. Rhoden, who had been a music critic at the *Baltimore Sun* did an interview while officially on duty at the *New York Times* as a sports writer. I am still looking for that. Sad to say, some of the leading papers today have a solid record of having never had a black music critic on staff, so such wide searches will continue to be necessary for many of us.[7]

A few other forms of change came through the women producers who launched us on this journey: Mary Griffin McArthur of the Kitchen, Marjorie Samoff, co-founder of AMTF, and Beverly Sills, then General Manager of the City Opera. I can't overstate their help. The few people I had asked to read or check the libretto for me told me they didn't know if it was okay or not because they'd never seen one before. It is neither a play nor a collection of poems though it is also both. As a woman entering this seemingly cloistered world inside of opera palaces, doing a job no one expected me to be doing, it was really important that these three producers acted as if this huge undertaking—33 singers, whole floors of costumes, massive stage, stage management teams—was just what we do on any Tuesday. McArthur suggested we switch from writing a hybrid music theater piece to opera and that we apply for opera funding because opera was then usually so large. As this was an era of truly lavish spending on the classical forms, I basically re-imagined the settings with more big movable parts than Rhoda Levine would ever choose to use. (The funding all went to singers one year and the next to the expensive, now digitized, skills of a score copyist.) In Philadelphia I spent the day before dress rehearsal in an

empty dressing room with Samoff because our lead had turned up sick, and she asked me to sit while she made a couple of calls. Her theater's investment was at stake and she was clearly worried. She said we had to talk to a certain TV network executive who could release Avery Brooks, by then a TV star and the only other singer who knew the music. We finally got someone to agree to get him on the phone. She talked. We waited. “Do you need a sandwich, some coffee?” she asked. I had quit smoking, but asked for a pack of cigarettes, and hours later she got a yes to putting our new star on a plane. Sills, on a given day would say something like, “today we have to meet with the heads of the 13 unions in the building and then we'll move on.” She assured us about things we thought were problems and she took me along sometimes when she went to solve unexplained things that she regarded as problems. “We'll catch a cab.” We went to a union hall, or a bank president's barbecue. At City Opera, director Rhoda Levine explained audition rituals, which were less user-friendly than in downtown theater. Screening the libretto was new then and a nondigital slide projection that involved a woman technician sitting with me at a table in the audience, asking for several hours if I was okay with breaking a word with a hyphen for the next slide or if it was okay to only squeeze five words on a line. She explained the timing of moving the slides to stay with the music. I suddenly discovered I had opinions about hyphens and timing. By the time I had a producer who sent me a warning prior to our first meeting that I need not say anything because they weren't there to talk to me, the others had pointed my feet in the direction of GO.

One important facet of our presence then was that Anthony, Kip, and I had lived through the time period we were invoking. It turned out to be useful to have seen some of the characters and communities in action on the streets of Harlem, or in interviews at certain moments of crisis. And we met many people who had been involved in different eras of Malcolm's life. As people born in the mid-twentieth century, we have continued to bring to this work living memory of the man at the center of the work. In the course of working on the original production, we talked to as many people as possible who knew Malcolm X or were witnesses to the movement he built. After the first run, people began to seek us out and share more experiences. In doing a book tour for my book, *Malcolm X, The Great Photographs*, people in cities across the country sought me out to tell of various encounters with Malcolm, working a shoe shine stand with him in Roxbury as teens, going to the mosque there, or telling me of postcards received from him when he was in Africa, or showing a photograph taken with him abroad. One day it will not be possible to bring living memory of this period to the artists realizing a production and that being the case, we are trying to leave guideposts in the work and in the current experience of those with whom we work. This is the main reason that I have written all of this down for the first time. In the years when the first productions appeared a number of reporters asked what it was like to work in the opera environment, and I did not feel like I could really make an analysis of this unique journey. Nor did I think I should. In the decades since, I have never been asked in any context about working in opera until a conference about three years ago in UW-Madison on women in theater. So this is some of what looking back for the first time has prompted.

WHAT IS NEW NOW?

The opera today is tighter than it was in 1986. It is a more tautly drawn work than it was in its original 2½-hour rendition. It opens with more immediacy, rather than the simple calling of young Malcolm's name. We have chosen to replace one of Betty's arias with

the original words. The music is the same. I wrote the second version to the same notes in 1986 because so many people in the seats were still suffering the loss of the man in the opera and others killed during the late '60s. And though we used some spoken word passages to share Malcolm's speaking style and rhythms, some of his public speaking is now sung and the language lifted to be more anthemic. We have added a few lines of singing in places that were musical interludes. In this libretto I have also tightened scene descriptions, added some specific information younger audiences may need, and caught a few errors I missed as we rushed to print then. Character specifics, such as "postman" and "numbers runner," have been removed to allow the director to envision the people in various communities as they choose. Welcome to *X*'s second century!

- 1 John Rockwell, "Tenor in 'X' Talks of Debut and Blacks in Opera," *New York Times*, September 30, 1986, accessed March 11, 2022. www.nytimes.com/1986/09/30/arts/tenor-in-x-talks-of-debut-and-of-blacks-in-opera.html
- 2 Les Payne and Tamara Payne, *The Dead are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X* (New York: Liveright, 2020), Winner of the 2021 Pulitzer Prize, the 2020 National Book Award, and others; Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, and a *New York Times* bestseller; Peniel E. Joseph, *The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Basic Books, 2020); Clayborne Carson, *Malcolm X, The FBI File* (New York: Skyhorse, 2012); Herb Boyd, *The Diary of Malcolm X, El Hajj Malik Shabazz, 1964* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2013); For young readers: Ilyasah Shabazz and AG Ford, *Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to Be Malcolm X* (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2014). Ashley Southall and Jonah E. Bromwich, "Two Convicted of Killing Malcolm X Will Be Exonerated After Decades," *New York Times*, November 17, 2021. Accessed March 6, 2022. www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/nyregion/malcolm-x-killing-exonerated.html
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CAST



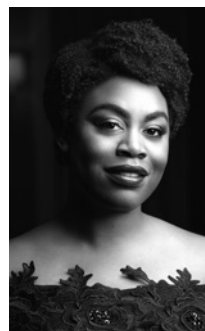
DAVÓNE TINES (Malcolm X)

Heralded as "[one] of the most powerful voices of our time" by the *Los Angeles Times*, the "immensely gifted American bass-baritone Davóne Tines has won acclaim, and advanced the field of classical music" (*The New York Times*) as a path-breaking artist whose work not only encompasses a diverse repertoire but also explores the social issues of today. As a Black, gay, classically trained performer at the intersection of many histories, cultures, and aesthetics, he is engaged in work that blends opera, art song, contemporary classical music, spirituals, gospel, and songs of protest, as a means to tell a deeply personal story of perseverance that connects to all of humanity. He was recently named *Musical America's* 2022 Vocalist of the Year.

Mr. Tines is Artist-in-Residence at Detroit Opera—an appointment that culminated in his performance in the title role of Anthony Davis's *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* in the spring of 2022—and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale's first-ever Creative Partner. His ongoing projects include Recital No. 1: *MASS*, a program exploring the Mass woven through Western European, African-American, and 21st-century traditions, with performances this season at the Ravinia Festival, in Washington, DC presented by WPA, and at the Barbican in London. He also performs *Concerto No. 1: SERMON*—a program he conceived for voice and orchestra that weaves arias by John Adams, Anthony Davis, Igee Dieudonné and Mr. Tines himself, with texts by James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, and Maya Angelou—with the Philadelphia Orchestra and BBC Symphony.

Mr. Tines is a member of AMOC and co-creator of *The Black Clown*, a music theater experience commissioned and premiered by The American Repertory Theater and presented at Lincoln Center. He has premiered works by today's leading composers, including John Adams, Terence Blanchard, and Matthew Aucoin, and his concert appearances include performances of works ranging from Beethoven's Ninth with the San Francisco Symphony to Kaija Saariaho's *True Fire* with the Orchestre National de France.

Davóne Tines is a winner of the 2020 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, recognizing extraordinary classical musicians of color, and the recipient of the 2018 Emerging Artists Award from Lincoln Center. He is a graduate of The Juilliard School and Harvard University, where he also serves as guest lecturer.



WHITNEY MORRISON (Louise/Betty)

A Chicago native and recent alum of the Ryan Opera Center, Whitney Morrison champions the African American aesthetic in classical music, embracing a style of performance that blends classical singing technique with elements of the gospel singing tradition. She recently appeared as Leonie Baker in the world premiere of *Freedom Ride* at Chicago Opera Theater, prompting *Classical Voice America* to say, "the production's big surprise was soprano Whitney Morrison, who nearly stole the show." Ms. Morrison also garnered acclaim for her "richly textured performance and luxurious voice" (*The Times Weekly*) as Sister Rose in *Dead Man Walking* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Other recent credits include the role of Donna

Anna (*Don Giovanni*) with Chicago's Floating Opera Company and appearances at the 2018 Grant Park Music Festival and the Rochester Institute of Technology's celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy, "MLK Expressions."

Ms. Morrison received her bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy from Alabama's Oakwood University. She went on to earn a master's degree in music from the Eastman School of Music. Ms. Morrison is a 2020 National Semifinalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, first place winner in the National Classical Singer University Competition, a finalist in the Luminarts Classical Music Competition and recipient of a She Shines Award from Girls Inc. of Chicago. Ms. Morrison is a two-time recipient of the UNCF John Lennon Endowed Scholarship and also trained at the Georg Solti Accademia di Bel Canto in Italy and the Neil Semer Vocal Institute in Germany.



RONNITA MILLER (Ella)

This season, American mezzo-soprano Ronnita Miller joined the Metropolitan Opera as Big Stone in Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice*, and appeared as soloist with the San Diego Symphony in Beethoven's *9th Symphony*, and in recital with New World Symphony. She has also performed at The Atlanta Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin, and in the summer of 2021 she curated a recital titled *What the Heart Desires* with tenor Nicholas Phan for the Merola Festival. Throughout her distinguished career, Ms. Miller has appeared with numerous ensembles and companies, including Teatro Real Madrid, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Semperoper Dresden, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, and the Los Angeles Opera.

In the 2019-2020 season, she completed her seventh season as a member of the ensemble at Deutsche Oper Berlin. Performances there included Mamma Lucia in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*, Mary in *Der fliegende Holländer*, Madelon in *Andrea Chenier*, and Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. She also made her debut at the Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam as Fricka in a performance of *Die Walküre*, conducted by Jaap van Zweden, and in the US she joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to sing Mamma Lucia in *Cavalleria Rusticana* under the baton of Riccardo Muti.

In addition to performing, Ms. Miller has conducted masterclasses at St. Petersburg College in St. Petersburg, Florida, outreach classes in NYC, written for online publications including Interview *En L'air*, and has taught private lessons.



VICTOR ROBERTSON (Elijah Muhammad/Street)

American tenor Victor Robertson made his Metropolitan Opera debut in their new 2017 production of *Merry Widow* as Raoul, and in the same year, his Broadway debut in its longest running show, *Phantom of the Opera* as Piangi. Mr. Robertson has sung his signature role, Count Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, at Minnesota Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Manitoba Opera, Portland Opera, Arizona Opera, Opera Carolina, Sarasota Opera, Coeur D'Alene Opera, Toledo Opera and with Santa Cruz Symphony. Other roles in the artist's repertoire include Tonio in *La Fille du Regiment* at Lyric Opera of Kansas, Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*, Fenton in *Falstaff* at Cleveland Lyric Opera, and Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore* at Kentucky Opera.

This season, the artist sings Remendado in *Carmen* at Cincinnati Opera, and Alfredo in *La Traviata* at Orlando Opera, appears as Raymond Santana in Anthony Davis's *Central Park Five* at Portland Opera, and returns to Cincinnati Opera in *Castor and Patience*, their world premiere by Gregory Spears, in the role of Nestor.

With a natural ability for contemporary music, Mr. Robertson inaugurated the role of Benny "Kid" Paret in Terence Blanchard's celebrated *Champion* in its world premiere in 2017 at Washington National Opera and later revived the role at Detroit Opera and at Opera de Montréal. He appeared as

Hosea Williams in Douglas Tappin's *I Dream*, a piece based upon a series of dreams, reminiscences and premonitions leading up to a fateful moment in modern American history—the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King.

Making his off-Broadway debut, Mr. Robertson joined the cast of *Three Mo' Tenors* at the Little Schubert Theatre in 2007-8 and remained with the show when it toured the US and when it went on to play the Edinburgh Festival, and in Moscow, the Dominican Republic, and the UK's Henley Festival. Mr. Robertson made his professional Broadway debut in Baz Luhrmann's *Rent* at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles in a record 82 sold-out performances, for which he won the coveted Ovation Award in 2004.



JOSHUA CONYERS (Reginald)

A native of the Bronx, NY, baritone Joshua Conyers is recognized for his captivating performances and championed as one the promising young dramatic voices of today. Active in contemporary opera, Mr. Conyers performed the role of Jason in the world premiere of Matt Boehler's *75 Miles*, and Uncle Wesley in Carlos Simon's *Night Trip* for Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative. Last season, he was seen as Eustis in *Le maréchal ferrant* with Opera Lafayette, Sprecher in *Die Zauberflöte* with Aspen Opera Theater, and joined Atlanta Opera as Tonio in *Pagliacci*, and Tiger Brown in the *Threepenny Opera*. In the 2021-2022 season, Mr.

Conyers made his Seattle Opera debut as Policeman 3/Congregant 3 in Tesori's *Blue*, and sang Schaunard in *La bohème* with Annapolis Opera, and debuted with Opera Memphis as Tonio in *Pagliacci*. Mr. Conyers also sang the role of Reginald in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* with Detroit Opera this spring, prior to BMOP's production.

As a concert artist, Mr. Conyers made his Carnegie Hall Debut in 2018 performing Mozart's *Regina Coeli*, K. 276, Vaughn Williams' *Serenade to Music*, Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* and Mark Hayes' *Te Deum* under the baton of distinguished composer and arranger Mark Hayes with MidAmerica Productions. Mr. Conyers also made his debut at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2018 in the Duruflé *Requiem* with Manhattan Concert Productions under the baton of conductor Anton Armstrong.

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GIL ROSE, Artistic Director

Gil Rose is one of today's most dynamic conductors, praised as "amazingly versatile" (*The Boston Globe*) with "a sense of style and sophistication" (*Opera News*). Equally at home performing core repertoire, new music, and lesser-known historic symphonic and operatic works, "Gil Rose is not just a fine conductor, but a peerless curator, sniffing out—and commissioning—off-trend, unheralded, and otherwise underplayed repertoire that nevertheless holds to unfailingly high standards of quality. In doing so, he's built an indefinable, but unmistakable, personal aesthetic" (WXQR).

A global leader in American contemporary music, Rose is the founder of the performing and recording ensemble the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), who "bring an endlessly curious and almost archaeological mind to programming... with each concert, each recording, an essential step in a better direction" (*The New York Times*), as well as the founder of Odyssey Opera, praised by *The New York Times* as "bold and intriguing" and "one of the East Coast's most interesting opera companies."

Since its founding in 1996, the "unique and invaluable" (*The New York Times*) Boston Modern Orchestra Project has grown to become the premier orchestra in the world for commissioning, recording, and performing music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Under Rose's leadership, BMOP has won seventeen ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming, been selected as Musical America's Ensemble of the Year in 2016, and in 2021 was awarded a Gramophone Magazine Special Achievement Award in recognition of its extraordinary service to American music of the modern era. Under Rose's baton, BMOP has been featured at numerous festivals including the Festival of New American Music (Sacramento, CA), Concerts at the Library of Congress (Washington, DC), and the MATA Festival in New York.

In 2013, Gil Rose expanded his musical vision with the founding of Odyssey Opera, a company dedicated to eclectic and underperformed operatic repertoire from all eras. Working with an international roster of singers and directors, Odyssey Opera has presented over 36 operas in Boston, including three world premieres and several U.S. premieres. As a leader of modern opera in the United States, Odyssey has become known for its innovative thematic seasons.

In addition to his role as conductor, Rose is leading the charge for the preservation and advancement of underperformed works through recordings. BMOP/sound, the independent record label Rose founded in 2008, has released over 86 recordings of contemporary music by today's most innovative composers, including world premieres by John Cage, Lukas Foss, Chen Yi, Anthony Davis, Lisa Bielawa, Steven Mackey, Eric Nathan, and many others. BMOP/sound, with Rose as executive producer, has secured five GRAMMY® nominations and a win in 2020 for Tobias Picker's opera *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Odyssey Opera's in-house label has released five CDs, most recently a complete version of Camille Saint-Saëns's *Henry VIII*.

Beyond Boston, Gil Rose enjoys a busy schedule as a guest conductor and educator. Equally at home on the podium in both symphonic and operatic repertoire, Rose has led performances by the Tanglewood Opera Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Symphony, the American Composers Orchestra, the National Symphony of Ukraine, the Matsumoto Festival of Japan, the New York City Opera, and the Juilliard Symphony among others. In addition to being former faculty at Tufts University and Northeastern University, Rose has worked with students across the U.S. at institutions such as

Carnegie Mellon University, MIT, New England Conservatory, and the University of California at San Diego. He is a visionary curator of music, inaugurating the Ditson Festival of Music at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art and programming three seasons for the Fromm Concerts at Harvard series.

In the 2022-2023 season, Gil Rose leads Odyssey Opera in a concert performance of three one-act operas by Rachmaninoff and brings John Corigliano and Mark Adamo's new opera *The Lord of Cries* to Boston audiences. In addition, he and BMOP will travel to Carnegie Hall for the orchestra's debut performance and culmination of their 25th season, and BMOP and Odyssey will co-produce *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom*, the second opera in AS TOLD BY: History, Race, and Justice on the Opera Stage, a five-year initiative highlighting Black composers and vital figures of Black liberation and thought.



ANTHONY DAVIS, Composer

Anthony Davis is an internationally recognized composer of operatic, symphonic, choral, and chamber works, and a winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his opera *The Central Park Five*. He is also known for his virtuoso performances both as a solo pianist and as the leader of the ensemble Episteme, a unique ensemble of musicians who are disciplined interpreters as well as provocative improvisers. In April 1993, Mr. Davis made his Broadway debut, composing the music for Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*, directed by George C. Wolfe. His music is also heard in Kushner's companion piece, *Perestroika*, which opened on Broadway in November 1993.

As a composer, Mr. Davis is best known for his operas. *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, which played to sold-out houses at its premiere at the New York City Opera in 1986, was the first of a new American genre: opera on a contemporary political subject. The recording of *X* was released on the Gramavision label in August 1992 and received a Grammy Nomination for "Best Contemporary Classical Composition" in February 1993, but has since gone out of print. Mr. Davis's second opera, *Under the Double Moon*, a science fiction opera with an original libretto by Deborah Atherton, premiered at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis in June 1989. His third opera, *Tania*, with a libretto by Michael-John LaChiusa and based on the abduction of Patricia Hearst, premiered at the American Music Theater Festival in June 1992. A recording of *Tania* was released in 2001 on Koch, and in November 2003, Musikwerkstaat Wien presented its European premiere. A fourth opera, *Amistad*, about a shipboard uprising by slaves and their subsequent trial, premiered at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in November 1997. Set to a libretto by poet Thulani Davis, the librettist of *X*, *Amistad* was staged by George C. Wolfe.

Reacting to two of Mr. Davis's orchestral works, *Maps* (Violin Concerto) and *Notes from the Underground*, Michael Walsh said in *Time* magazine: "Imagine Ellington's lush, massed sonorities propelled by Bartók's vigorous whiplash rhythms and overlaid with the seductive percussive haze of the Balinese gamelan orchestra, and you will have an idea of what both the Concerto and *Notes from the Underground* sound like." Mr. Davis's works also include the Violin Sonata, commissioned by Carnegie Hall for its Centennial; *Jacob's Ladder*, a tribute to Mr. Davis's mentor Jacob Druckman commissioned by the Kansas City Symphony; *Esu Variations*, a concert opener for the Atlanta Symphony; *Happy Valley Blues*, a work for the String Trio of New York with Mr. Davis on piano; *Pale Grass and Blue*, *Then Red*, a dance work choreographed by Ralph Lemon for the Limon Dance Company; and *Tales (Tails) of the Signifying Monkey* commissioned by The Pittsburgh Symphony. His orchestral works have been performed by the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Kansas City Symphony, Beethoven

Halle Orchestra of Bonn, and the American Composers Orchestra. In the 2003-2004 season, Mr. Davis served as Artistic Advisor of the American Composers Orchestra's Improvise! festival and conference which featured a performance of *Wayang V* with Mr. Davis as piano soloist. Both *Notes from the Underground* and *Wayang V* appear on a 2014 CD from BMOP/sound devoted to Anthony Davis' orchestra works.

Born in Paterson, New Jersey, on 20 February 1951, Mr. Davis studied at Wesleyan and Yale universities. He was Yale's first Lustman Fellow, teaching composition and Afro-American studies. In 1987 Mr. Davis was appointed Senior Fellow with the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University, and in 1990 he returned to Yale University as Visiting Professor of Music. He became Professor of Music in Afro-American Studies at Harvard University in the fall of 1992, and assumed a full-time professorship at the University of California at San Diego in January 1998. Recordings of Mr. Davis's music may be heard on the Rykodisc (Gramavision), Koch, Music and Arts and BMOP/sound labels. His music is published by G. Schirmer, Inc.



THULANI DAVIS, librettist

Thulani Davis is an interdisciplinary artist and historian, whose work includes poetry, theater works and cultural criticism. Ms. Davis wrote the libretti for Anthony Davis's *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, his *Amistad*, and many other musical works. Her forthcoming operas are *The Little Rock Nine* by Bernadette Speech, and *Fire Across the Tracks: Tulsa 1921* by Anthony Davis. Her produced plays include: *Everybody's Ruby: Story of a Murder in Florida*, *The Souls of Black Folk: An Oratorio for Five Actors*, the adaptation for George C. Wolfe's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and *Where the Mississippi Meets the Amazon*, with Ntozake Shange and Jessica Hagedorn. Davis wrote the book and lyrics for *The Sojourner*

Washing Society, *A Musical in Gospel & Blues*, by composer Steven Robinson. She has written the scripts for several narrative films, and award-winning documentaries. The author of six books, she has two new works: *Nothin but the Music* (2020), a poetry collection, and *The Emancipation Circuit: Black Activism Forging a Culture of Freedom*, forthcoming in June. She is a professor and a Nellie Y. McKay Fellow in Afro-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS, Story Author

Christopher Davis has worked as an actor and director, in addition to his role as storywriter for *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. He performed the role of Malcolm X in *El Hajj Malik: A Play About Malcolm X* by N.R. Davidson for theater companies in both New Haven, Connecticut, and Jamaica, Queens, as well as creating the role of Nate Turner in *Against the Sun* by Ihsan Bracy. Since 1990, Mr. Davis has worked in market research for Ipsos NA, a multi-national French-held firm where he is Director of Insights for the Ipsos Affluent Intelligence Group. Christopher is thrilled to see *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* return for a whole new generation of artists and audiences.



PASCALE FLORESTAL, Associate Director

Pascale Florestal is a Director, Educator, Dramaturg, Writer and Collaborator based in Boston, MA. Recent directing Credits: *The Colored Museum* with The Umbrella Performing Arts Center, *Once On This Island* with SpeakEasy Stage, *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing* with Emerson Stage and *Everybody* with Boston Conservatory. As an Assistant to the Director she has worked with Timothy Douglas, Liesl Tommy, Billy Porter, Paul Daigneault and M. Bevin O'Gara. Ms. Florestal recently served as the Associate Director to Kimberly Senior on *Our Daughters, Like Pillars* at the Huntington Theater. Recent dramaturgy: *Witch*, Huntington Theater Company, *The Resurrection of Michelle Morgan*, Geva Theater and *Pass*

Over by Antoniette Nwandu with SpeakEasy Stage. Ms. Florestal was recently named one of the ARTery 25 Artists of Color Transforming the Cultural Landscape in Boston. She serves as the Education Director and Associate Producer for The Front Porch Arts Collective and is an Assistant Professor of Theater at Boston Conservatory at Berklee College of Music.



KENNETH GRIFFITH, Choral Conductor

Ohio native Kenneth E. Griffith II is a conductor, educator, collaborative pianist, and music director who promotes music for social change. He is active in schools and communities in the Greater Boston area, sharing the songs and stories of underrepresented peoples and providing music instruction in neighborhoods underserved in the arts.

Mr. Griffith worked with collegiate, community, and opera choruses at Bard College and served as an Assistant Conductor for the Collegiate Chorale in New York. Over the years, he has assisted in the preparation of ensembles heard at the Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and the Verbier Music Festival in Switzerland. A versatile musician, Mr. Griffith collaborated on projects with vocalists including Idina Menzel and Javier Muñoz, movement artists like Chanel DaSilva, and instrumental ensembles such as the Boston-based Eureka Ensemble.

In 2014, Mr. Griffith came to Massachusetts as the Director of Choral and Chamber Music at Brooks School in North Andover. In 2017, he started as Director of Music at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lynn in Swampscott. In 2021, Mr. Griffith joined Boston Children's Chorus as a conductor for their flagship ensemble, Premier Choir. He made his Boston Symphony Hall debut in March 2022 during their 19th Annual MLK Tribute Concert to great acclaim. Mr. Griffith holds a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the Capital University Conservatory of Music and a Master of Music in Conducting from the Bard College-Conservatory of Music. He currently resides in Somerville.


JOHN OLUWOLE ADEKOJE, Projection Design

John Oluwole ADEKOJE is a national award winner of The Kennedy Center's ACTF Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award for the play *Street Hawker*, as well as a recipient of The Roxbury International Film Festival's Emerging local Filmmaker award for the documentary *Street Soldiers*, which also showed at the Pan African Film Festival in Cannes, France, The World Film Festival-Montreal, the BronzeLens Film Festival in Atlanta. Mr. ADEKOJE has received the Brother Thomas Fellowship Award and he is a playwriting Fellow at the Huntington Theater Company.

Most recently, he was awarded the Emerging Filmmaker Award for *Knockaround Kids*, his narrative feature, at the Roxbury International Film Festival which all showed at the Urbanworld Film festival in New York. *Knockaround Kids* can be found on Tubi, Amazon prime, Google Play, Apple and other film platforms. Mr. ADEKOJE is the co director and director of photography for the digital version of *Hype Man* (Company One/American Repertory Theatre) as well as the writer, director and projection/art designer for the Triggered Life Project (Portland Playhouse). Mr. Adekoje teaches film production and theatre at Boston Arts Academy.


KAT ZHOU, Lighting Design

Kat C. Zhou is a lighting designer for theatre, dance, and opera, currently based in New York City. She is pleased to be making her BMOP debut and returning to Odyssey Opera, where she was the assistant lighting designer on *Maria, Regina d'Inghilterra*. Other opera credits include *The Rake's Progress* (BU Opera Institute), the Run AMOC! Festival (American Modern Opera Company), and *The Cunning Little Vixen* (BU Opera Institute/Glimmerglass).

Ms. Zhou was the inaugural recipient of the Howell Binkley Fellowship (2021). Formerly, she served as the artist-in-residence at the Signet Society (2018-2020), and was the president/managing director of the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players (2013-2017). She holds an MFA in lighting design from Boston University and an AB in mathematics from Harvard College. More info: katzhoudesign.com


BROOKE STANTON, Costumes, Hair, and Makeup

Brooke Stanton is a costumer who has worked in theatre, film, and television. During her five years with George Lucas' ILM, she built creatures for the Star Wars Special Edition Trilogy and The Phantom Menace. She has toured internationally and nationally designing for Peter Sellers. Other clients include Disney, Columbia Pictures, CBS, American Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theatre, Aspen Music Festival, Santa Fe Opera, Boston Symphony Youth Orchestra, Commonwealth Shakespeare, S.F. Shakespeare, New England Conservatory, and Odyssey Opera. She studied Costume Design at NYU and Textiles at California College of the Arts. www.brookestanton.com



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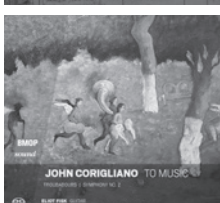
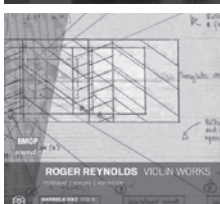
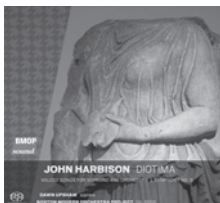
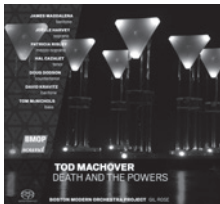
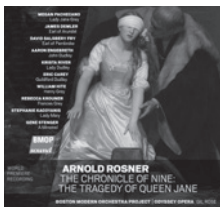
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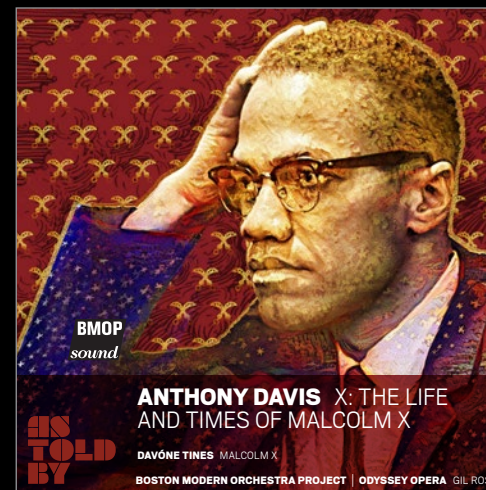
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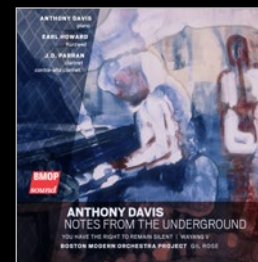
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