

WEDNESDAYS@7 Presents

Black Lives in the Operas of Anthony Davis

Wednesday, April 3, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

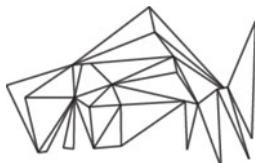
Featuring

Christine Jobson, Soprano

Carl DuPont, Bass-Baritone

Alan Johnson, Piano

Anthony Davis, Piano



UC San Diego

ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Music

The Central Park Five

Libretto by Richard Wesley

Harlem, A Black and Tan Fantasy

Carl DuPont (The Masque)

The Masque, as a reporter, comments on the people in Harlem.

Tania

Libretto by Michael-John LaChiusa

Overture

Alan Johnson (piano)

The music in the overture later appears as Betty Ford's aria "Once There was a Child" in Tania's closet world as Patty imagines searching for her mother and finding Betty Ford instead.

After the Fire/And the Funk Goes This Way

Carl DuPont (Cinque)

Cinque, the leader of the Symbionese Liberation Army, imagines the final conflict, a premonition of the safe house fire in Los Angeles that killed him and most of the members of the SLA.

Once Upon a Time

Christine Jobson (Patty)

The stage is divided in two sections, Patty's bedroom and the Closet World separated by a large door. Patty fears that she will never find her way back to the bedroom as she moves toward the Closet door. Like the Grimm's fairy tale, she places breadcrumbs on her path to the door. At the end of the aria she is abducted by the SLA who hide in her closet.

Small, White Bird

Carl DuPont (Cinque)

The "small, white bird" is Patty now Tania. She has joined the SLA.

Amistad

Libretto by Thulani Davis

I Could Tell by Their Looks, Their Touches

Christine Jobson (Margru)

Margru, a Mende captive, is held in a prison in Connecticut. She recounts the story of her abduction and the people she left behind.

The Past is a Fading Daylight

Carl DuPont (Cinque)

Cinque, the chief of the Mende, is held in a prison in Connecticut, captured after the rebellion on the Amistad. He remembers his capture as he is chained ankle to wrist.

They Come As If From the Heavens

Christine Jobson (The Goddess of the Waters)

The Goddess of the Waters (Yemaya) appears as finally the Trickster God's (Esu's) appeals are heard. She views the Middle Passage as a violation of her body as she receives the bodies of captives and slaves thrown overboard.

X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X

Libretto by Thulani Davis

Overture

Anthony Davis (Piano)

This piece began as a work for piano, MIDDLE PASSAGE, which was originally commissioned and performed by pianist Ursula Oppens. I present a more improvised version today. The piano work provided the musical skeleton for the entire opera as thematic material from the piece recurs throughout X.

Earl Should Have Been Home by Sunset

Christine Jobson (Louise)

Louise Little, Malcolm's mother, worries that something horrible has happened to her husband Earl, a minister and active supporter of Marcus Garvey. She remembers other atrocities, like the burning of her house in Omaha, Nebraska, as her family lives in fear of violence.

You Want the Truth, But You Don't Want to Know

Carl DuPont (Malcolm Little)

Malcolm's aria ends Act I of the opera. Malcolm Little is under interrogation by the police for the robbery in the jewelry store and other crimes. The orchestra asks the questions and receives answers they don't anticipate. Malcolm is consumed by his rage.

Black Lives in the Operas of Anthony Davis

The stories in my operas are drawn from the history of African Americans from the tragic consequences of the slave trade to the emergence of Black Nationalism and galvanizing figures like Malcolm X. In my operas one can find heroic figures like Malcolm or Cinque, the leader of the Mende rebellion, Yoruba deities like the Trickster God and the Goddess of the Waters, or tragic victims of the American justice system, or misguided leaders of marginalized radical groups like the Symbionese Liberation Army. My operas address the issues of race and the collision of culture.

My first opera, *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* with a libretto by Thulani Davis follows Malcolm X's odyssey and transformation from Malcolm Little, to Malcolm X and finally to El Hajj Malik el Shabazz. The three act structure of the opera corresponds to a change of name. In Act I, Malcolm becomes Detroit Red, the street hustler, who finds himself at the end of the act confronting his demons in prison. In Act II, a visit with his brother Reginald, introduces Malcolm to Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam. In Act I he becomes Malcolm X and begins his ministry. In Act III Malcolm breaks with Elijah and makes his pilgrimage to Mecca and embraces Sunni Islam. His story was told in the opera as the classic journey of the tragic hero whose metamorphosis reflects the evolution of African American politics and identity. The rhythmic structures in the opera compel the drama reflecting Malcolm's violent world. The music also reveals the parallel musical evolution of Jazz from Swing and the Jump Blues of the late 1940's to the modal innovations John Coltrane and Miles Davis in the 60's.

My opera *Tania* about the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst also explores a political topic with heiress turned revolutionary. Whereas X at root is a tragedy, *Tania* with a libretto by Michael John LaChiusa is a dark comedy reflecting an undeveloped revolutionary ethos signaling the end of the earlier period of radicalism. Much of the opera happens in a "closet world" where Patty becomes the revolutionary Tania and then after the death of her comrades becomes Patty again. The music employs parody to comic effect and musical repetition as a means to explore brainwashing in cults and conversion therapy.

The opera *Amistad* with a libretto by Thulani Davis tells the story of the mutiny and trial of Mende captives aboard the slave ship Amistad. The opera reveals the story of the

Amistad as not only the pyrrhic victory of Mende captives who were never slaves but also as a transformative moment in the formation of American culture. This is represented in the opera in the parallel story of the arrival of the Trickster God in America. It is no accident that the anxiety about slave rebellions with Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey and the Amistad helped account for the popularity of the minstrel show in "White" America beginning in the 1840's. The opera explores this cultural phenomenon as the genesis of American culture, no longer European, forever entangled in race and representation. The Trickster's arrival is balanced by the emergence of the Goddess of the Waters for whom the Middle Passage is a violation of body and spirit. The music of the opera ranges from an evocation of the sea to the playful improvisatory spirit of the Trickster, who plays with language and time.

The Central Park Five will premiere in June at Long Beach Opera. The opera with a libretto by Richard Wesley, examines the wrongful conviction of five teenaged boys in New York City for the rape and assault on the Central Park jogger. The case electrified New York City and the boys were vilified for their supposed actions. Donald Trump was particularly vocal in his accusations against the boys. He published letters in the New York newspapers calling for the death penalty beginning his ongoing campaign to promote racial division and acrimony. The opera explores the interrogation of the five teenagers that forced confessions and the racial anxiety in New York with the emergence of hip-hop and hip-hop culture.

I would like to thank Alan Johnson who has been a tireless advocate for my music and an indispensable proponent of new American opera. I would also like to thank the performers, Christine Jobson and Carl DuPont. I would also like to thank the institutions that have supported this project, the University of Miami, the University of California, San Diego, the University of Maryland and the University of North Carolina, Charlotte.

~Anthony Davis

Contact us for information on upcoming concerts:
Music Box Office: (858) 534-3448 | <http://music.ucsd.edu/concerts>

Audience members are reminded to please silence all phones and noise-generating devices before the performance, and to remain seated during the performance. As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photography is allowed in the hall. UC San Diego is a non-smoking campus.

David Espiritu, Jr. & Jeremy Olson - Theatrical Production Specialists
Caroline Louis Miller, composer - chimes

About the Artists:

Christine Jobson, soprano, from Miami, Florida, has performed in Spain, Portugal, Austria, Russia, the Bahamas, Bermuda, and throughout the United States. Operatic roles include the title role in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Musetta in *La Bohème*, Celie in *Signor Deluso*, and Annie and Bess in *Porgy and Bess*. Ms. Jobson made her Russian debut at the Music Hall Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia, in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess Suite*.

South Florida concert appearances as soloist have been with the Delray Beach Chorale, Art Basel, Curtiss Mansion, Handel's *Messiah* with the Hampton House Community Trust, and the City of North Miami's Mayoral Inauguration. Her recent debut with the South Florida Youth Orchestra of "*Heart on the Wall*" by Robert Owen was received with great acclaim. Christine's work in the development of new opera includes a workshop of *Beyond* by Mary Ellen Childs, in a collaboration with Frost Opera Theater at the University of Miami, Opera America, and the Duffy Institute for New Opera.

Ms. Jobson is currently pursuing a DMA in Vocal Pedagogy and Performance at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, with a dissertation on the life and legacy of composer Florence Price. Her focus is on the preservation and dissemination of vocal music by African American composers, including Negro spirituals, anthems, art song, gospel, and hymns. Christine was awarded the 2017 – 2018 Presser Foundation Graduate Music Award, given annually at the University of Miami to support research and development. In summer 2018, Ms. Jobson presented an African American art song recital at the University of Miami at Salzburg, Austria Kammermusik Konzerte series, in addition to being a winner in the Salzburg Mirabell Competition.

Ms. Jobson received a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education from Oakwood University and a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Kentucky. Further studies were at the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. Academic and teaching positions include Miami Union Academy, Barry University, and Florida Memorial University. She is currently teaching in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Miami, while maintaining a private voice studio.

Upcoming engagements include recitals featuring the opera music of Anthony Davis and performances of African American art song, including those by Florence Price. Ms. Jobson's recordings include "By Faith," a collection of hymns and Negro spirituals with renowned pianist Dr. Wayne Bucknor. Ms. Jobson will release a recording of art songs by Florence Price in spring 2019.

Bass-Baritone **Carl DuPont** is a vocalist equally engaged in performing, teaching, and research. He made his first operatic appearance as a boy soprano in the title role of *Amahl* and *The Night Visitors* in his hometown of Daytona Beach, FL, and has been singing ever since. He has been celebrated for his "dramatic, dark tones" (South Florida Classical Review) and his "lyricism that underpins every statement" (Fanfare Magazine) in modern and standard roles including Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, the title character in *Dennis Rodman in North Korea* and the title role in *Approaching Ali* with Asheville Lyric Opera. His versatility has been featured internationally on stages in Mexico City, Hong Kong, Tel Aviv, New York City, and Leipzig. However, the intimacy of the solo recital is his preferred métier, and sharing the wealth of songs by black composers, a particular passion.

Dr. DuPont instructs undergraduate students in applied voice, diction, and vocal pedagogy in his duties as an Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His own studies began at the prestigious Eastman School of Music, and Indiana University, where he earned the distinctive Performers' Certificate at both institutions coupled with his bachelor's and master's degrees. He was then awarded the highly sought-after University of Miami Fellowship and completed a doctorate in Vocal Pedagogy and Performance at the Frost School of Music. Dr. DuPont's scholarly interest focuses on equity and inclusion in higher music education, specifically the contributions of black musicians, composers, and educators to the discipline. Highlights from this season include Hortensius in *La Fille du Regiment* and Zuniga in *Carmen* with Opera Carolina and a debut with Opera Toledo. This season he will also present recitals at USC San Diego, University of Miami, East Carolina University.

Alan Johnson is a Professor in the Department of Vocal Performance and Program/Music Director of the Frost Opera Theater at the Frost School of Music, at the University of Miami. Throughout his more than 30-year career, he has collaborated with distinguished singers in concert and opera, both nationally and internationally. As music director, conductor, pianist, vocal coach, and new opera advocate, he has prepared, performed, and premiered many of the most notable and progressive works in opera and music theater.

His many honors include the 2012 Phillip and Patricia Frost Award for Excellence in Teaching and Scholarship, University of Miami Provost Research Awards (2016-17 and 2018-19) featuring the opera music of composers Philip Glass and Anthony Davis, and a 2016 Rockefeller Residency in Bellagio, Italy with composer Mary Ellen Childs. Alan's work has garnered Bessie and Drama Desk awards as well as an OBIE Award for Sustained Excellence in Music Direction, and a Joseph Jefferson Award for Outstanding Music

Direction of the premieres of *The Sound of a Voice* and *Hotel of Dreams*, two one-act operas by Philip Glass and David Henry Hwang.

His long association with Anthony has included musical direction for numerous premieres in opera (*In the Penal Colony*, *The Sound of a Voice*), dance/musical theater (*Provenance Unknown*, *The Mysteries* and *What's So Funny?!*), and theater (*Henry IV* Parts I and II, *Cymbeline*, *In the Summer House*), as well as music preparation for the premieres of *Book of Longing*, *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8*, *Hydrogen Jukebox*, *Orphée*, and *La Belle et La Bête*.

His production affiliations, performances, and composer collaborations have included works by John Adams, Edward Barnes, Nicholas Brooke, Mary Ellen Childs, Douglas Cuomo, Michael Daugherty, Michael Dellaira, Tina Davidson, Anthony Davis, Jonathan Dove, John Duffy, Gary Fagin, Kenneth Fuchs, Michael Gordon, Allan Jaffe, Guy Klucevsek, Michael Kosch, Leroy Jenkins, Michael John LaChiusa, David Lang, Libby Larsen, Charles Norman Mason, Lansing McClosky, John Moran, Diedre Murray, Polly Pen, Michael Alec Rose, Dan Moses Schreier, Thomas Sleeper, Michael Torke, and Richard Wargo.

Johnson has conducted premiere performances at distinguished venues across the United States, including the American Repertory Theater, American Music Theater Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Lincoln Center, New York Shakespeare Festival, Opera Delaware, A Contemporary Theater – Seattle, Court Theater – University of Chicago, Jacobs Pillow, Joyce Theater, Long Wharf Theater, McCarter Theater, Spoleto Festival USA and Italy, Pittsburgh Opera Theater, and many others.

Since 2008, Alan has held the position of Music Director at the John Duffy Institute for New Opera at the Virginia Arts Festival. He appears regularly in recital with singers, most recently in New York, Alabama, New Jersey, Florida, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, North Carolina, Iowa, and Wisconsin. As conductor of Frost Opera Theater, he has programmed and led repertory from the Baroque period to the present day. He holds a Bachelor of Music in piano performance from the University of Miami and a Master of Music in Vocal Coaching and Accompanying from the University of Illinois, including studies with legendary pianists Ivan Davis and John Wustman.