The compositions & company:

JOURNEYS TO JUSTICE

**Songs for the African Violet**
Words and music by Jasmine Barnes

Soprano Soloist: Leah Hawkins *
Collaborative Pianist: Nicholas Fox
Cellist: Dylan Rieck

**Two Black Churches**
Composed by Shawn E. Okpebholo | Text by Dudley Randall, Marcus Amaker

Baritone Soloist: Michael Parham +
Collaborative Pianist: Nicholas Fox

**“Your Daddy’s Son” from Ragtime**
Music by Stephen Charles Flaherty | Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens

Soprano Soloist: Lynnesha Crump +
Collaborative Pianist: Nicholas Fox
Bass Clarinetist: Louis DeMartino

**The Talk: Instructions for Black Children When They Interact with the Police**
Words and music by Damien Geter

Conductor: Lance Inouye *
Narrator: Ithica Tell
Mezzo-Soprano Soloist: Jasmine Johnson +
Sopranos: Kari Burgess, Eva Wolff
Mezzo-Sopranos: AnDee Compton, Anna Jablonski
Tenors: Joseph Michael Muir, Bryan Ross
Bass-Baritones: Gregory Brumfield, Erik Hundtoft
Pianist: Sequoia
**Night Trip**  
Music by Carlos Simon | Libretto by Sandra Seaton

Conductor: Lance Inouye *  
Conchetta: Jasmine Johnson +  
Uncle Mack: David Morgans Sanchez +  
Uncle Wesley: Edwin Jhamal Davis +  
Gas Station Attendant: Joseph Michael Muir  
Police Officer: Erik Hundtoft  
Pianist: Sequoia

**Songs of Love and Justice**  
Music by Dr. Adolphus Hailstork | Text by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Soprano Soloist: Lynnesha Crump +  
Collaborative Pianist: Nicholas Fox

* Portland Opera Debut  
+ Member of the Portland Opera Resident Artist Program

Scenery, costumes, and props created by Portland Opera.  
Performed in English with English titles. English titles written and produced by Portland Opera.  
Total running time is approximately 1 hour, 20 minutes.
Welcome to our first hybrid theatrical film in Portland Opera’s history. This has been quite a journey, leaning into the digital streaming world as we continue to make art.

When we decided to program Journeys to Justice, it was at a time when our nation and community had just witnessed the senseless murder of George Floyd. With broken hearts, we were moved by these beautiful compositions, and the sum of their parts became more profound as each piece came into focus, together.

Here we are, nearly a year later, preparing for the premiere—while witnessing the recent murder of Daunte Wright, and the ongoing trial of Derek Chauvin—adding even more intensity into our songs, and a renewed sense of urgency in sharing these important pieces.

Music has the capacity to lift our hearts, to share our pain, and to soothe our souls. I hope you share in the inspiration behind these pieces: to have a moment of solace, of mourning, to renew our actions and commitments towards racial justice and social change; to help underscore the ongoing realities that Black community members face daily in our nation, and in our city.

These songs of love and justice are shared with hope.
**Synopses:**

**JOURNEYS TO JUSTICE**

*Songs for the African Violet*
Words and music by Jasmine Barnes

Commissioned for Carl A. Alexander and the Voice(ed) Project, Chicago, Illinois; April, 2018

*Songs for the African Violet* is a song cycle that embraces and celebrates the Black Woman through song.

“Home” | “Is it Fair?” | “Flowers” | “Crowned”

**Two Black Churches**
Composed by Shawn Okpebholo

“Ballad of Birmingham” text by Dudley Randall

“The Rain” text by Marcus Amaker

Two Black Churches is a song set in two movements composed for baritone Will Liverman and pianist Paul Sánchez. This work is a musical reflection of two significant and tragic events perpetrated at the hands of white supremacists in two black churches, decades apart: the 1963 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, which took the lives of four girls, and the 2015 Mother Emanuel AME Church shooting in Charleston, South Carolina, resulting in the deaths of nine parishioners.

The text of the first movement is a poem by Dudley Randall, Ballad of Birmingham, a narrative account of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing from the perspectives of the mother of one victim and her child. Stylistically, this movement includes 1960s black gospel juxtaposed with contemporary art song. At moments, the civil rights anthem, We Shall Overcome, and the hymn, Amazing Grace, are referenced subtly. While there are strophic elements consistent with the poem’s structure, the work is also rhapsodic, though serious and weighty.

The text of the second movement is a poem called The Rain by Marcus Amaker, poet laureate of Charleston, South Carolina, written specifically for this composition. This poem poignantly reflects the shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church. Set in the coastal city of Charleston, which often floods, The Rain is a beautifully haunting metaphor on racism and the inability of blacks in America to stay above water—a consequence of the flood of injustice and the weight of oppression. In this composition, the number nine is significant, symbolizing the nine people who perished that day. Musically, this is most evident through meter and a reoccurring nine-chord harmonic progression. At the first church service at Mother Emanuel after the shooting, the hymn, ’Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus, was sung, testifying to a community that chose faith and hope over hate and fear. That hymn is referenced in this movement.

*“Your Daddy’s Son” from Ragtime*
Music by Stephen Flaherty, Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, Book by Terrence McNally

*“Your Daddy’s Son”* appears in Act I of the musical *Ragtime*, which debuted in 1996, and is based on the novel by the same name by E.L. Doctorow.
The Talk: Instructions for Black Children When They Interact with the Police
Words and music by Damien Geter

2. Keep your hands where they can see them.
3. Be polite. Save your rage. (Yes, sir. No, ma’am. Please. Thank you.)
4. Get home safely.

Night Trip
Composed by Carlos Simon | Libretto by Sandra Seaton

The uncles arrive in Chicago after dark at their sister’s apartment to pick up their niece Conchetta. Conchetta is thrilled to go “home” to see her relatives—her grandmother, her aunts, her “play aunts.” She sings about the rough world of the big city and longs for the small-town life in Tennessee. The uncles sing about the good old days when they were in the service. Wesley shows off his fully operational A-11 Army watch to Mack. They enjoy using military language.

The uncles remind her of their orders to take care of the box of money, the one under the seat. The men stop for gas in Indiana, ask the attendant if they can use the restroom, only to be told that none is available for them. In anger, they order the attendant to take out the hose then drive off without paying. As they’re speeding away, we hear sirens. They’re stopped by a policeman and the gas station attendant. An argument ensues between the uncles, the attendant and the police. Conchetta steps out of the car and offers them her food.

Wesley steps forward and directs the police officer to look under the seat for another box filled with dollar bills. With money in hand, there is still more hesitation by officer. The police and attendant drive off with the box of money.

Bittersweet. In the final solo Conchetta is still caught up in the experience of the road. Her uncles try to reassure her that all is well again. She has been changed by the experience.

Songs of Love and Justice
Composed by Dr. Adolphus Hailstork | Text by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

1. Justice
4. Love
About the artists:

JOURNEYS TO JUSTICE

**Damien Geter, Curator**

Damien Geter is an acclaimed composer and diverse artist whose credits include performances ranging from the operatic stage to the television screen. As a composer, Damien infuses classical music with various styles from the black diaspora to create music that furthers the cause for social justice.

Damien’s growing body of work includes chamber, vocal, and orchestral works. Recent highlights include commissions for Resonance Ensemble (*An African American Requiem*), The Washington Chorus (*Cantata for a Hopeful Tomorrow*), Washington National Opera, Opera Theater Oregon (*Invisible*), the University of Michigan (*The Justice Symphony*), and All Classical Portland (*Neo-Soul*). His large work, *An African American Requiem* will premiere in 2021 in partnership with Resonance Ensemble and the Oregon Symphony. Also a professionally trained classical singer (bass), Damien has appeared with the Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Opera, Portland Opera, among other companies across the nation.

Damien currently serves as the Artistic Advisor for the social justice-focused award-winning vocal ensemble Resonance Ensemble and was recently (July 2020) named Artistic Advisor for Portland Opera. The book he co-authored, *Music in Context: An Examination of Western European Music Through a Sociopolitical Lens* is available on Amazon, or directly from the publisher, Kendall Hunt.

**Chip Miller, Director**

Chip Miller is a director and producer, currently in the role of Associate Artistic Director at Portland Center Stage at the Armory. They were previously the Artistic Associate / Resident Director at Kansas City Repertory Theatre. Directing: *Hedwig & The Angry Inch*, the world premiere of *Redwood* (Portland Center Stage at the Armory), *School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls Play*, *Welcome to Fear City*, *A Raisin in the Sun* (KCRep); the world premiere of *Becoming Martin* by Kevin Willmott (The Coterie); *dwb: driving while black* (Lawrence Arts Center, Baruch Performing Arts Center). They have developed work at The William Inge Theatre Festival, NYU’s New Plays for Young Audiences, Portland Center Stage’s JAW Festival, The Midwest Dramatists Center, and KCRep’s OriginKC New Works Festival. Education: BFA: New York University, Tisch School of the Arts.
About the artists:

JOURNEYS TO JUSTICE

Lance Inouye, Conductor

Lance Inouye is Artistic Director/Conductor of The Portland Concert Opera and Music Director/Conductor of the Lewis & Clark Orchestra in Portland, Oregon. Inouye served on the Music Staff of Florida Grand Opera in Miami, as Assistant Conductor and Coach for Eugene Onegin, Un ballo in maschera, and FGO’s premiere of Jorge Martin’s opera Before Night Falls. He previously served on the conducting/music staff of Sarasota Opera for several years. Inouye made his Sarasota Opera Orchestra debut conducting a highly acclaimed Gala concert of scenes and choruses. At Sarasota Opera, Inouye was also Music Director and Conductor of the Sarasota Youth Opera where he conducted Aaron Copland’s The Second Hurricane, Judith Weir’s The Black Spider, the U.S. premiere of Dean Burry’s The Hobbit, and led the Youth Opera on its first international tour in Italy. In 2010-2011, he served as Music Director and Conductor of The Opera Intimi Project, Tel Aviv, where he conducted Puccini’s opera Le Villi at Hateiva Theatre in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Leah Hawkins, Soprano Soloist

A native of Philadelphia, soprano Leah Hawkins begins the 2020-21 season as Desdemona in 7 DEATHS OF MARIA CALLAS at Bayerische Staatsoper & Greek National Opera, joins Valery Gergiev and Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Beethoven Symphony No. 9, and presents a recital at The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. A recent alumna of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the Metropolitan Opera, last season she appeared at the Met to great acclaim as the Strawberry Woman in Porgy & Bess and Masha in The Queen of Spades. Ms. Hawkins is an alumna of the Cafritz Young Artist Program at Washington National Opera, where stage appearances included Mazzoli’s Proving Up; Champion, an “opera in jazz” by Terence Blanchard; and Justice at the Opera with the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. On the concert stage she has appeared with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra and Yale Philharmonia, among others.
**About the artists:**

**JOURNEYS TO JUSTICE**

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**Michael Parham,**
**Baritone Soloist**

Prior to joining the Portland Opera Resident Artist program in 2020, baritone Michael Parham has performed with City Lyric Opera, Opera Las Vegas, Vocaleis Repertory Company, and the South Florida Symphony. Parham was a 2019-20 New York district winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, a 2019 Semi-Finalist in the Premiere Opera Foundation Competition, and a 2017 Finalist in the Meistersinger Competition in Graz, Austria. He is also a member of the American Spiritual Ensemble. Originally from Chattanooga, Tennessee, Parham holds a master’s degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and completed his undergraduate work at Oakwood University.

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**Lynnesha Crump,**
**Soprano Soloist**

Prior to joining the Portland Opera Resident Artist program in 2020, Lynnesha Crump, soprano, was recently seen in numerous productions, including Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* at the Metropolitan Opera, Frances Pollock’s *Stinney: An American Execution* with Prototype Festival, and she covered the role of Stella in Offenbach’s *The Tales of Hoffman* at Aspen Music Festival. Hailing from Washington, D.C., she is a graduate of the Mannes School of Music where she received her Master of Music and Oberlin Conservatory of Music where she received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance.

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Photos of Portland Opera Resident Artists by Gia Goodrich | VEV Studios.
Ithica Tell, Narrator

Ithica Tell is delighted to have a chance to participate in Journeys to Justice. Building artistic relationships in Portland is vitally important to telling compelling stories and having the chance to add another Portland Opera brick brings Ithica incredible joy. Last seen on stage at Portland Center Stage at the Armory in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, and *Hedwig & The Angry Inch*, Ithica is delighted for the chance to be performing live theatre again.

Jasmine Johnson
Mezzo-Soprano Soloist, Conchetta

Jasmine Johnson, Portland Opera Resident Artist and mezzo-soprano, made her professional debut with Opera Parallèle in the world premiere of their original opera, *Amazing Grace*, in 2015. Committed to new music, Johnson has also collaborated with Festival Opera on developing Wang Jie’s opera, *Rated R for Rat (an eco-opera)*. Johnson received her Bachelor of Music, Master of Music, and a postgraduate diploma from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.
About the artists:

JOURNEYS TO JUSTICE

Edwin Jhamal Davis
Uncle Wesley

Edwin Jhamal Davis, Portland Opera Resident Artist and bass, made his professional debut with Mississippi Opera Company in the role of Simone in Puccini’s Gianni Schicchi. Additional recent credits include performances with Pompano Beach Orchestra, Bronx Concert Singers, and Boston Paramount Theater. A native of Utica, Mississippi, Davis is an alumnus of Jackson State University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree and he holds a master’s degree from the Manhattan School of Music.

David Morgans Sanchez
Uncle Mack

David Morgans Sanchez, Portland Opera Resident Artist and tenor, made his Metropolitan Opera debut in their 2019/20 season production of Porgy and Bess. In recent seasons, he has also performed with New York City Opera, City Lyric Opera, Sarasota Opera, Music Theatre Heritage, Des Moines Metro Opera, and Inside Broadway. A native of Kansas City, Sanchez holds a Bachelor of Science in Music from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri and a Master of Music from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance.
The ensemble:

JOURNEYS TO JUSTICE

Meet members of the Portland Opera Chorus and Orchestra by visiting: portlandopera.org/about/people

Meet the full creative team by visiting: portlandopera.org

Dylan Rieck
Principal Cello

Louis DeMartino
Principal Clarinet

Eva Wolff
Soprano

Kari Burgess
Soprano

AnDee Compton
Mezzo-soprano

Anna Jablonski
Mezzo-soprano

Joseph Michael Muir
Tenor

Bryan Ross
Tenor

Erik Hundtoft
Bass-baritone

Gregory Brumfield
Bass-baritone

Nicholas Fox
Collaborative Pianist

Tyler Buswell
Set Designer

Dominique Fawn Hill
Costume Designer

Jennifer Lin
Lighting Designer

Brian Mohr
Sound Designer

Sequoia
Accompanist
The composers & librettists:
JOURNEYS TO JUSTICE

Click through to read bios, explore websites, and celebrate the composers and librettists.

From top left: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Marcus Amaker, Damien Geter, Carlos Simon.

From bottom left: Shawn Okpebholo, Jasmine Barnes, Stephen Flaberty & Lynn Ahrens, Sandra Seaton, and Dr. Adolphus Hailstork.

Not pictured: Terrence McNally and Dudley Randall.
Music credits

JOURNEYS TO JUSTICE

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“Ballad of Birmingham” text by Dudley Randall
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“Your Daddy’s Son” from Ragtime
Music by Stephen Charles Flaherty, Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens
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The Talk
Instructions for Black Children When They Interact with the Police
Words and Music by Damien Geter
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Night Trip
A chamber opera in one act
Commissioned by the Washington National Opera
Music by Carlos Simon, Libretto by Sandra Seaton
By arrangement with CSJr., publisher
Sole Agent: Bill Holab Music

Songs of Love and Justice
Music by Dr. Adolphus Hailstork
Text by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Stock media provided by retrofootage / Pond5

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Piano provided by Portland Piano Company.
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Portland Opera is grateful for the support and cooperation of the American Guild of Musical Artists, the American Federation of Musicians, Local 99, IATSE Local 28, and our medical advisors for making this project possible.

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MISSION

We gather and inspire audiences, artists, and collaborators to share opera experiences that enliven and connect us all, enhancing the cultural landscape of the beautiful Pacific Northwest.

VALUES

We realize our mission and vision with a constellation of values that guide our work:

THE ART OF OPERA

We are unapologetically passionate about the live art of opera, and are energized by its roots as the people’s art form. We believe in its future. We continue the timeless tradition of storytelling, we celebrate the universal language of music, and we honor the brilliance of the human voice.

ENSEMBLE & CULTURAL EQUITY

Our work relies on being an ensemble, and our ensemble only thrives with diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect. We commit to actively confronting and dismantling white supremacy, patriarchy, and exclusion in our company, field, and community. We commit to being inclusive and strive every day to be an anti-racist organization.

OUR SHARED HUMANITY

We sing stories about experiences, emotions, and moments that matter in life. In this practice we, together with audiences, aim to reveal and gain insight into the human condition—as a reflection of ourselves, and ourselves in relation to each other.

FISCAL STRENGTH & STEWARDSHIP

We are committed to the fiscal health of our organization, and its bright future. We are dedicated financial stewards of the community and the philanthropic funding that makes our work possible.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

We generate positive impacts for our community, fostering and co-authoring collaborations and programs to achieve meaningful engagement. We contribute to the civic and cultural life of our region, and amplify the contributions and insights of our peers, colleagues, and partners.

IMAGINATION & THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

We accomplish our work with an enthusiasm to be creative, to innovate and transform, to adapt and collaborate. We hold ourselves and each other accountable to achieve sustainability, increase accessibility, and make space for curiosity in attaining our strategic goals.

About

PORTLAND OPERA

VISION

We celebrate the power of performance, storytelling, and song as an inclusive artistic leader.