

PLAYBILL®

The Kennedy Center



DECEMBER 2015

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN, *Chairman*

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TERRACE THEATER

Wednesday Evening, December 2, 2015, at 7:00 and 9:00

WASHINGTON
NATIONAL OPERA

presents

American Opera Initiative

Three 20-Minute Operas

Twenty Minutes or Less by Sarah Hutchings and Mark Sonnenblick
Alexandra by David Clay Mettens and Joshua McGuire
Service Provider by Christopher Weiss and John de los Santos

World premieres

Performed in English

The performance is approximately one hour and 15 minutes,
followed by a Q&A session with the artists

Major support for WNO is provided by Jacqueline Badger Mars.

David and Alice Rubenstein are the Presenting Underwriters of WNO.

WNO acknowledges the longstanding generosity of Life Chairman Mrs. Eugene B. Casey.

General Dynamics is the Presenting Sponsor of WNO's 2015–2016 Season.

WNO's season is presented with the support of Daniel and Gayle D'Aniello.

The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program is made possible through
the generous support of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation,
with additional funding provided by Judy and Billy Cox.

www.kennedy-center.org/wno

Patrons are requested to turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during performances.
The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in this auditorium.

A Letter from Michael Heaston

It is hard to believe that this is already the fourth cycle of WNO's American Opera Initiative (AOI), a commissioning program that has quickly established itself as a leader in our industry. We are thrilled that, due to incredible demand, we have added a second performance of this evening's 20-minute operas. The opportunity to experience the world premieres of American chamber operas by our budding, vibrant composer/librettist teams has firmly taken hold here in Washington and we are glad that you can join us this evening.

It has been a gift for our three teams to develop these pieces under the watchful eyes (and ears!) of our incredible mentors: Ricky Ian Gordon, Mark Campbell, and John DeMain. This, combined with the opportunity to write for the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists and members of the Washington National Opera Orchestra, makes an AOI commission a truly unique opportunity in the development of each composer and librettist lucky enough to secure one.

I invite you all to join us in January for the world premiere of *Better Gods*, our 1-hour opera by composer Luna Pearl Woolf and Caitlin Vincent, a librettist who first joined us for a 20-minute opera in 2013. This powerful drama depicts the final days of the rule of Queen Lili'uokalani, the last monarch of Hawaii, and continues the tradition of AOI commissions telling thought-provoking, important American stories. In the midst of winter, please allow us to bring the tropics to you directly!

There is no recipe, rule book, or instruction manual for writing great opera. What exists are traditions, techniques, attention to dramatic pacing, and the willingness to let music speak when words no longer can. This is only learned by doing, and doing is achieved through opportunity. And that is what AOI truly is—a great *opportunity* for the next generation of music dramatists to explore their craft and leave us, the audience, all the richer.

Thank you for joining us tonight as we witness another memorable evening of new opera from our three teams.

Warmly,

Michael Heaston
Advisor to the Artistic Director
Director, Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program and the American Opera Initiative

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American Opera Initiative

Three 20-Minute Operas

December 2, 2015

Twenty Minutes or Less

Music by Sarah Hutchings
Libretto by Mark Sonnenblick

Osha	Daryl Freedman *‡
Damian	Timothy J. Bruno ‡
Candice	Raquel González ‡
Pizza Queens	Mandy Brown *
	Rexford Tester ‡

Alexandra

Music by David Clay Mettens
Libretto by Joshua McGuire

Alexandra	Leah Hawkins ‡
Alex	Michael Brandenburg ‡
Ray	Wei Wu ‡

Service Provider

Music by Christopher Weiss
Libretto by John de los Santos

Autumn	Daryl Freedman *‡
Beau	Hunter Enoch ‡
Charlene	Mandy Brown *
Dallas	Rexford Tester ‡

Washington National Opera Orchestra

Conductor and Mentor	John DeMain
Mentor to the Composers	Ricky Ian Gordon *
Mentor to the Librettists	Mark Campbell
Director	Andrea Dorf McGray ‡
Costume Designer	Timm Burrow
Lighting Designer	A.J. Guban
Cover Conductor	Ken Weiss
Musical Preparation	Joel Ayau ‡
	Michael Sherman *‡
Stage Manager	Sean Corcoran

* Washington National Opera Debut

‡ Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

‡ Current member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

Synopses

Twenty Minutes or Less

Music by Sarah Hutchings

Libretto by Mark Sonnenblick

Osha's first night working at Pizza Queen coincides with its most important delivery of the year. Will her co-workers like and respect her? Will she get the pizza to the customer in time? Will the thin veneer of human civilization prove strong enough to keep the empty chaos of the universe at bay? The clock is ticking...

Alexandra

Music by David Clay Mettens

Libretto by Joshua McGuire

As a young widow tries to return a library book stolen by her deceased husband, she realizes it is the first link in a chain of secret messages from another time. With the library closing around her, she is forced to choose between her own complex history with the book and an uncertain future.

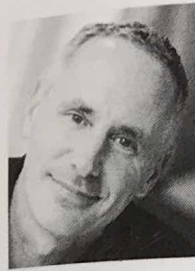
Service Provider

Music by Christopher Weiss

Libretto by John de los Santos

Service Provider is a comic opera detailing the erosion of modern romance by our obsession with mobile technology. When a loving young couple goes out for their anniversary dinner at an elegant restaurant, the evening descends into farcical disaster as the constant threat of cell phone use eventually unmask the fractured reality of their marriage.

Meet the Artists



Mark Campbell is one of the most in-demand librettists working in opera today, profiled in Opera News as one of 25 people “poised...to become major forces in opera in the coming decade.” He has written 15 librettos, but his most known work is the libretto for the opera *Silent Night*, which garnered the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music for composer Kevin Puts. Since its premiere at Minnesota Opera, the opera has been broadcast on PBS’s *Great Performances* and received productions at Opera Philadelphia, Fort Worth Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Calgary Opera, and the Wexford Festival in Ireland. Productions are also scheduled for Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Opéra de Montréal. Other successful operas include *Later the Same Evening*, *Volpone*, *As One*, *Bastianello/Lucrezia*, *A Letter to East 11th Street*, *The Inspector*, and *Rappahannock County*. He has collaborated with many notable contemporary composers, including Mark Adamo, Mason Bates, William Bolcom, Conrad Cummings, Ricky Ian Gordon, Jake Heggie, Martin Hennessy, Laura Kaminsky, Paul Moravec, John Musto, Paola Prestini, Kevin Puts, Richard Peaslee, and Michael Torke. He has received many other prestigious prizes for his work, including a Grammy nomination for Best Classical Recording, the first Kleban Prize, two Richard Rodgers Awards, three Drama Desk nominations, a Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation Award, a New York Foundation for the Arts Playwriting Fellowship, and the Domenic J. Pellicciotti Opera Composition Prize. As a lyricist, he penned all of the lyrics for *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, a theatrical song cycle with music by 18 composers including Jake Heggie and Duncan Sheik. Other musicals for which he has written lyrics include *And the Curtain Rises*, *The Audience*, *Chang & Eng*, and *Splendor*. Recordings of his works include the Grammy-nominated *Volpone* (Wolf Trap Recordings), *Later the Same Evening* (Albany Records), *Bastianello/Lucrezia* (Bridge Classical), and *Songs from*

an Unmade Bed (Sh-k-Boom Records). *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, *Approaching Ali*, *As One*, and *Silent Night* are also published by Bill Holab Music. He has also become an advocate for contemporary American opera and has mentored future generations of opera writers through such organizations as American Opera Projects, WNO’s American Opera Initiative, the Virginia Arts Festival/John Duffy Composers Institute, American Lyric Theatre, and Opera Philadelphia’s Composer-in-Residence Program. Recent and upcoming operas include *The Manchurian Candidate* (2015, Minnesota Opera, Kevin Puts), *The Whole Truth* (2015, UrbanArias, Robert Paterson), *Memory Boy* (2015, Minnesota Opera, Reinaldo Noya), *Burke + Hare* (2016, Music-Theatre Group, Julian Grant), *The Shining* (2016, Minnesota Opera, Paul Moravec), *Elizabeth Cree* (2017, Opera Philadelphia, Kevin Puts), *Dinner at Eight* (2017, Minnesota Opera, William Bolcom), and *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (2017, Santa Fe Opera, Mason Bates).

Composers and Librettists



The operatic and orchestral works of **Sarah Hutchings** (Composer, *Twenty Minutes or Less*) have been performed and commissioned by vocalists of the Metropolitan Opera, and orchestras such as the Stuttgart Philharmonic, the Florida Chamber Ensemble, and the Manchester Symphony. In 2015 another opera with librettist Mark Sonnenblick, *Rodman in North Korea*, received its workshop premiere with orchestra. She also continues work on her third full-length opera, *The Broken Land*, with librettist Melinda McLain. She has previously apprenticed to composer Ricky Ian Gordon, working on his new opera *Morning Star* in collaboration with Cincinnati Opera, and composer Carlisle Floyd during his residency at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She was also a Composer Fellow in 2013, working under

Meet the Artists

composers Michael Ching, Charles Wourinen, and Libby Larsen during her residency at the John Duffy Composers Institute. She has also appeared as an assistant director for a production of *An American Tragedy* at The Glimmerglass Festival in 2014, working with composer Tobias Picker and stage director Peter Kazaras. Previous stage direction credits include two seasons at Cincinnati Chamber Opera, directing productions of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* and Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*, and with Houghton Lyric Theater, directing productions of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* and Schwartz's *Children of Eden*. She holds a doctor of musical arts degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and a master of music degree in composition and theory from Florida State University. www.sd Hutchings.com.



Mark Sonnenblick (Librettist, *Twenty Minutes or Less*) writes lyrics, music, and theater. He is a current Dramatists Guild fellow and has developed work with the Duffy Institute at the Virginia Arts Festival,

the Johnny Mercer Songwriters Project, and Prospect's Music Theatre Lab. *Horizons*, for which he wrote book and lyrics, was workshopped at the Yale Institute for Music Theatre in the summer of 2015. Other credits include *Independents* (Soho Playhouse, FringeNYC 2012), *Wheel of Misfortune* (Denver Center for the Performing Arts), *Stompcat in Lawndale* (Ars Nova's Ant Fest), *Rodman in North Korea* (Houghton Lyric Theater), *The Dinosaur Hunters* (touring children's musical), and *Bunkerville*, which was the first student-written musical to be performed by Yale Drama in more than 30 years. He was a finalist for the 2015 Kleban Prize and the 2014 Jonathan Larson Grant, and he has received a Manhattan Association of Cabaret award nomination (with composer Ben Wexler) for Best Song. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from Yale College.



David Clay Mettens (Composer, *Alexandra*) is a composer of acoustic and electro-acoustic concert music. He has been commissioned and performed by ensembles across the United States and as part

of the Ritsos Project in Samos, Greece. His orchestra piece "*Sleeping I am carried...*" was selected for the 24th Annual Underwood New Music Readings with the American Composers Orchestra. Recently, his works have been performed at the North American Saxophone Alliance Region 2 Conference, by OSSIA on the Cornell Contemporary Chamber Players series, and at the Café MoMus new music series at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music. His compositions for large ensemble have been performed or read by the Eastman School Symphony Orchestra and Wind Orchestra, the Elon University Wind Ensemble, and the University of South Carolina Symphonic Winds. He completed degrees at the Eastman School of Music (MA, 2015) and University of South Carolina (BM, 2013), and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Chicago. www.mettensmusic.com



Joshua McGuire (Librettist, *Alexandra*) is the author of two full-length opera librettos, *The Secret of Luca* (based on the novel by Ignazio Silone) and *Roscoe* (based on the novel by Pulitzer

Prize-winner William Kennedy), with music by Evan Mack, as well as *#isoperadead*, the first-ever opera for Twitter. He is also the author of *The Secret of Music: a look at the listening life*, a book of essays on music and mindfulness. In 2014 he was awarded a residency at Yaddo. As a concert guitarist, he has presented recitals in the United States and internationally, specializing in new works for the instrument. He currently serves as senior lecturer in musicianship at the Blair School of