



**MONTCLAIR**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

Wiley Hausam, Director

Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts

**PEAK Performances** presents



An Opera In-Concert

# ***Blind Injustice***

Fri., February 16, 2024, 7:30pm | Sun., February 18, 2024, 3:00pm

**Alexander Kasser Theater**

Music by **Scott Davenport Richards**

Libretto by **David Cote**

Stage Direction and Dramaturgy by **Robin Guarino**

Based on casework by the **Ohio Innocence Project**

And the book *Blind Injustice* by **Mark Godsey**

Musical Director and Conductor **Ted Sperling**

Produced by **PEAK Performances**

*Blind Injustice* was commissioned and premiered  
by Cincinnati Opera in 2019.

Immediately following the performance, there will be a public  
conversation with two exonerees portrayed in the piece.



**SCAN ME**

We have collected resources to  
provide some basic information about  
the individuals portrayed in  
*Blind Injustice*, the dimensions of this  
problem, and its causes. And how you  
can take action to lessen  
unjust incarceration.

## Creative Team

Scenic Concept Consultant **Andromache Chalfant**

Lighting Design **Jason Flamos**

Sound Design **Dave Meschter**

Costume Design **Kaye Voyce**

Stage Manager **Bethany Windham**

Production Manager **Hillery Makatura**

## Cast (in order of appearance)

Prosecutor **Joseph Lattanzi**, *baritone*

Defense Attorney **Samuel Levine**, *tenor*

Alesha, a law student **Victoria Okafor**, *soprano*

Nancy Smith **Reilly Nelson**, *soprano*

Laurese Glover **Orson Van Gay II**, *tenor*

Derrick Wheatt **Phillip Bullock**, *baritone*

Eugene Johnson **Miles Wilson-Toliver**, *baritone*

Clarence Elkins **Logan Wagner**, *tenor*

Rickey Jackson **Eric Shane Heatley**, *baritone*

Derrick's Mother/Ensemble **Adrienne Danrich**, *soprano*

Earl Mann/Ensemble **Marc Kudisch**, *baritone*

Earl Mann's Cellmate/Edward Vernon/Ensemble **Kyle Oliver**, *baritone*

This performance is made possible in part by the generous support of

**Roger and Emily Hill Charitable Fund, Richard and Edward Rosenthal Brothers,**

**The Alexander Kasser Theater Endowed Fund, The New Jersey State Council on the Arts**

## Ensemble

**Joe Becherer<sup>=</sup>, Joshua Cellar<sup>+</sup>, Jack Cotterell, Camryn Dewar<sup>+</sup>, Mark Donato, Princess Gant<sup>+</sup>, Mia Grizzuti<sup>+</sup>, Mitchell Hernandez<sup>+</sup>, Elizabeth Johnson<sup>+</sup>, Charlie Kollar<sup>+</sup>, Claire Kwiat<sup>+</sup>, Kaitlyn LeBaron<sup>=</sup>, Megan Lione<sup>=</sup>, Ron Meyers<sup>=</sup>, Donny Nikola<sup>+</sup>, Vivianne Potter<sup>=</sup>, Jim Roumeles<sup>=</sup>, John Sabatos<sup>=</sup>, Eric Sebek<sup>+</sup>, Bella Squatrito<sup>+</sup>, Chloe Stavis<sup>+</sup>, Mark Sullivan<sup>=</sup>, John Van Antwerp<sup>=</sup>, David Waggett<sup>=</sup>, Lauren Taylor<sup>+</sup>, Deanna Thomas<sup>+</sup>, Amanda Yachechak**

= Members of MasterVoices

+ Montclair State University Students

## Blind Injustice Orchestra

**Richard Rood, Meghan Williams,**

**Dilyana Tsenov**, *violins*

**Wayne Smith**, *cello*

**Bill Moring<sup>^</sup>**, *bass*

**Janet Arms<sup>^</sup>**, *flute and piccolo*

**Benjamin Baron<sup>^</sup>**, *bass clarinet*

**Wayne J. du Maine**, *trumpet*

**Julie Dombroski-Jones**, *tenor and bass trombones*

**Ryan McCausland**, *drums*

**Evan Silberstein**, *percussion*

**Paul Staroba**, *piano*

<sup>^</sup> Montclair State University Faculty

## Staff for Blind Injustice

Associate Conductor **David Fraley**

Vocal Contractor **Nancy Wertsch**

MasterVoices Chorus Contractor **Julie Morgan**

Orchestra Contractor **Benjamin Baron**

Score Preparation **Tyler Ruben**

Rehearsal Pianists **Greg Paladino, Paul Staroba**

Supertitles Operator **Abby Brodnick**

**Running time: 1 hour, 30 minutes, no intermission.**

# Program Notes

Mark Godsey and the six exonerees were central to our creative process. After Cincinnati Opera partnered with Young Professionals Choral Collective to create an opera based on Mark's book and actual cases taken up by the Ohio Innocence Project, we dove into research. Interviews with Mark, Rickey, Nancy, Clarence, Laurese, Derrick, and Eugene formed the foundation of the libretto. As Scott began to compose each scene, we consulted them on accuracy and tone. They attended workshops, befriended the performers, inspired new scenes, and—most important of all—gave us their blessing.

*Blind Injustice* is an opera about stories a society tells itself to justify routine dehumanization of its most vulnerable citizens. Our criminal justice system is built on simplistic narratives of good guys catching bad guys, the infallibility of forensic science, the presumed guilt of those accused, and the finality of justice.

We start and end the piece with an impossible question: What makes a person? After meeting people who survived unimaginable mental strain yet today lead happy lives, as well as learning about deep-rooted flaws in the legal system, we found comfort in the notion that human strength can survive human cruelty. As Mark's book explains with harrowing precision, self-deception and bias underlie these gross miscarriages of justice. Meeting the exonerees, Mark, and everyone involved with the OIP Rosenthal Institute for Justice opened our eyes. We hope the work helps you see better, too.

We are deeply grateful to Wiley Hausam and everyone at PEAK Performances for believing in our project. This production would not be possible without the generous continued support of Richard and Edward Rosenthal Brothers and the Roger and Emily Hill Charitable Trust.

—Scott Davenport Richards, David Cote, & Robin Guarino

## About the Artists

### Creative Team

**Scott Davenport Richards** (Composer) is an award-winning composer/librettist whose creative works have resided at various addresses around the intersection of jazz, opera, and musical theater. His most recent opera, *Blind Injustice* (with librettist David Cote), premiered with direction by Robin Guarino at Cincinnati Opera in 2019 to a sold-out run and national critical acclaim. The live CD/Album was cited by *Opera News* as one of the 5 Best New Opera Recordings of 2022.

He has recently completed commissions for the Public Theater: *The Rumble of Myth* (with Marcus Gardley), and the Tony-winning Signature Theatre (VA): *The Break* (with Michele Lowe). The New York City Opera has performed two Richards works as a part of its Vox Festival of new opera: *A Star Across the Ocean—Paris 1965* featuring Tony award-winner Chuck Cooper, and *Charlie Crosses the Nation*, An Opera in Jazz Idiom. He was commissioned by Paulette Haupt, artistic director of the O'Neill Theater Center's National Musical Theater Conference, to compose *A Thousand Words Come to Mind* (with Michele Lowe) for the inaugural set of her *Inner Voices* one-person musical monologue series. Other musical theater works include music for *Coyote Goes Salmon Fishing* (written with Deborah Brevoort, directed by Molly Smith at Perseverance Theatre/produced by Stuart Ostrow in Houston), and the original score for *A Christmas Story The Musical* at Kansas City Rep.

His play-scores have been heard at resident theaters around the country including the Yale Rep, Alliance, Center Stage, Madison Rep, Powerhouse, and New Federal.

Works for children include a number of commissions from TheaterWorks USA: *Corduroy* (music, lyrics, orchestration), *Sundiata! The Lion King of Mali* (music, lyrics, orchestration), *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (orchestrations), and *Junie B. Jones* (orchestrations).

As an actor, Richards originated the role of Sylvester (the stuttering nephew who almost ruins the recording session) in the historic original Broadway production of August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and assisted his father, director Lloyd Richards, in the origination and Broadway premieres of three other Wilson works.

A recipient of the Jonathan Larson, Frederick Loewe, Shen Family Foundation, Meet the Composer, and the NJ State Council on the Arts Composition awards, he taught on the faculty of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Musical Theater Writing Program from 1997 to 2009 and currently holds a position as professor of Composition/Musical Theatre at Montclair State University's Cali School of Music, where he has taught since 2005. He holds an MFA from New York University Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Musical Theater Writing Program and a BA from Yale University.

**David Cote** (Librettist) is a playwright, opera librettist, and arts journalist based in New York City. This season includes *Lucidity* with composer Laura Kaminsky, co-commissioned by On Site Opera and Seattle Opera. Previous operas include *Blind Injustice* (Cincinnati Opera); *Three Way* (Nashville Opera and BAM); *The Scarlet Ibis* (Prototype Festival); and *600 Square Feet* (Cleveland Opera Theater). Cote's plays include *The Mûch*, *Saint Joe*, and *Otherland* (O'Neill National Playwrights Conference finalist). He wrote the text for Nkeiru Okoye's Black Lives Matter monodrama for baritone and orchestra, *Invitation to a Die-In*. His *Cocoa Cantata* is a modern-day sequel to Bach's *Coffee Cantata*, composed by Robert Paterson. Recordings include *Blind Injustice* (NAXOS), *Three Way* (American Modern Recordings), and *In Real Life* (AMR). Cote's TV and theater coverage appears in *The A.V. Club*, *Observer*, *4 Columns*, and *American Theatre*. He was the longest-serving theater editor and chief drama critic of *Time Out New York*. Cote is the author of popular companion books about the Broadway hits *Moulin Rouge! The Musical*, *Spring Awakening*, *Jersey Boys*, and *Wicked*. His writing has also appeared in *Opera News*, the *Village Voice*, the *Guardian*, and the *New York Times*. Cote is currently working on a grand opera about the artistry and activism of Paul Robeson with Scott Davenport Richards and Robin Guarino, and a monodrama with Stefan Weisman for mezzo-soprano Hai-Ting Chinn about climate change and Greenland's ice sheet.

**Robin Guarino** (Stage Director/Dramaturg) has directed opera, musical theater, film, and over 60 new productions, including over seven world premieres. A frequent collaborator at Lincoln Center, she has directed HD productions at the Metropolitan Opera of *Così fan tutte* and *Der Rosenkavalier*, and fully staged operas at Avery Fisher Hall and Alice Tully Hall. Guarino has directed celebrated productions at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Next Wave Festival, San Francisco Opera (HD of *Le nozze di Figaro*), Seattle Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Virginia Opera, Gotham Chamber Opera, Skylight Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Bard Festival, and Eos Orchestra as well as Juilliard Opera Theatre, Yale Institute for Music Theatre, Jacobs School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and such distinguished young artist training programs such as the San Francisco Merola and Adler Programs, among others. Her film *Crossing the Atlantik* was featured on *Independent Focus*, PBS. She recently directed critically acclaimed new productions of *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and *Madame Butterfly* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis; a double bill, *War Stories*, for the Philadelphia Opera Festival; *The Rake's Progress* for the San Francisco Opera Merola Program; *AS ONE* for Cincinnati Opera; and the world premiere of *Blind Injustice*, a project inspired by the Ohio Innocence Project, for Cincinnati Opera. She held the J. Ralph Corbett Distinguished Chair of Opera at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music from 2008 to 2020 and before that was the dramatic co-advisor of the Juilliard Opera Theater from 2004 to 2008. Guarino has a strong commitment to developing new works and supporting the work of living composers and librettists and continues that passion as artistic director of Opera Fusion: New Works, a collaboration with Cincinnati Opera, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, that has developed the following new operas and world premieres for major companies across the United States: *Intimate Apparel*, *The Hours*, *Eurydice*, *Hadrian*, *DOUBT*, *Champion*, *Robeson Opera*, and *Lincoln on the Bardo*. Guarino is a judge for the Metropolitan Opera National Council and the Lotte Lenya Competition.



**The Ohio Innocence Project** (OIP) is a law clinic at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. Fueled by the idealism and energy of law students, OIP investigates the cases of Ohio's incarcerated who claim they are innocent and were wrongfully convicted. The OIP is one of the most active and successful innocence projects in the country and to date has secured the freedom of 42 innocent Ohioans who together served more than 900 years in prison for crimes they didn't commit. For a deep-dive on the subject of wrongful conviction and the Ohio Innocence Project, please visit our Exploration Page ([peakperfs.org/blind-injustice/](http://peakperfs.org/blind-injustice/)).

**Mark Godsey** (Author, *Blind Injustice*) is the Carmichael Professor of Law and director of the Ohio Innocence Project at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. A former federal prosecutor in Manhattan, Godsey co-founded and now directs one of the most successful innocence projects in the country, which to date has secured the freedom of 42 wrongfully convicted Ohioans.

**Ted Sperling** (Musical Director and Conductor) is a multifaceted artist, director, music director, conductor, orchestrator, singer, pianist, violinist, and violist. He is the artistic director of MasterVoices and music director of the recent Broadway productions of *My Fair Lady*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *The King and I*. He has directed the premiere productions of *The Other Josh Cohen*, *Red Eye of Love*, *Striking 12*, and *See What I Wanna See*, all Off-Broadway.

A Tony Award-winner for his orchestrations of *The Light in the Piazza*, Sperling is known for his work across many genres, including opera, oratorio, musical theater, symphony, and pops. His video interpretation of Adam Guettel's *Myths and Hymns* can be viewed on the PBS channel AllArts, where you can also view his concert of Carole King songs. He earned rapturous reviews for his production of Stephen Sondheim's *The Frogs* at Lincoln Center, *Lady in the Dark* with MasterVoices at NY City Center, as well as for recent performances of *Let 'Em Eat Cake* and *Anyone Can Whistle* at Carnegie Hall. Sperling appeared as Steve Allen in the final episode of Season Two of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* and as bandleader Wallace Hartley in the original Broadway musical *Titanic*.

Artists Sperling has directed and conducted include Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell, Isabel Leonard, Stephanie Blythe, Nathan Gunn, Rufus Wainwright, Glenn Close, Eric Idle, Kevin Kline, Martin Short, Deborah Voigt, Kelli O'Hara, Victoria Clark, Audra McDonald, Idina Menzel, Michael Bublé, Randy Newman, Bryn Terfel, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Anne Hathaway, Matthew Broderick, Sarah Jessica Parker, Jeremy Jordan, Santino Fontana, Dove Cameron, Jennifer Holliday, Cheyenne Jackson, Nathan Lane, Kristin Chenoweth, Vanessa Williams, Sutton Foster, Harvey Fierstein, Zachary Quinto, Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Jane Lynch, Patrick Wilson, Donna Murphy, Mandy Patinkin, Patti LuPone, Chita Rivera, and Liza Minelli. Maestro Sperling was the principal conductor of the Westchester Philharmonic for six seasons. Recent conducting appearances include performances with the Chicago Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and San Diego Symphony. His program *The Traiblazing Music of Joni Mitchell, Carole King and Carly Simon* has generated enthusiastic responses from critics and audiences alike.

**Jason Flamos** (Lighting Design) is a New Jersey-based lighting designer. Select credits include Cape Fear Regional Theatre (*Clue, Matilda*), Mile Square Theatre (*Betrayal, I and You, The 39 Steps, It's a Wonderful Life, Pipeline*), Shakespeare Theatre of NJ (*William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play Abridged, Snug, The Comedy of Errors*), Thingamajig Theatre Company (*Cabaret, The Little Mermaid, The Pillowman, A Few Good Men*), American Theater Group (*Small Town Story*), 10 Hairy Legs dance company (*Heist, 172, Brian, Quadrivium, Cruise Control*), American Repertory Ballet (*The Time That Runs Away, If, Intrare Forma, Saudade, World Interrupted, Strange Sentience, Circadia, Moving to Bach, Hindsight, Kaleidoscope Mind, Delibes Duet*). Associate design for Paper Mill Playhouse includes *Murder on the Orient Express, The Sound of Music, On Your Feet, Sister Act, The Producers*, and *Cinderella*. He worked as National Tour associate lighting designer for Big League Productions (*A Chorus Line, Legally Blonde, The Cher Show, Little Women*). [www.JasonFlamos.com](http://www.JasonFlamos.com)

**David Meschter** (Sound Design) is a sound designer and electronic musician who has been active in the performing arts for over 40 years. He studied Audio Technology at American University in Washington, DC, and established Applied Audio Technologies in the early 1980s. He has collaborated with some of the most renowned artists and institutions in music, dance, theater, and opera. He was the sound designer for John Cage and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, where he also performed as an electronic musician from 1981 to 1988. He was the sound designer and engineer for Meredith Monk and Vocal Ensemble from 1989 to 2013, and the sound designer and audio supervisor for Lincoln Center Festivals from 1996 to 2018. He has also worked with Philip Glass, LaMonte Young, the Kronos Quartet, Laurie Anderson, Ping Chong, the Ridge Theater, Yasunao Tone, Houston Grand Opera, Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York City Opera, Gotham Chamber Opera, the Public Theater, and many more. His sound design for *Medea* on Broadway, directed by Deborah Warner, earned him a Drama Desk Award nomination for Best Sound Design of the 2002–03 season along with Mel Mercier for Best Soundscape. He has also continued to participate in the Tibet House Benefit at Carnegie Hall since 1998 as the sound designer and supervisor. Meschter is also the founder of PsiPhiTrophic MediaLabs, a company developing psychotropic media using binaural audio and visual technologies—exploring the effects of sound and light on human perception, consciousness, and relaxation.

**Kaye Voyce** (Costume Design) is a New York City–based designer for theater, opera, dance, and film. Opera work includes the world premieres of Missy Mazzoli’s *The Listeners* (Den Norske Opera), Dylan Mattingly’s *Stranger Love*, Philip Glass’s chamber opera *Mud/Drowning*, and Ricky Ian Gordon’s *Ellen West* (Saratoga Opera and Prototype Festival [OTSL]). Other recent opera includes *Susannah* (OTSL), *Bluebeard’s Castle* (Des Moines Metro Opera), *The Merry Widow* (Wuppertal Oper), *La fanciulla del West* (National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing), *Il Turco in Italia* (Festival d’Aix en Provence, Opera Dijon, Teatro Regio Torino, Theatr Wielki), and *Le roi Arthus* and *The Wreckers* (Bard Summerscape). In theater, she has designed on Broadway (most recently *Sea Wall/A Life* and *True West*) and Off-Broadway (recently on the play *Jonah* [Roundabout] and Sarah Silverman’s musical *The Bedwetter*). Upcoming: *Uncle Vanya* (Lincoln Center Theater) and *Close-Up* (Festival d’Avignon).

**Bethany Windham** (Stage Manager) received her undergraduate degree from the UNC School of the Arts in 2020 for Scenic Technology. She later became a technical assistant at the Metropolitan Opera, where she made technical drawings for over 10 productions. She later pivoted into stage management through the Bank of America Fellowship at the Met and was ecstatic to begin this new journey. There she assisted in over eight productions, including one world premiere. Her most recent assistant stage management credits include *La traviata* and *Alcina* with Seattle Opera. She had the opportunity to ASM at Des Moines Metro Opera this past summer on *Carmen* and *The Love for Three Oranges*. Windham is passionate about diversity and accessibility in the arts and hopes to be an advocate and facilitator as the arts continue to evolve. Windham believes art should be challenging, uncomfortable, and nourishing and she is always on the lookout to participate in stories that do just that. She is currently a Kenan Fellow at the Kennedy Center and is thrilled to make her home base in DC.

**David Fraley** (Associate Conductor) is a pianist and music director in NYC/NJ. He works with universities, cabarets, readings, workshops, mainstage productions, basement hangouts, and living room impromptus. He specializes in Sondheim, auditions, teaching, and piano reduction. He hopes he can be your friend. Recently: Montclair State University: *Blind Injustice*, *Spring Awakening*. Forestburgh: *Spamalot*, *The Addams Family*. 54 Below: Actor Therapy Lippa/LaChiusa. davidfraley.com

## Cast

**Phillip K. Bullock** (Derrick Wheatt), praised by *Opera News* for his “appealingly suave baritone,” has been featured in operas, recitals, and concerts throughout the United States and Europe. Bullock’s recent engagements include his appearance as Zdzetrick in Damien Sneed’s reimagining of Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and the roles of Cato and Watchman in Gregory Spears and Tracy K. Smith’s new, critically acclaimed opera, *Castor and Patience*, voted the Best New Opera of 2022 by the *New York Times*. Additionally, he premiered Diane White-Clayton’s commissioned work *Many Mansions* with Boston Landmarks Orchestra, Dave

Brubeck's *Gates of Justice* with the Brubeck Trio and University of California Los Angeles orchestras, and he joined American Opera Projects for *Composers and the Voice: Six Scenes* as well as creating the role of the God of Love in Long Beach Opera's premiere *The Romance of the Rose*, written by Pulitzer nominee Kate Soper and directed by James Darrah.

Past season highlights include performances of Jake in *Porgy and Bess* at Semperoper Dresden, Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, and in the Royal Danish Opera production in Copenhagen. He appeared in performances of *Le nozze di Figaro* (Figaro and Antonio), *La fanciulla del West* (Jake Wallace), *Don Carlos* (Rodrigue), *Carmen* (Morales and Escamillo), *Romeo et Juliette* (Gregorio), *Falstaff* (Pistola), *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (Balthazar), *Little Women* (John Brooke), *Faust* (Valentin), *The Magic Flute* (Papageno), *L'elisir d'amore* (Belcore and Dulcamara), and *Tosca* (Angelotti).

**Adrienne Danrich** (Derrick's Mother/Ensemble) has had her voice described as "fresh liquid-silver" and "meltingly tender in its high, floating vulnerability" by *Opera News*. Danrich made her San Francisco Opera stage debut as Micaela in *Carmen*. She made her professional debut as Pamina in *Die Zaubeflöte* with Kentucky Opera. She made debuts with Sarasota Opera, Opera Pacific, and Dayton Opera as the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* and her Lyric Opera of San Antonio debut as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*. Danrich sang the role of Serena in *Porgy and Bess* with Dayton Opera and Sister Rose in *Dead Man Walking* with Fort Worth Opera. With Cincinnati Opera, she performed the High Priestess in *Aida* and Anna in *Nabucco*. Danrich also performed with Kenya Opera in various venues throughout Africa in Nairobi and Mombasa.

In 2006, Danrich received a commission from Cincinnati Opera to write and perform a one-woman show: *This Little Light of Mine: The Stories of Marian Anderson and Leontyne Price*. This production has since been presented over 50 times in various venues nationwide. PBS Milwaukee (MPTV) filmed and televised *This Little Light of Mine*, and Danrich won a Midwest Emmy® for Outstanding Achievement for On Camera Talent as a Performer and Narrator. Danrich is a native of St. Louis, MO, and is an alumna of Eastman School of Music and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

**Eric Shane Heatley** (Rickey Jackson) is a singer, educator, and administrator who is excited to return to the inspiring role of Rickey Jackson for a second time. With a passion for new opera, especially those highlighting underrepresented voices, Heatley has performed in numerous new opera workshops, most recently as Hollis in the *Two Corners* workshop by Cincinnati Opera's Opera Fusion New Works. Heatley has also appeared as Jake in *Porgy and Bess* with the Glimmerglass Festival and a touring production with the South Florida Symphony. After the world premiere performance of *Blind Injustice* in 2019, Heatley is looking forward to another opportunity to share this powerful and much needed opera with more audiences.

**Marc Kudisch** (Earl Mann/Ensemble) has been seen on and off Broadway and in modern opera, television, and film for the past 30 years, recently completing a costarring turn in *Girl from the North Country* at the Belasco Theatre, his 15th Broadway show. He has been nominated for the Tony Award three times, as Trevor Graydon in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, Baron Bomburst in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, and Franklin Hart in *9 to 5*, and is a Drama Desk Award winner for his work Off-Broadway in *The Wayside Motor Inn* at the Signature Theatre.

Opera credits include Carl Magnus in *A Little Night Music* for NYC Opera/LA Opera, the Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance* for NYC Opera, and the world premieres of Henry Kissinger in *A New Prince* for Dutch National Opera, Joshua Crouch in *Anatomy Theater* for Prototype Festival/LA Opera, the Older Man in *Trade* for Prototype Festival/LA Opera, and Morris in *Adoration* for Prototype Festival. Concert/orchestral credits include the Boston Pops, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Philharmonic, the Ravinia Festival, Utah Symphony, and the Jerusalem Symphony. TV/film credits include Dr. Gus on *Billions* (Showtime), Ty Rathbone on *The Tick* (Amazon), Billy Kastner on *Late Night* (Amazon), and Roger Wade on *Mindhunter* (Netflix).

**Joseph Lattanzi** (Prosecutor) commands attention for his “robust vocalism,” “unmistakable charisma,” and “undeniable star potential.” Lattanzi established himself as a major artist in the current landscape of opera with his portrayal of Hawkins Fuller in the world premiere of Gregory Spears’s *Fellow Travelers*. *The New York Times* said, “Joseph Lattanzi was splendid as Hawk, his buttery baritone luxuriant and robust.” Praise for his work encompasses nearly 10 years of raves from audiences in Cincinnati, New York City, Chicago, Phoenix, Tucson, and Des Moines and critics from the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Opera News*, and *Opera Now*. He can be heard on the original cast recording of *Fellow Travelers*. His recorded work also includes the world premiere recording of *Blind Injustice* in addition to songs and duets with some of the music world’s finest interpreters.

Recent engagements include Paul Jobs in *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* at San Francisco Opera and a role and house debut as Belcore in *L’elisir d’amore* at Minnesota Opera. Future engagements include the title role of *Don Giovanni* at Arizona Opera and a world premiere with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

**Samuel Levine** (Defense Attorney) was born in Boston and trained at the Juilliard School. The “wonderfully appealing,” “ardent tenor” (*New York Times*) regularly sings on many of the world’s finest stages, specializing in Wagnerian, Slavic, English, and contemporary repertoire. He has sung at the Hamburg Staatsoper, Oper Köln, Oper Frankfurt, Nationaltheater Mannheim, Staatstheater Wiesbaden, Irish National Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Boston Lyric Opera, and Houston Grand Opera as well as the Houston Symphony, Moscow Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonie, and Carnegie Hall.

Recent highlights include the world premiere of Salvatore Sciarrino’s *Venere e Adone* in Hamburg under Kent Nagano, the title role of Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius* at the Berlin Philharmonie, Skuratov/*From the House of the Dead* as well as Jimmy in the world premiere of *Oryx and Crake* in Wiesbaden, Edrisi/*Krol Roger* in Frankfurt under Sylvain Cambreling, Walther/*Tannhäuser* in Klagenfurt under Nicholas Carter, and Vogelgesang/*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in Frankfurt under Sebastian Weigle as well as in Mannheim under Alexander Soddy. He was a Young Artist at the Santa Fe Opera and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and a Fellow at the Tanglewood and Aspen Music Festivals. In the current season, he returns to Hamburg for more performances of *Venere e Adone*, joins Theater Bonn for *Flight* and *Moses und Aron*, and covers the Heldentenor role of *Der Fremde* for Netherlands Reisoper. He sang the role of the Defense at the world premiere of *Blind Injustice* for Cincinnati Opera in 2019.

**Reilly Nelson** (Nancy Smith), described by *Opera News* as “a revelation,” brings her “distinctly warm and burnished” sound to stages across North America and Europe. This past summer, Nelson returned to Barbara Hannigan’s Equilibrium Young Artists Programme at the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance. In the summer of 2022, she made her debut at the Glimmerglass Festival, portraying Gianna in the world premiere of *Tenor Overboard*, which garnered significant acclaim.

Nelson has showcased her talents with major symphony orchestras and opera companies in the USA, Canada, and abroad, including the Rochester Philharmonic, Reno Philharmonic, Phoenix Symphony, Cincinnati Opera, Tiroler Festspiele Erl, and the Glimmerglass Festival. Her artistic journey includes completion of Young Artist programs with Cincinnati Opera, Kentucky Opera, Tanglewood Music Center, and Glimmerglass.

As a new resident of Toronto, Nelson has been establishing her reputation as an accomplished recitalist, giving performances with the JoM Collective and the Kingston Road United Church concert series. Notably, Nelson secured the second place in the 2023 Toronto Mozart Vocal Competition and earned a coveted spot as one of the Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques for the 2023–24 season.

A specialist in the works of Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht, Nelson was a winner of the 2018 Lotte Lenya Competition and achieved district victory in the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions. She holds a bachelor of music from the Eastman School of Music and has furthered her education with master’s and doctoral degrees in Vocal Pedagogy from the University of Cincinnati. Currently, she is a student of Neil Semer.



**Victoria Okafor** (Alesha, a law student), a “silvery-voiced soprano...” (*Seen and Heard International*), is steadily making a name for herself in the world of musical theater and opera. She has sung with companies such as Washington National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Cincinnati Opera, Opera Birmingham, and Opera Columbus. Last season included performances of Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* with the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra, *Così fan tutte* in concert with Newport Classical, a workshop of *Robeson* with Cincinnati Opera, performances of Clorinda in *La Cenerentola* with Kentucky Opera, and Utah Festival Opera’s summer 2023 season of *Lohengrin*, Elton John’s *AIDA*, and *Oliver*. A recent highlight was placing second in the prestigious Lotte Lenya Competition. Okafor also returned to her alma mater, Shenandoah Conservatory, to perform *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the Shenandoah Symphony as well as William Grant Still’s *From the Hearts of Women*.

During the COVID pandemic, Okafor was a part of numerous projects, like Angela Brown’s *From a Sistah’s Point of View*, Mozart’s *Requiem* with the Kentucky Symphony, and *Cincinnati Opera at 100* with Cincinnati Opera. She also received an encouragement award in the Kentucky District for the Metropolitan National Council Competition.

Okafor made her début with Cincinnati Opera as Barbarina in *Le nozze di Figaro*, followed by the role of Alesha in the opera *Blind Injustice*, which she created during the opera’s original workshop. She has also originated the roles of Wilhelmina in Gregory Spears’s *Castor and Patience*, Nyomi in William Menefield’s *Fierce*, and Laura in Kevin Puts’s *The Hours*.

Okafor is a native of the DC/Maryland area and holds degrees from Shenandoah Conservatory and the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music with a BM in voice performance, an MM in voice performance, and an AD in opera performance.

**Kyle Oliver’s** (Earl Mann’s Cellmate/Edward Vernon/Ensemble) 2022 performances included Zurga in Bizet’s *The Pearl Fishers* with Sarasota Opera as well as a concert preview of American one-act operas with Little Opera Theatre of New York at NYC’s Merkin Hall. He sang Méphistophélès and Ramiro in *Faust et Hélène* and *L’heure espagnol* with New Camerata Opera, directed by John de los Santos, and made company and role debuts as Johannes Zegner in Missy Mazzoli’s *Proving Up* and Bob in *Highway 1 USA* by William Grant Still with the Opera Ithaca Festival. In 2023 Oliver joined Opera Theatre of St. Louis for their New Works Collective, debuted with White Snake Projects as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, and sang Baron Douphol at Tulsa Opera in *La traviata*. In previous seasons he appeared with Pittsburgh Opera, Caramoor Opera, Loft Opera, and Teatro Nuovo.

**Orson Van Gay II** (Laurese Glover) has captivated audiences in classical and contemporary opera and concert performances with his charisma and “fine heroic tenor” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*). Van Gay has garnered acclaim for roles in his home of Southern California and across the United States. His 2023–24 concert season includes solo appearances with the Muse/ique Symphony, Redlands Symphony Orchestra, and performances of Mozart’s *Requiem* with the Modesto Symphony. He also voices the role of Tamino in Pocket Opera’s animated/live-action film version of *A Pocket Magic Flute*, to be shown in schools and educational programs in conjunction with the San Francisco Opera Guild. In November of 2023, Van Gay self-released his first solo album, *Colors of a Lyric*, with pianist Lenny Hayes.

Van Gay’s recent operatic roles have included Danilo in *The Merry Widow*, for which he earned Pocket Opera’s inaugural Hurst Artist of the Year Award in 2022; Nemorino in *L’elisir d’amore* with the Phoenix International Festival of the Voice; Alfredo in *La traviata* with Piedmont Opera; the title role of *Candide* with Angels Vocal Art; Orlando in The Industry’s site-specific production of *Hopscotch*; and the Athlete in *I Can’t Breathe* and Rodolfo in *La bohème* with Pacific Opera Project. A frequent performer with Long Beach Opera, Van Gay has been seen as Vitaliano in Handel’s *Giustino*, Gérard in *Les enfants terribles*, and Raymond Santana in Anthony Davis’s Pulitzer Prize-winning opera, *The Central Park Five*, a role Van Gay premiered with the same company in 2019. Van Gay often performs with the Los Angeles Opera, most recently as the Messenger in *Il trovatore* and as Ramerrez in *The Prospector*. He debuted the role of Bernard Curson (aka “Cherubino”) in the world premiere of *Figaro 90210!*, and has sung in the company’s *Connects*, *City of Hope*, and *I AM LA* series.

**Logan Wagner** (Clarence Elkins), noted for his “expressive stage skills” and “powerfully transformative” voice, is a highly sought-after young artist. Wagner grew up in Villa Hills, KY. An advocate for contemporary opera, Wagner originated the role of Boy in a workshop of *Bulrushers* by Nathaniel Stookey at Cincinnati Opera. With Cincinnati Opera’s Opera Fusion: New Works, Wagner also originated the roles of Sergei Eisenstein and Carl Van Vechten in *Robeson/Moscow* by Scott Davenport Richards. Comfortable in both musical theater and opera, Wagner was seen as a principal artist at Utah Festival Opera, where he performed the roles of Monostatos in *The Magic Flute* and Padre in *Man of La Mancha* and covered Martin in *The Tender Land*. In 2023, Wagner joined Des Moines Metro Opera (DMMO) as an apprentice artist. While at DMMO he covered the role of Jumper in Zach Redler and Jerre Dye’s new American opera, *The Falling and the Rising*. Wagner made his Dayton Opera debut as Beadle Bamford in Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd*. He then sang the roles of Marcellus and the Second Gravedigger in Thomas’s *Hamlet* with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. This performance was conducted by Maestro Louis Langrée and was in collaboration with Opéra-Comique in Paris. In the summer of 2024, Wagner will join Wolf Trap Opera as a studio artist to sing the Brother in Weill’s *The Seven Deadly Sins* with the National Orchestra Institute. At the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM), Wagner has sung Orfeo in *L’Orfeo*, Don Basilio and Don Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro*, L’Aumonier in Poulenc’s haunting opera *Les dialogues des Carmélites*, and Timothy Laughlin in Gregory Spears’s contemporary masterpiece, *Fellow Travelers*.

Wagner began his operatic studies at CCM, graduating with his bachelor of music in 2020 and master of music in 2023. Wagner is currently based in Cincinnati, OH.

**Miles Wilson-Toliver** (Eugene Johnson) is a Grammy-considered singer and music director who excels at educating, connecting, and transforming individuals and communities through diverse musical genres and programs. Classically trained in opera with expertise in musical theater, jazz, rhythm and blues, gospel, and music of the African diaspora, he is committed to expanding opportunities to historically marginalized groups with a proven track record in advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) in the arts. He is adept at leading, instructing, and mentoring performers to optimize their musical and sound capabilities. A passionate choral director with over a decade of organizing and strengthening vocal and instrumental groups for traditional and contemporary church worship services, he also has extensive experience teaching in private, classroom and workshop settings. He is also proficient in the development and administration of performing arts programs, including curriculum, and concert design and implementation.

#### **Special Thanks to:**

**Jonathan Koppell**, President, Montclair State University

**Junius Gonzales**, Provost, Montclair State University

**Daniel Gurskis**, Dean, College of the Arts

**Anthony Mazzocchi**, Director, Cali School of Music

**Mark Hardy**, Faculty, School of Theatre and Dance

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**Stuart MacLelland**, Faculty, School of Communication and Media

**Patty Piroh**, Director of Production Services and Technology, Broadcast and Media Operations

**Douglas Chang**, Video Producer

**Ted Sperling**, MasterVoices

# It Takes a Village:

Every so often, PEAK Performances embarks on producing a very ambitious work. *Blind Injustice* is a perfect example. Operas have a reputation for scale, and for good reason. In this opera, there are 12 principal singers, 27 members of the vocal ensemble, and 12 musicians in the orchestra. And then there are the many members of the creative team, all the stage technicians, and the members of the administrative and operations staff of PEAK and the Kasser Theater. But more remarkable than the number of individuals is the diverse gathering of folks who are participating in the production! It includes independent professional artists from around the country; students, faculty, and staff from Montclair State University College of the Arts; and members of the New York City organization known as MasterVoices, now led by Ted Sperling, which for more than 75 years has been bringing together large numbers of artist professionals and passionate amateur choral singers to create high-quality, large-scale choral and lyric theater works-in-concert. I believe there are few collaborations more gratifying—and more healing—than bringing together folks from all walks of life to make art together and present it to their community.

We look forward to creating more work like this. In May, we will produce Larry Keigwin and Nicole Wolcott's *Stage Door*, a brand-new, large-scale, celebratory dance work that will bring together professionals and amateurs who live in the Montclair area community. Please come be a part of *Stage Door*! We'll post more information about how you can become involved soon.

Sincerely,



**Wiley Hausam**

Director, PEAK Performances

Email: [hausamw@montclair.edu](mailto:hausamw@montclair.edu)

## Upcoming Events

### MANDY PATINKIN IN CONCERT

**BEING ALIVE**

With Adam Ben-David, piano

**SAT., FEBRUARY 14 @ 8:00 PM**

**STANDING ROOM ONLY!**

### KEIGWIN + COMPANY

**STAGE DOOR**

Dance | Variety

**SAT., MAY 11 @ 8:00 PM**

**SUN., MAY 12 @ 3:00 PM**

**FOR TICKETS: 973-655-5112 | [PEAKperfs.org](http://PEAKperfs.org)**



Programs in this season were made possible, in part, by the Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund, PEAK Patrons, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

PEAK Performances develops, presents, and produces a broad range of world-class dance, film, master classes, music, opera and music theater, talks, and theater in the Alexander Kasser Theater on the campus of Montclair State University for students, faculty, staff, and the general public. We are building community through live performance. PEAK Performances is a program of the university's Arts + Cultural Programming Department.



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We respectfully acknowledge that Montclair State University occupies land in Lenapehoking, the traditional and expropriated territory of the Lenape. As a state institution, we recognize and support the sovereignty of New Jersey's three state-recognized tribes: the Ramapough Lenape, Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, and Powhatan Renape nations. We recognize the sovereign nations of the Lenape diaspora elsewhere in North America, as well as other Indigenous individuals and communities now residing in New Jersey. By offering this land acknowledgement, we commit to addressing the historical legacies of Indigenous dispossession and dismantling practices of erasure that persist today. We recognize the resilience and persistence of contemporary Indigenous communities and their role in educating all of us about justice, equity, and the stewardship of the land throughout the generations.