TERENCE BLANCHARD / LIBRETTO BY KASI LEMMONS

FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES

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An Opera in Three Acts by Terence Blanchard

Based on the Book by Charles M. Blow

Libretto by Kasi Lemmons

Monday, October 4, 2021
7:30–10:35 PM

The production of *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* was made possible by generous gifts from The Ford Foundation and the Francis Goelet Trusts

Additional funding from The Joan Ganz Cooney and Holly Peterson Fund

Commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera

Originally commissioned by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, co-commissioned by Jazz St. Louis

A co-production of the Metropolitan Opera, LA Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago

GENERAL MANAGER Peter Gelb

JEANETTE LERMAN-NEUBAUER MUSIC DIRECTOR Yannick Nézet-Séguin
The Metropolitan Opera
2021–22 SEASON

The third Metropolitan Opera performance of
TERENCE BLANCHARD’S

FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES

CONDUCTOR
Yannick Nézet-Séguin

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

CHARLES
Will Liverman

UNCLE PAUL
Ryan Speedo Green*

DESTINY
Angel Blue

FOREMAN
Norman Garrett

BILLIE
Latonia Moore

CHICKEN PLUCKER
Terrence Chin-Loy

CHAR’ES-BABY
Walter Russell III

RUBY
Briana Hunter

WILLIAM
Cheikh M’Baye

SPINNER
Chauncey Packer

NATHAN
Oleode Oshotse

VERNA
Denisha Ballew

JAMES
Ejiro Ogodo

LONELINESS
Angel Blue

ROBERT
Judah Taylor

YOUNG LOVELY
Marguerite Mariah Jones

This performance is being broadcast live on Metropolitan Opera Radio on SiriusXM channel 355.

Monday, October 4, 2021, 7:30–10:35PM
CHESTER
Chris Kenney

BERTHA
Cierra Byrd**

PASTOR
Donovan Singletary*

WOMAN SINNER
Briana Hunter

ADULT ROBERT
Calvin Griffin

ADULT WILLIAM
Terrence Chin-Loy

ADULT NATHAN
Errin Duane Brooks

ADULT JAMES
Norman Garrett

WOMEN
Denisha Ballew
Christine Jobson
Jasmine Muhammad
Kimberli Render
Nicole Mitchell
Karmesha Peake

EVELYN
Brittany Renee

KABOOM
Donovan Singletary*

PLEDGE
David Morgans Sanchez

NASH
Chase Taylor

* Graduate of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program
** Member of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program

ORCHESTRA RHYTHM SECTION
PIANO Bryan Wagorn*
BASS Matt Brewer
GUITAR Adam Rogers
DRUMS Jeff Watts

Monday, October 4, 2021, 7:30–10:35PM
Chorus Master Donald Palumbo
Dramaturg Paul Cremo
Musical Preparation Donna Racik, Jonathan C. Kelly, Kazem Abdullah, Bryan Wagorn*, and Katelan Trân Terrell*
Assistant Stage Directors Christina Franklin, Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj, Daniel Rigazzi, and Paula Suozzi
Associate Choreographer Rickey Tripp
Assistant Set Designer Ryan Howell
Assistant Costume Designer Devario Simmons
Additional Orchestrations Howard Drossin
Intimacy Director Doug Scholz-Carlson
Assistant Intimacy Director Rocio Mendez
Met Titles Michael Panayos
Prompter Donna Racik
Additional Casting Tara Rubin, CSA; Tasha Ward, CSA
Special Thanks Dr. Angel Caraballo
Scenery, properties, and electrical props constructed and painted by The Scenic Route, Pacoima, and Metropolitan Opera Shops
Costumes constructed by Metropolitan Opera Costume Department; Barak LLC, Jersey City; John Kristiansen New York Inc., New York City; Donna Langman, New York City; Jennifer Love Costumes, New York City; and Crystal Thompson, New York City
Wigs and Makeup constructed and executed by Metropolitan Opera Wig and Makeup Department

This production uses gunshot effects.

The commissioning and development of the world premiere of Fire Shut Up in My Bones at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis was made possible with support from the Fred M. Saigh Endowment at Opera Theatre, the Sally S. Levy Family Fund for New Works, the Whitaker Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and OPERA America’s Opera Fund.

This performance is made possible in part by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Before the performance begins, please switch off cell phones and other electronic devices.

Met Titles
To activate, press the red button to the right of the screen in front of your seat and follow the instructions provided. To turn off the display, press the red button once again. If you have questions, please ask an usher at intermission.
Synopsis

Act I
Charles Blow, age 20, drives down a Louisiana backroad with a gun in the passenger seat. Destiny sings to him, calling him back to his childhood home. He begins reliving memories from his childhood.

Charles’s seven-year-old self, Char’es-Baby, talks to his mother, Billie. He is desperate for affection, but Billie is too frazzled to give him the validation that he craves. They are dirt poor. Billie works in a chicken factory, but she dreams of Char’es-Baby getting a good education and escaping their town. Her husband, Spinner, is a womanizing spendthrift. When she hears that he’s flirting with other women, she confronts him at gunpoint. Billie doesn’t shoot, but she tosses Spinner out. Billie and her five sons move in with Uncle Paul. Char’es-Baby dreams of a different life, collecting “treasure” from the junkyard while Loneliness sings to him. One day, his cousin Chester comes to visit. When Chester sexually abuses him, he is too horrified and ashamed to say anything.

Adult Charles begins to weep as he recoils from these memories, while Destiny reminds him that there is no escape.

Intermission  (AT APPROXIMATELY 8:45PM)

Act II
As Charles grows into a teenager, he is full of confusion and rage, and tormented by phantom terrors. He attends a church service in which the pastor is baptizing people, promising that God can wipe all sins clean. Charles decides to get baptized, but it fails to free him of his inner demons. Charles tries to talk to his brothers, but they refuse to engage in any “soft talk.” Loneliness reappears, promising to be his lifelong companion. Evelyn, a beautiful young girl, interrupts Charles’s reverie. Their chemistry is clear. Charles feels a new sense of independence and is finally ready to strike out on his own; Grambling State University has offered him a full scholarship. Billie is left alone to reflect on all that she has sacrificed for her family and wonders what might lie ahead.

Act III
At his college, Charles rushes Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, where the brothers lead an elaborate and energetic step dance. Charles and the other pledges are hazed, but he stoically takes each indignity in stride: Pain is nothing new for him. Later, he goes to a frat party and meets an attractive young woman, Greta. They begin a passionate love affair. Charles eventually shares his awful secret with
Greta, only to find out that she’s still seeing someone else. Charles is left alone again. He calls home, desperate to hear his mother’s voice. To his shock, Billie tells him that Chester has come back to visit. Charles instantly decides to return home to confront Chester, gun in hand.

Charles sits in his car on the dark road, contemplating the choice lying before him. Destiny starts to sing to him once again, seductively promising to stand by him through to the bloody end. As Charles reaches his childhood home, Char’es-Baby appears, urging him to leave his bitterness behind. Charles must decide whether to exact his revenge or begin his life anew.

Synopsis reprinted courtesy of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.
Fire Shut Up in My Bones

Premiere: Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, 2019

Fire Shut Up in My Bones is a setting of journalist and commentator Charles M. Blow’s contemporary memoir, which deals with the author’s attempts to find love and healing in his young adulthood after a childhood pervaded by abuse. The abuse took multiple forms, both in the background of dire poverty of Blow’s rural African American community—embedded in the visible and unseen systems of class and race that perpetuated that poverty—and in a harrowing incident of sexual trauma perpetrated by a cousin on the seven-year-old Charles (called Char’es Baby), an act of betrayal that unleashed a years-long process of self-recrimination and shame. As he matures, Charles struggles in relationships—with a personification of Destiny, who challenges him to consider his place in the world; with a personification of Loneliness, who lays claims on him; with a young woman named Greta to whom he is attracted (all three characters portrayed by the same singer); with his other relatives and members of his community; with his church; and above all, with his mother Billie, whose love is clear but not always available. Ultimately, he must confront the defining experience of his own inner conflicts before he can achieve any form of self-actualization, either through revenge on his childhood abuser or through some resolution of the ongoing personal crisis that it engendered. The score, by Terence Blanchard, draws on several sources—ranging from jazz to classical to the traditional music of these rural communities—to depict internal and communal conflicts.

The Creators

Terence Blanchard (b. 1962) is a celebrated composer whose many works express his roots in jazz but defy further categorization. The six-time Grammy Award winner was born in New Orleans and became a trumpeter for the Lionel Hampton Orchestra in 1982. His first opera, Champion, was produced in St. Louis in 2013. A prolific creator in a wide variety of forms and genres, he is especially celebrated for his close collaboration with director Spike Lee and his accomplishments as an award-winning composer of film scores, including for Malcom X, BlackKklansman, Da 5 Bloods, Mo’ Better Blues, and more than 60 others. Charles M. Blow (b. 1970) is a noted journalist and commentator. He is a regularly featured op-ed columnist for The New York Times and an anchor for the Black News Channel. The libretto for Fire Shut Up in My Bones marks the first foray into opera for Kasi Lemmons (b. 1961), a noted writer, actress, and director, whose films include Harriet, Talk to Me, and Eve’s Bayou.
The Setting
The opera takes place in and around the small and poor town of Gibsland, in northwestern Louisiana, as well as at Blow’s alma mater, Grambling State University. The time ranges from Charles’s childhood in the 1970s to his adulthood in the 1990s.

The Music
Both grounded in the classical idiom and deeply steeped in the form-defying jazz that has been central to Blanchard’s output, Fire Shut Up in My Bones does not fit perfectly into any single category or genre. The composer’s use of film-score techniques—including a lyrical sweep that propels the action forward and the ability to have a sudden audio “close-up” on a given character—is a notable feature of the score. Another element worth noting is the use of the music of the characters themselves and the world that they inhabit, although these recognizable references are always a part of the overall narrative soundscape. The music associated with the church services that the struggling Charles attends, for example, embraces the style of Black spiritual music of this region but is not a literal recreation. Instead, it tells the story of a character’s experience with that musical encounter. The vocal writing also parallels this path, composed for singers with the power of traditional classical training but also requiring a comfort level with the methods of jazz and gospel singing. Spoken, rather than sung, passages appear briefly and with dramatic significance, and at many times during Charles’s flashbacks, he and his younger self, Char’es-Baby, sing the same lines in unison. The characters of Destiny and Loneliness in particular express themselves in music that incorporates jazz and classical traditions while not being entirely defined by one or the other. Charles’s mother Billie, likewise, has music that must express her great love for her family while simultaneously showing her inability to express that affection. In this, her music recalls the most complex and nuanced characters in the operatic repertory. Charles’s soliloquys, musicalized internal monologues that give voice to the character’s epic psychological journey to self-acceptance, are prime examples of the score’s demands on the performer’s skills in several diverse genres at once.

Met History
The first opera by a Black composer performed at the Met, Fire Shut Up in My Bones opened the 2021–22 season on September 27, 2021, as the company retook the stage following the longest closure in its history due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducted a production co-directed by James Robinson and Camille A. Brown and starring baritone Will Liverman as Charles, soprano Angel Blue as Destiny/Loneliness/Greta, and soprano Latonia Moore as Billie.
A Note from James Robinson

When I became artistic director at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2009, among my first priorities was to embark on a wide-ranging commissioning initiative called New Works, Bold Voices. The objective was to create new operas and to provide opportunities for composers to take a second look at operas they had already premiered. One of the first composers I contacted was jazz trumpeter Terence Blanchard. I was well acquainted with Terence’s music from his powerful film scores, and I still consider his haunting album A Tale of God’s Will one of the best things in my personal music library. After our first meeting, Terence agreed to create an “opera in jazz,” and in 2013, we premiered Champion, based on the life of bisexual boxing champ Emile Griffith. The success of Terence’s opera was tremendous, so I immediately asked him to follow it up with another. Fire Shut Up in My Bones was premiered in 2019 in St. Louis, and, yet again, it was met with great enthusiasm.

Both of Terence’s operas deal fearlessly with Black men struggling with their identity and sexuality, in addition to confronting some very difficult and often painful subjects. The story of Emile Griffith is told through the fog of pugilistic dementia and confronts the athlete’s search to embrace his love of other men. As Emile sings in the opera (after being haunted by the death of an opponent he killed during a bout): “I kill a man, and the world forgives me. I love a man, and the world wants to kill me.” Charles M. Blow’s elegant and gripping memoir Fire Shut Up in My Bones reveals a man haunted by the abuse he suffered at the hands of an older cousin and how coming to terms with his own sexuality became a lifelong journey. And while not everyone has experienced the reality of growing up poor in rural Louisiana, Blow’s memoir touches on universal themes that are both resonant and relevant. In both operas, an honest light is shone on taboos, social norms, and stereotypes. And what I find particularly moving is how Terence uses music to give these characters compelling voices.

In the opera, Charles is faced with a brutal choice and looks back on his life to understand what has led him to a potentially life-ruining crossroads. He questions his role in certain traumatic events and wonders how he could have changed the course of his own personal history. His is a journey of self-loathing, self-discovery, and eventually self-forgiveness. Charles states that he is a “stranger in my hometown,” and I find this idea deeply affecting, for many of us have felt the loneliness of not fitting in or not belonging, even in an environment that should be comforting and familiar.

While preparing Fire Shut Up in My Bones, first in St. Louis and now at the Met, one of the challenges was how to adapt Kasi Lemmons’s gorgeously cinematic libretto to the stage. Early on, Kasi and I talked about how a memoir is like a collection of old photographs. With that in mind, the creative team and I—now joined by co-director and choreographer Camille A. Brown, with whom I had the immense honor of working with on Porgy and Bess—set out to create a fluid, multi-layered, almost collage-like production. I cannot say enough about how thrilled I am to be involved in this historic production at the Met and to work with this extraordinary composer, librettist, and cast.

—James Robinson

Visit metopera.org.
Contributing my voice to Terence Blanchard’s beautiful and haunting music, creating movement language for Kasi Lemmons’s libretto, sharing the story of celebrated writer Charles M. Blow, and co-directing with James Robinson, with whom I had the pleasure of working on Porgy and Bess, has been a dream. It has also been uniquely challenging because I joined the Fire Shut Up in My Bones project at the height of the pandemic, five years after work began on the original production. Not only did I have to choreograph, I had to find my directorial voice, among a team that had been collaborating for years. It was daunting, thrilling, and overwhelming to play catch-up. I started with what I know—dance—and approached the piece the same way I approach all of my creative work, asking questions, investigating, and listening. How could I make sure that the gestures and movements stayed true to the intentions of the composer? How could my direction amplify the voice and the heart of this piece?

In the director’s seat, I wanted to play with abstraction and time travel, capturing the psyche of Charles, his inner turmoil, and his tussles with Destiny and Loneliness. We treated each scene as though it were one of those aged Polaroid pictures—static in time, with the only breath being Charles, walking us through his journey, the pictures shapeshifting as we follow him along. Isolated both spiritually and physically, it was important to show Charles’s struggles, his longing for peace, and his search for a savior—only to realize that his savior was himself, the younger version of himself, giving him grace and resolve.

Two phrases within the show resonate with me: “Sometimes you gotta’ just leave it in the road” and “I bend, I don’t break, I sway.” They speak to the specificity of the Black experience but also call upon a universal theme of determination and the need for personal resolution. Charles experienced a traumatic childhood event, which changed his life. He ultimately finds the strength and motivation to “leave it in the road.” Past traumas can either haunt us or heal us. Charles’s story empowers us with the understanding that the devastation of the past does not have to define our futures. We too can give ourselves the grace to let go. Fire also illuminates themes of perseverance and resilience—both hallmarks of the Black experience. We don’t break, we sway. We never give in. Our light will never go out. To honor this, I wanted to find a way—amid the struggle—to elevate the stuff of the Black experience that celebrates us. That heals us. That shows us off.

Terence has created a percussive score that is complex and nuanced, and I have tried to add to that my original artistic expression in movement, bringing to bear the many influences and elements that make up my individual style. What I found so thrilling was that I could use step to embody triumph, pain, and the joy of life, and create a rhythmical score for this powerful “opera in jazz.” Step is a social dance rooted in African American history and culture, tracing back more than 200 years to West Africa, transformed by enslaved people.
throughout the Americas. Stepping is energetic, visceral, urgent, and powerful. It is also embedded in the fabric of Black fraternities and sororities, which were intentionally created as safe spaces when white Greek-letter organizations would not let Black men and women join them. It has always been historically important for Black people to create safe spaces for themselves. What has emerged from that has been extraordinary: Black people creating community for themselves everywhere—in the Church, at the jook joint, and at historically Black colleges and universities. In these safe spaces, we converge to share all that is messy and radiant in our lives, in our relationships, and in our humanity.

I am humbled and honored to be a part of this show that is inviting audiences into a vulnerable and poignant story.

At one point in history, Black people were not allowed to perform on the Met stage and even more so, were not able to authentically portray our own narratives. The full spectrum of our real lives were unseen. But we did not break.

Once invisible, now beautifully and vibrantly visible. Past, present, and future, we sway.

—Camille A. Brown
The Contributions and Complications of Black Fraternities and Sororities

Black fraternities and sororities are significant in the African American community, with the cultural and service-oriented tenets acting as strong reasons that individuals join. In the early 1900s, America was a place where Black people were looking for spaces to fit in. Black college students were looking for others with relatable challenges to bond and organize with for individual and collective success. There were few avenues for educated Black people to come together for service to their people and community until these fraternities and sororities emerged.

The founding of these organizations was influenced and rooted in a legacy of trauma and hurt—hurt that was carried by individuals who were in the same generation as families raised in the antebellum South under Jim Crow. They all promote higher education as a means to elevate their people. They all advocate for closing wealth and healthcare disparities, civil and voting rights, affordable housing, criminal justice reform, and jobs with living wages, and they all believe in robust community service and mentoring. But, as we see in Fire Shut Up in My Bones, they also were all plagued with unsanctioned and unfortunate occurrences of hazing.

Charles Blow and I were drawn to the same fraternity—Kappa Alpha Psi—presumably for the same reasons: the mission of achievement, the idea of brothers who stand together and stand up for one another, and the comfort of men who would befriend and never betray. Kappa gave us leaders and role models to emulate. In fact, most Black men doing significant things were members of a Black fraternity. These associations help raise the bar for what one can accomplish, especially against overwhelming odds.

Navigating America as a Black man or woman presents a unique set of challenges which are marginally mitigated by joining a fraternity or sorority. For me and Blow, it became important to have the support and encouragement of a group of people who also aspired to be leaders and change agents. The potential of being hazed seemed a small price to pay for this bond and legacy of strength and community. Because of this rationale, pledges and brothers generally attributed honor and heritage to the legacy of hazing and were each trained to teach the same to those who followed. And therein lies the cycle of a historic and horrific mentality that has left a black eye on the great character and value of fraternities and sororities, otherwise amazing treasures in the Black community.

I recall similar instances of hazing in pledging Kappa as those depicted in Blow’s memoir and Terence Blanchard’s opera. The questions Blow asked himself, I asked myself. The conflicting emotions that he experienced also surfaced within me. Sadly, after more than 30 years as a brother, I still find myself trying to balance, equate, and weigh the good versus the brutal and bad.

Blanchard’s opera shows that every individual brings their own stories, traumas, and experiences with them to college and to fraternities or sororities.
How they are shaped, formed, and realized will be different for each individual. For me, pledging was not the highlight of the fraternal experience. I appreciate that the opera brilliantly captures the beautiful traditions of stepping and line dancing in celebration of a rich history of achievement. My memories also involved challenges that shaped me into the man I am today. Not only did it prepare me for the rigors of being a Black man in America, but it also helped me see all the possibilities that can be achieved through hard work and perseverance. These are the same challenges that Blow faced during the process of joining a fraternity, as well as the general history of Black people learning to rise above the surrounding circumstances. I am proud that our fraternities today are exercising safer, legal ways to create bonds that uplift the next generation of Black leaders in America.

—Sean Pittman

Sean Pittman is an alumnus of Kappa Alpha Psi’s chapter at Florida State University, where he earned bachelor’s and law degrees and was student body president. A prominent attorney, philanthropist, and host of The Sean Pittman Show and podcast, he is past president of the Orange Bowl Committee and General Counsel of the National Bar Association.
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The Cast and Creative Team

Terence Blanchard
COMPOSER (NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA)

career highlights  Fire Shut Up in My Bones marks Terence Blanchard’s Met debut and is his second opera, following the 2013 Champion. Both works had their world premieres at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and Fire Shut Up in My Bones will also appear at Lyric Opera of Chicago later this season. He studied jazz trumpet at Rutgers University and was invited to play with the Lionel Hampton Orchestra in 1982. Following a string of collaborative recordings, he released his first, self-titled solo album on Columbia Records in 1991, and in 2015, he released his first album with his jazz quintet E-Collective. His extensive filmography includes the scores for more than 60 films, and he frequently collaborates with director Spike Lee, including on the recent BlacKkKlansman and Da 5 Bloods, for which he was nominated for Academy Awards. He also scored the recent HBO series Perry Mason. Among his other numerous accolades are six Grammy Awards (from 14 nominations), BAFTA and Golden Globe Award nominations, and a 2018 United States Artists fellowship.

Kasi Lemmons
LIBRETTIST (ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI)

career highlights  Award-winning screenwriter-director, actor, producer, and librettist Kasi Lemmons is one of the most impactful voices of our time. For decades, her storytelling has brought the African American experience to the fore—taking audiences from the complex social world of Louisiana’s intelligentsia in her first feature, Eve’s Bayou, recently added to the Library of Congress’s National Film Registry; to the streets and airwaves of Vietnam-era Washington, D.C., in Talk to Me, which won her an NAACP Image Award for outstanding directing; to the treacherous Southern fields and freedom-promising North in Harriet, starring Cynthia Erivo as the iconic liberator Harriet Tubman, which was nominated for two Oscars. Fire Shut Up in My Bones is her first opera libretto and is the first opera with a Black librettist to be performed by the Met. She is an arts professor in the graduate film department at NYU and is currently directing the Whitney Houston biopic I Wanna Dance with Somebody while developing the feature The Shadow King, based on the novel by Maaza Mengiste, and the television series Ring Shout, based on the novel by P. Djéli Clark.
Charles M. Blow  
**AUTHOR (GIBSLAND, LOUISIANA)**


Yannick Nézet-Séguin  
**CONDUCTOR (MONTREAL, CANADA)**

**THIS SEASON**  *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, Matthew Aucoin’s *Eurydice*, Tosca, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Carlos*, Mahler’s Symphony No. 2, and Verdi’s *Requiem* at the Met; Met Orchestra Concerts at Carnegie Hall; *Das Rheingold* in concert with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra in Paris, and concerts with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre Métropolitain, and Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.

**MET APPEARANCES**  Since his 2009 debut leading Carmen, he has conducted more than 100 performances of 13 operas, including Wozzeck, Turandot, Dialogues des Carmélites, Pelléas et Mélisande, La Traviata, Elektra, Parsifal, and Der Fliegende Holländer.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS**  He is in his third season as the Met’s Jeanette Lerman-Neubauer Music Director. He has served as music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra since 2012 and artistic director and principal conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. In 2018, he became honorary conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, where he was music director for ten seasons, and in 2016, he was named an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. Between 2008 and 2014, he was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also led performances in Baden-Baden and at the Vienna State Opera, La Scala, Covent Garden, and Salzburg Festival.
James Robinson
CO-DIRECTOR (CLAREMORE, OKLAHOMA)

THIS SEASON  Fire Shut Up in My Bones at the Met and Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the world premieres of Tobias Picker's Awakenings and a new performing edition of Stewart Wallace’s Harvey Milk at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

MET PRODUCTIONS  Porgy and Bess (debut, 2019).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS  Since 2009, he has served as artistic director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, where his productions have included Huang Ruo’s An American Soldier, Marc Blitzstein’s Regina, the world premiere of Jack Perla’s Shalimar the Clown, the world premieres of Terence Blanchard’s Fire Shut Up in My Bones and Champion, John Adams’s The Death of Klinghoffer, and Ricky Ian Gordon’s The Grapes of Wrath. He directed Porgy and Bess at English National Opera and Dutch National Opera, and his work has also appeared at the Canadian Opera Company, Opera Australia, Royal Swedish Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, LA Opera, Washington National Opera, Seattle Opera, and with the London Symphony Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic, among many others.

Camille A. Brown
CO-DIRECTOR AND CHOREOGRAPHER (NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON  Fire Shut Up in My Bones at the Met and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

MET PRODUCTIONS  Choreographer for Porgy and Bess (debut, 2019).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS  She made her Broadway debut in 2012 choreographing A Streetcar Named Desire and returned for productions of Once on This Island (for which she received Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and Chita Rivera Award nominations) and Choir Boy (for which she received Tony and Drama Desk Award nominations). She is artistic director of Camille A. Brown & Dancers, made her feature film debut with George C. Wolfe’s Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, and choreographed the Emmy Award–winning Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert. She was named the 2021 Distinguished Artist by the International Society for the Performing Arts and has been honored with an Obie Award, Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellowship, five Princess Grace Awards, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award, Guggenheim Fellowship, TED Fellowship, AUDELCO Award, and Lucille Lortel Award nomination, among others accolades. Next year, she will make her Broadway directorial debut leading a production of Ntozake Shange’s For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf.
MUSSORGSKY

BORIS GODUNOV

One of today’s most commanding dramatic basses, René Pape brings his definitive portrayal of Boris Godunov back to the Met stage. Maestro Sebastian Weigle conducts Mussorgsky’s enthralling Russian epic, which is presented this season in its original 1869 version.

SEP 28  OCT 2, 5, 9 mat, 14, 17 mat

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Allen Moyer
SET DESIGNER (SCHUYLKILL HAVEN, PENNSYLVANIA)

**This Season** Fire Shut Up in My Bones at the Met and Lyric Opera of Chicago, Paradise Square on Broadway, and The Vagrant Trilogy at the Public Theater.

**MET Productions** Orfeo ed Euridice (debut, 2007).

**Career Highlights** His productions have appeared at the Canadian Opera Company, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, English National Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Dallas Opera, LA Opera, Scottish Opera, Washington National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, and Wexford Festival Opera. Broadway credits include Grey Gardens (Tony and Drama Desk nominations and Henry Hewes Award), The Lyons, Lysistrata Jones, Thurgood, and Twelve Angry Men. Other New York credits include productions for Playwrights Horizons, Second Stage, Roundabout Theatre Company, the New Group, Manhattan Theatre Club, Lincoln Center Theater, and Carousel and Showboat with the New York Philharmonic, and between 2017 and 2020, he was resident scenic designer for New York City Center’s Encores! series. For San Francisco Ballet, with choreographer Mark Morris, he designed Sylvia, and for the Mark Morris Dance Group, Romeo and Juliet: On Motifs of Shakespeare.

Paul Tazewell
COSTUME DESIGNER (AKRON, OHIO)

**This Season** Fire Shut Up in My Bones at the Met and Lyric Opera of Chicago and MJ on Broadway.

**MET Productions** Faust (debut, 2011).

**Career Highlights** He was the winner of a 2016 Tony Award for his work on Hamilton and has created costumes for two dozen Broadway shows, earning additional Tony nominations for Ain’t Too Proud, A Streetcar Named Desire, Memphis, In the Heights, The Color Purple, and Bring in ’Da Noise, Bring in ’Da Funk. He received an Emmy Award for his work on NBC’s The Wiz Live!, and further screen credits include the Kasi Lemmons’s 2019 film Harriet and Stephen Spielberg’s upcoming adaptation of West Side Story. Among his other accolades are four Helen Hayes Awards for Outstanding Costume Design, two Lucille Lortel Awards, and a Henry Hewes Award. His designs have also appeared on the stages of English National Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera, New York City Opera, the Glimmerglass Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the Bolshoi Ballet, Stratford Shakespeare Festival, New York’s Public Theater, the Kennedy Center, and Arena Stage, among many others.

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PUCCINI

TURANDOT

Blazing soprano Christine Goerke takes on the title role of Puccini’s grand final masterpiece, starring alongside tenor Yusif Eyvazov as Calàf and sopranos Gabriella Reyes and Michelle Bradley as Liù. Marco Armiliato conducts Franco Zeffirelli’s opulent staging.

OCT 12, 16, 21, 24 mat, 29  NOV 2, 6, 12, 16

Tickets from $25 | metopera.org
Christopher Akerlind
LIGHTING DESIGNER (HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT)

THIS SEASON  Fire Shut Up in My Bones at the Met and Lyric Opera of Chicago and Clyde’s on Broadway.

MET PRODUCTIONS  Il Barbiere di Siviglia (debut, 2006).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS  He has designed more than 600 productions for theater and opera companies around the world, including nearly two dozen for Broadway. He received Tony Awards for Indecent and The Light in the Piazza (both also earning him Drama Desk Awards) and Tony Award nominations for Rocky (for which he also won a Drama Desk Award), The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess, 110 in the Shade, Awake and Sing!, and August Wilson’s Seven Guitars. He is resident lighting designer for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, where he has served in that capacity for more than 25 years and where he has contributed to a number of world premieres, including Terence Blanchard’s Champion and Fire Shut Up in My Bones, Jack Perla’s Shalimar the Clown, Judith Weir’s The Vanishing Bridegroom, and Huang Ruo’s An American Soldier. Other premieres include Ricky Ian Gordon’s The House Without a Christmas Tree at Houston Grand Opera and Joby Talbot’s Everest at the Dallas Opera.

Greg Emetaz
PROJECTION DESIGNER (NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON  Fire Shut Up in My Bones at the Met for his debut and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS  He has designed video and projections for a number of operatic world premieres, including Jimmy López’s Bel Canto at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Terence Blanchard’s Champion and Fire Shut Up in My Bones, Huang Ruo’s An American Soldier, and Peter Ash’s The Golden Ticket at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. His work has also appeared at San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, and Beijing’s National Center for Performing Arts. He served as video director for the 2007–10 New York City Opera VOX Showcases, the 2008–10 NEA Opera Honors, and the 2011 and 2013 NEA Jazz Masters. He is the writer and director of the horror-comedy feature Camp Wedding and the award-winning shorts Bowes Academy, Death by Omelette, and Spell Claire. He is also the co-director of the web series Do It Yourselfie: Songs for Millennials and numerous music videos and commercials.
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A scene from Puccini’s La Bohème
PHOTO: EVAN ZIMMERMAN / MET OPERA

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Angel Blue
SOPRANO (LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA)

THIS SEASON    Destiny/Loneliness/Greta in Fire Shut Up in My Bones and Bess in Porgy and Bess at the Met, Violetta in La Traviata at Covent Garden, Mimi in La Bohème at the Bavarian State Opera, Marguerite in Faust at the Paris Opera, and concerts with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Philadelphia Orchestra.

MET APPEARANCES    Bess, and Musetta and Mimì (debut, 2017) in La Bohème.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS    Recent performances include Mimi in Hamburg, Dresden, and at the Canadian Opera Company; the title role of Tosca in Aix-en-Provence; Violetta at La Scala and in Winnipeg; Bess at Seattle Opera; and Liù in Turandot at San Diego Opera. She has also sung Myrtle Wilson in John Harbison’s The Great Gatsby in Dresden, the Peri in Schumann’s Das Paradies und die Peri in concert in Rome, Clara in Porgy and Bess at La Scala, Donna Elvira in Don Giovanni in concert in Tokyo, and Mimi in Valencia and at the English National Opera and the Vienna State Opera. She was the 2020 recipient of the Met’s Beverly Sills Artist Award, established by Agnes Varis and Karl Leichtman.

Latonia Moore
SOPRANO (HOUSTON, TEXAS)

THIS SEASON    Billie in Fire Shut Up in My Bones and Serena in Porgy and Bess at the Met, Cio-Cio-San in Madama Butterfly at the Dallas Opera, Billie at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the title role of Aida at LA Opera.

MET APPEARANCES    Serena, Aida (debut, 2012), and Cio-Cio-San.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS    Recent performances include Leonora in Il Trovatore at the Glimmerglass Festival; the title role of Tosca at Austin Opera, Washington National Opera, Opera Australia, and in Rouen; Mimi in La Bohème at Palm Beach Opera; Serena at Dutch National Opera and English National Opera; Aida in Buenos Aires and at the Polish National Opera and English National Opera; and Desdemona in Otello in Bergen, Norway. She has sung Aida in Zurich and Tokyo; at Opera Australia, Pittsburgh Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, San Diego Opera, and the Dallas Opera; and in concert in Bergen and at Ravinia Festival. Other recent credits include Tosca at New York City Opera; Fidelia in Puccini’s Edgar in Dortmund, Germany; Cio-Cio-San at San Diego Opera; Liù in Turandot at Covent Garden; and Liù, Mimi, and Cio-Cio-San in Dresden.

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The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED

Will Liverman
BARITONE (VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA)

This season Charles in Fire Shut Up in My Bones, Papageno in The Magic Flute, and Horemhab in Philip Glass’s Akhnaten at the Met; the Steward in Jonathan Dove’s Flight at the Dallas Opera; Charles at Lyric Opera of Chicago; Price’s Song to the Dark Virgin with Chicago Sinfonietta; and Bernstein’s Mass at the Kennedy Center.


Career highlights Recent performances include Bob in Still’s Highway 1, USA at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Silvio in highlights from Pagliacci at Seattle Opera, Silvio at Opera Colorado, Pantalone in The Love for Three Oranges at Opera Philadelphia, Stárek in Jenůfa and Schaunard in La Bohème at the Santa Fe Opera, Schaunard at Opera Philadelphia and the Dallas Opera, the Pilot in Rachel Portman’s The Little Prince at Tulsa Opera, Papageno in Die Zauberflöte at Central City Opera and Milwaukee’s Florentine Opera, Tommy McIntyre in Gregory Spears’s Fellow Travelers at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Figaro in Il Barbiere di Siviglia at Kentucky Opera and Seattle Opera, and Dizzy Gillespie in the world premiere of Daniel Schnyder’s Charlie Parker’s Yardbird at Opera Philadelphia.

Walter Russell III
TREBLE (NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

This season Charles-Baby in Fire Shut Up in My Bones for his debut at the Met.

Career highlights Walter Russell III is a 13-year-old Harlem native who performed across the United States and Canada as Young Simba in the national tour of Disney’s The Lion King before making his Broadway debut in the role in 2020. His television credits include Showtime’s Let the Right One In, ABC’s Disney Family Singalong II, and Nickelodeon’s Lip Sync Battle Shorties, and he has appeared in music videos for “Enough” by Sia and “Sugar” by Sufjan Stevens. He has trained with Harlem School of the Arts and National Dance Institute and competes with PUSH Dance Company.