

CHAMPION

TRANSMITTED LIVE ON SAT, APR 29, 2023

The Met
ropolitan
Opera **HD**
LIVE

CONDUCTOR

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

PRODUCTION

James Robinson

SET DESIGNER

Allen Moyer

COSTUME DESIGNER

Montana Levi Blanco

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Donald Holder

PROJECTION DESIGNER

Greg Emetaz

CHOREOGRAPHER

Camille A. Brown

LIVE IN HD DIRECTOR

Gary Halvorson

LIVE IN HD HOST

Lawrence Brownlee

EVELDA GRIFFITH

Latonia Moore

KATHY HAGEN

Stephanie Blythe

YOUNG EMILE GRIFFITH

Ryan Speedo Green

EMILE GRIFFITH

Eric Owens

ACT I Suffering from dementia, Emile Griffith is confused and haunted by his past. His caretaker and partner, Luis, reminds him to be ready for his meeting with Benny Paret, Jr. In the late 1950s, Emile is a young man in St. Thomas. He moves to New York in search of his mother. She takes him to meet Howie Albert, who sets his sights on training Emile as a boxer. Emile quickly develops into a talented welterweight. Emile finds his way to a gay bar owned by Kathy Hagen, to whom he reveals some demons from his past. In 1962, Emile encounters Benny Paret at a weigh-in. Paret hurls a homophobic slur at him. Deeply hurt, Emile wonders what it means to be a man. As they prepare for their fight, Paret continues to taunt Emile, who ultimately delivers so many blows that Paret falls into a coma.

INTERMISSION

ACT II Back in the present, Emile is haunted by the ghost of Paret. In the late 1960s, Emile is enjoying a strong winning streak, but he remains disturbed by Paret's death. Denying his own identity, he takes a young bride, Sadie. By the early 1970s, Emile's luck has changed. He's now starting to display signs of "boxer's brain." Howie tries to console Emile, but Emile rejects him. He looks for comfort at Kathy's bar. A group of thugs beat him violently. Once more in the present, Emile relives the attack. Emile asks for forgiveness from Benny, Jr. The voices and memories subside. Emile Griffith, the former welterweight champ, can now take life one day at a time.

An opera by Terence Blanchard

Libretto by Michael Cristofer

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

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