



# Echoes of Excellence:

Celebrating the Legacy of Chicago's Black Voices



## **DAVID ZIVAN**

Lead Writer and Editor

## CATHY KIEPURA ROBERT JOHNSON

Program Book Designers

#### **JESSICA M. PEDROZA, PMP**

Marketing Project Manager

Administrative Offices 20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 860 Chicago, Illinois 60606 lyricopera.org

#### **SAMETZ BLACKSTONE ASSOCIATES**

Visual Direction

## PMGMA, Inc.

PMGMA, Inc. 340 Anthony Trail Northbrook, IL 60062 pmgma.com

Gail McGrath

Publisher & President

Sheldon Levin Finance

Rand Brichta

Sales Manager

Jill Wettersten

Account Manager

For advertising information call 847-770-4621.

To see our Advertising Terms and Conditions, visit our website at pmgma.com.

All contents copyrighted. All rights reserved.

Nothing may be reproduced in any manner without written permission. © 2025

PMGMA, Inc. is a Woman Owned Business.

You can view this program on your mobile device at www.pmgma.com.

For the latest information on this performance, please scan this QR code.





## **Board of Directors**

#### **OFFICERS**

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
The Honorable Brandon
Johnson
Honorary Chairs
of the Board
Sylvia Neil
Chair of the Board
Edgar D. Jannotta
Allan B. Muchin
Co-Chairs Emeritus
David T. Ormesher
Co-Chair Emeritus &
Chair of the Executive
Committee
John Mangum

James L. Alexander Enrique Mazzola Shirley Welsh Ryan Eric S. Smith Penelope Steiner Nasrin Thierer Vice Chairs

General Director,

President & CEO

Endowed Chair

The Women's Board

Donna Van Eekeren
Secretary
Dan Grossman
Treasurer
Elizabeth Hurley
Assistant Secretary
Vincente F. Milianti
Assistant Treasurer

## LIFE DIRECTORS

Julie Baskes
Gilda R. Buchbinder
Sonia Florian
Ronald J. Gidwitz
Ruth Ann M. Gillis
J. Thomas Hurvis
Edgar D. Jannotta
George E. Johnson
Stephen A. Kaplan
Susan Kiphart
Robert W. Lane
Allan B. Muchin
Gordon Segal
Robert E. Wood II

#### **DIRECTORS**

Katherine A. Abelson\* James L. Alexander\* Jennie Huang Bennett Louise Bernard Santino Bibbo Bruce Braun Allan E. Bulley, III John E. Butler Marion A. Cameron-Gray\* Amy Carbone\* Orit Carpenter Jane Chu\* Richard W. Colburn\*+ Francesca Cornelli Vinay Couto Lester Crown\* Laura DeFelice Dan Draper+

Charles Droege+ Chaz Ebert Anne Edwards Lois Eisen James E. Fellowes Matthew A. Fisher Steven L. Fradkin\* Karen Freeman-Wilson Denise Gardner Sarah Garvey+ Ethel C. Gofen Melvin Gray Karen Z. Gray-Krehbiel Maria C. Green Dan Grossman\* Gary Haase\* Gregory K. Jones Neil T. Kawashima Kip Kelley II\* Lori Ann Komisar Josef Lakonishok\* Phil G. Lumpkin\* John Mangum\* Craig C. Martin\* Samir Mayekar\* Enrique Mazzola\* Robert J. McCullen Blythe J. McGarvie Dorri McWhorter+ Mimi Mitchell Frank B. Modruson\*+ Linda K. Myers Jeffrey C. Neal H. Gael Neeson

Allan Drebino

Svlvia Neil\* Gregory J. O'Leary\* Sharon F. Oberlander Olufunmilayo I. Olopade David T. Ormesher\* Anna Paglia Matthew J. Parr Jane DiRenzo Pigott\* Tanya Polsky\* Jose Luis Prado Don M. Randel John Robak Brenda Robinson\* Joseph O. Rubinelli, Jr.\* Richard O. Ryan Shirley Welsh Ryan\* E. Scott Santi\* Nancy Santi Christine Schyvinck Nancy S. Searle Marsha Serlin Brenda M. Shapiro\* Richard W. Shepro+ Eric S. Smith\* Kevin Smith Penelope Steiner\* Mary Stowell Nasrin Thierer\* Cherryl T. Thomas\* Bryan Traubert\* Olivia Tyrrell\* Donna Van Eekeren\* Roberta L. Washlow

William Mason General Director Emeritus

- + Audit Committee
- \* Executive Committee
- National Member
- ° Deceased

# Lyric Staff

#### LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO John Mangum,

General Director, President & CEO, The Women's Board Endowed Chair

#### Enrique Mazzola,

Music Director. The John D. and Alexandra C. Nichols Endowed

## Elizabeth Hurley,

Deputy General Director and Chief Advancement Officer

## Vincente F. Milianti.

Chief Financial and Operating Officer

## Matthew Ozawa,

Chief Artistic Officer

Jennifer E. Boyd, Vice President, People & Culture

Bradley Dunn, Vice President, Marketing and Communications

Stephanie Karr, Vice President, Artistic Operations & Administration

Anna Mattson, Vice President, Development

## Andreas Melinat,

Vice President, Artistic Planning Dan Novak, Vice President and Director, Ryan Opera Center, The Ryan Opera Center Board Endowed Chair

Will Raj, Vice President, Information Technology

## Michael Smallwood,

Vice President, Production and Technical Director, Allan and Elaine Muchin Endowed Chair

#### OFFICE OF THE GENERAL DIRECTOR

## John Mangum,

General Director, President & CEO, The Women's Board Endowed Chair

Erika Senase, Executive Assistant, Offices of the General and Music Directors

### OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY **GENERAL DIRECTOR**

Elizabeth Hurley, Deputy General Director and Chief Advancement Officer

## **ARTISTIC**

## Matthew Ozawa,

Chief Artistic Officer Michael Black, Chorus Director and Head of Music, The Howard A. Stotler Chorus Director Endowed

## Artistic Planning Andreas Melinat, Vice President,

Artistic Planning Jeremy Johnson, Manager, Artistic Planning Evamaria Wieser, Casting Consultant

#### **Artistic Operations &** Administration Stephanie Karr,

Vice President, Artistic Operations & Administration Katharine Gunnink.

Director of Company Management Sarah Cohn,

Manager, Music Administration Annika Donnen,

Managing Librarian

Markie Grav.

Artistic Finance Manager Christine Janicki,

Orchestra Personnel Manager Kevin Krasinski, Manager, Artistic Operations and Systems

Leo Barnard Jovon Eborn,

Company Management Assistants

## RYAN OPERA CENTER

## Matthew Ozawa

Chief Artistic Officer

Dan Novak, Vice President and Director, Ryan Opera Center, The Ryan Opera Center Board Endowed Chair

Craig Terry, Music Director, The Jannotta Family Endowed Chair Julia Faulkner, Director of Vocal

Logan Skirm, Manager

#### LYRIC UNLIMITED - LEARNING & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

## Matthew Ozawa,

Chief Artistic Officer Jill LeCesne Potter, Senior Director, Learning Programs

Sheran Goodspeed Keyton, Director of Civic Engagement Elise LaBarge, Learning Programs Manager

## **ADVANCEMENT**

## Elizabeth Hurley,

Deputy General Director and Chief Advancement Officer Lawrence DelPilar, Senior Director, Development

Gracie Denton Echales, Development Associate

## **Development**

Anna Mattson, Vice President, Development

Scott Podraza, Senior Director, Development

Bryan Hulscher, Senior Philanthropy Officer, Institutional Partnerships

Claire Ryan, CFRE, Director, Development Operations

Patrick Rybarczyk,

Senior Philanthropy Officer Paul D. Sprecher,

Senior Philanthropy Officer Sarah Sullivan, Senior Philanthropy Officer

Bridget Brazeau, Philanthropy

Kassandra Hernandez, Development

Operations Manager Meggie Keiser, Associate Director, Donor Engagement

Tara Lenardi, Grants Manager Leta Mumgaard,

Manager, Board of Directors

Griffin Scott, Coordinator, Donor Engagement

Margaret Smith, Coordinator, Donor Services

Kenni Ther, Coordinator, Donor Services

Mike Biver, Senior Director of Gift Planning

Jonathan P. Siner, Senior Director of the Ardis Krainik Society

Allison VerSteegh,

Manager, Events

Will Ellis, Associate, Boards (Women's Board and Ryan Opera Center Board)

Jonah Levi-Paesky, Associate, Volunteer Boards and Engagement (Guild Board, Chapters, and Lyric Young Professionals)

Ryan Morgan, Special Events Associate

Stefan Peters, Maître d'

#### Marketing and Communications

Bradley Dunn, Vice President, Marketing and Communications

Tracy Galligher Young, Senior Director, Marketing and Audience Development

Brittany Gonzalez Camuy, Director of Group Sales and Partnerships

Elisabeth Madeja, Director of Sales & Advertising

Michael Musick,

Director of Digital Marketing Tasha James, Marketing Manager, Discover Lyric Programs

Samantha Berger,

Manager of Website Content and Digital Experience

Jessica Pedroza, Marketing Project Manager

Kitty Schwartz, Digital Marketing Manager, Fundraising

Gavyne Stich, Marketing Manager, Data & Analysis Jake Friend, Manager, Art Direction

& Visual Identity Kendall Hicks, Group Sales &

Partnership Associate Victoria Pizzuto, Marketing Associate, Advertising & Promotions

Michael Solomon,

Director of Media Relations David Zivan, Lead Writer & Editor Alana Guggenheim,

Public Relations Manager Amanda Reitenbach, Manager of Social Media and Content Andrew Cioffi,

Digital Content Producer

Shannan Moore,

Digital Marketing Associate Janie Ragsdale, Marketing and Public Relations Coordinator

Gregg Brody, Box Office Director Alexandros Chatziapostolou Richard Diver Joseph Dunn

David Fitzgerald Destiny Mack Matthew Maggiore Jessica Reinhart Allan Waite Laura Waters, Box Office Treasurers

## **Ticketing Department/ Audience Services**

Susan Harrison Niemi, Senior Director of Audience Services Regina Ceragioli, Sales Manager, Customer Service & Call Center River Donnelly, Manager, Tessitura & Ticketing

Celia Williams, Manager, VIP Ticketing and Inventory Stephen Clark, VIP Ticketing Associate

Zachary Adams Marnie Baylouny Kathy Butera Colin Commager Hannah Cremin Madeline Curtin Toby Everhart Sophia Formella Wesley Jones Maria Kluber Laura Osterlund Eric Perrine Joseph Ryan Rvan Saladin Avery Sujkowski Danielle Vallandigham, Ticket Staff

## **ADMINISTRATION**

#### Vincente F. Milianti.

Chief Financial and Operating

#### **Finance**

Whitney Bercek, Controller LaToya Bowen, Senior Treasury Analyst

Erin Johnson,

Director of Financial Planning & Analysis

Justin Mascarenas, Assistant Controller

Idalia Andrade,

Accounts Payable Manager Faye Eisenberg, Staff Accountant Zachary Kurzenberger, Senior Financial Analyst

Angela Coleman, Accounts Payable Associate Eddy Hadzimuratovic,

Accounts Payable Associate Celia Hernandez, Financial Analyst

## People & Culture Jennifer E. Boyd, Vice President,

People & Culture Joshua Carroll, Director, Environmental Health, Safety, and Compliance Jamie Coffey, Payroll Specialist Charity Franco, Manager, People & Culture Operations Yolanda Sappington, Payroll Analyst

John Dorn, Union and Payroll Benefits Associate

Camilla Fernandez, Talent Management Associate Kristy Le, Employee Engagement Coordinator

Megan St. John, Director, Venue & Guest Services

Lena Sneed, House Manager

Richard Berry, Coat Check Attendant

Paulette Alonzi David Barcena Dominic Bialecki Thomas Brami Chenise Brown Nila Cabrejos Lau Daro Cook Chaurita Davis Nathalea Espinosa Matthew Furjanic Sharon Gaston Ramona Hawkins Gina Jacobs Marlyn Love Jacob Malkinson Lonnie Mitchell Steven Pace Ana Luisa Décaro Pinto Eduard Pulst Jazmin Reynoso Syvlie Rood John Rosenthal Edwina Schorn Mary Thomas Adam Wang, Ushers

TJ Gordon, Concessions Manager David Jaworski, Assistant Concessions Manager

John Ambrose Alyssa Bisanz Katherine Ciesla Joshua Galan Sylvia Hernandez David Jaworski Anne Kuntz Ashley Manley Ramon Alex Perez Julia Pestrikova Juliet Smith Anthony Sullivan Benjamin Tengowski Felipe Valadez Lindsey Wolfeld, Bartenders/Barbacks

David Jaworski Ramon Alex Perez Benjamin Tengowski Felipe Valadez, Porters

Patrick Dowling, Head of Security

Ellen Pomes Cesar Galan, Security Services

Esteban Alegria Joe Doner Cesar Galan Collin Harvey David Jaworski Ellen Pomes Emmanuel Stewart Cameren Truelove, Stage Door Staff

Information Technology Will Raj, Vice President,

Information Technology
Eric Hayes, Senior Director,
IT Operations
Rita Parida, Senior Director,
Data Services
Bill Anderson, Senior

Systems Administrator
Bob Helmuth, Systems
Administrator
Jessica Keener, Systems
Analyst

Michael Pierce, Technology Support Specialist James Webb, Junior Technology Support Associate

## Facilities Michael Smallwood,

Vice President, Production and Technical Director, The Allan and Elaine Muchin Endowed Chair

John Yelen, Senior Director of Facilities

Joe Minogue, Chief Engineer Michael LaPorte, Lead Engineer

Phillip Casica Anthony Fasano Brian Laurence McMahon Bernard McNeela Kevin O'Keefe Thomas Setina Eric Zawaski, Engineers

## TECHNICAL & PRODUCTION

Vincente F. Milianti, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

#### Technical Michael Smallwood

Vice President, Production and Technical Director, The Allan and Elaine Muchin Endowed Chair

April Busch, Technical Operations Director Maria DeFabo Akin, Production Design Director Scott Wolfson, Associate

Scott Wolfson, Associate
Technical Director
Brendan Henry, Technical
Finance Manager
Kathryn Johnson, Associate

Properties Director Chris Maravich, Lighting Director, Mary-Louise and James S. Aagaard Lighting Director Endowed Chair

Benjamin McCormack, Assistant Technical Director Sarah Riffle
Bridget Williams,
Assistant Lighting
Designers
Joe Dockweiler,
Master Carpenter

Mike Reilly, Head Flyman/ Automation Chris Barker Robert Hull, Jr. Connor Ingersoll Chase Torringa, Rigging/ Automation Assistants Phil Marcotte, Head Shop Carpenter Brian Grenda, Layout

Carpenter
Drew Trusk, Head Shop
Welder
Luigi Trupiano, Layout
Welder

Dan DiBennardi, Warehouse Coordinator Dan Donahue Ryan McGovern

Jeffrey Streichhirsch, Assistant Carpenters Anthony Bernardy John Ingersoll Aiden McGovern Rory McQuillan Dylan O'Shea Tyler Gil Ramos Jacob Sullivan

Brian Walsh Isaiah Williams, Carpenters

Anthony Coia,

Soren Ersbak,

Master Electrician

Board Operator Jose Villalpando, Titles Operator John Clarke, Jr. Thomas Hull Dan Kuh Robert Reynolds, Assistant Electricians Martin Childress Jason Combs Thomas Fernandez Nicholas Gutierrez Daniel Hull Jose Villalpando Daniel Vuillaume, Electricians

Nick Charlan, Head Audio Technician Matt Eble, FOH Engineer Asiel Simpson Matt Swiatkowski Monitor Engineers

Bob Ladd,
Property Master
Bob Hartge, Properties
Crew Head
Gordon Granger,
Prop Carpenter
Frank McPartlin, Armorer
Rachel Boultinghouse,
Upholsterer
Kevin McPartlin
Ian Scarlato
Taylor Torringa
Assistant Properties

Joshua Dobbins
John Kopecky
Ryan Lin-Peistrup
Michael O'Donnell, Jr.
Johnny Rivers
Drew Scafidi
James Ullrich
Properties

Michael Besancon, Charge Artist Michael Murtaugh Scenic Artist Alyssa Mohn, Scenic Artist Apprentice

Kim Buetzow, Costume Director, The Richard P. and Susan Kiphart Endowed Chair Lucy Lindquist, Wardrobe Mistress

Lauren Crotty
Ellouise Davis
Nina Escobedo
Molly Herman
M. Kate Keefe Marcheschi
Cecylia Kinder
Bryan McDonald
Kathy Rubel
Herbie Ruiz
Marguerite Scott
Ewa Szylak
Michelle Tan
Maggie Zabierowski,
Costumers

Katelynn Barker Louie Barrios Samantha Holmes Krystina Lowe Joanna Rzepka Sarah Santiago Kate Shattock Isaac B. Turner, Production Administrators

Samantha Holmes, Wardrobe Crew Head

Brigid Brown
Lauren Crotty
Nina Escobedo
Eric Guy
Dawn-Marie Hamilton
Mary Luchsinger
Wendy McCay
Moira O'Neil
Christopher Provyn
Sarah Santiago
Dulce Santillán
Roger Weir
Dressers

John Metzner, Wig &
Makeup Designer,
The Marlys A. Beider
Endowed Chair
Necole Bluhm,
Department Coordinator
Lynn Koroulis, Shop Manager

Brittany Powers, Wig & Makeup Crew Foreman

Katrina Brown Davis Campbell Martha Contreras Krista D'Agostino Eric Daniels June Gearon Nesrin Ismail Nini Jenkins Chantelle Johnson Lauren Mateling Megan Pirtle Liv Roach Alice Salazar Melanie Saso Jessica Scheithe Rachel Stiles, Wig & Makeup Run Crew

Davis Campbell
Colin Grice
Chantelle Johnson
Lynn Koroulis
Katie Kurz
James Ogle
Jessica Scheithe,
Wig Shop Staff

## **Production**

Rachel A. Tobias, Production Stage Manager

Katrina Bachus Jordan Lee Braun Adam Da Ros, Assistant Stage Directors

Alaina Bartkowiak Sandra Moore, Stage Managers

Adrienne Bader Alaina Bartkowiak Alycia Martin Sandra Moore Tommy Novak Daniel Sokalski Peggy Stenger Amy C. Thompson, Assistant Stage Managers







Local USA 829 of the IATSE is the union representing scenic, costume, lighting, sound and projection designers in Live Performance

## **Echoes of Excellence:**

# Celebrating the Legacy of Chicago's Black Voices

Saturday, November 8, 2025, 7:30 p.m.

A recital in collaboration with Black Leadership Arts Collective Alyson Cambridge, *Executive Director* 

Angela Brown, soprano
Alyson Cambridge, soprano
Jacqueline Echols, soprano
Laquita Mitchell, soprano
Lucia Bradford, mezzo-soprano
Issachah Savage, tenor
Chaz'men Williams-Ali, tenor
Lester Lynch, baritone
Kenneth Overton, baritone
Reginald Smith, Jr., baritone
Kevin Short, bass-baritone

Kevin Miller, pianist

Lighting and Projection Designer: **Bridget Williams**Stage Manager: **Sandra Moore**Assistant Stage Manager: **Gemma DeCetra** 

## LYRIC'S 2025/26 SEASON IS PRESENTED BY

The Robert and Penelope Steiner Family Foundation

Lyric Opera of Chicago thanks its Official Airline, **United Airlines**, and acknowledges support from the **Illinois Arts Council**.

John Mangum General Director Enrique Mazzola Music Director



## **PROGRAM**

Giacomo Puccini Tosca, "Mario! Mario! Mario!" Angela Brown (Tosca) (1858 - 1924)Chaz'men Williams-Ali (Cavaradossi) Giuseppe Verdi Un ballo in maschera, "Re dell'abisso affrettati" Lucia Bradford (Ulrica) (1813 - 1901)Otello, "Vane... Credo in un Dio crudele" Lester Lynch (lago) Christoph Willibald Gluck Laquita Mitchell (Queen Alceste) Alceste, "Divinités du Styx" (1714 - 1787)Jules Massenet Thais, "C'est toi, mon père" Jacqueline Echols (Thaïs) (1842 - 1912)Kenneth Overton (Athanaël) Georges Bizet Carmen, "Habanera" Alyson Cambridge (Carmen) (1838 - 1875)Vincenzo Bellini I puritani, "Suoni la tromba" Lester Lynch (Riccardo) (1801 - 1835)Kevin Short (Giorgio) Chaz'men Williams-Ali (Cavaradossi) Tosca, "E lucevan le stelle" Puccini Verdi Otello, "Si pel ciel" Issachah Savage (Otello) Reginald Smith, Jr. (lago) Rigoletto, "Caro nome" Jacqueline Echols (Gilda) Aida, "Ciel, mio padre" Laquita Mitchell (Aida) Kevin Short (Amonasro) "O terra addio" Angela Brown (Aida) Chaz'men Williams-Ali (Radamès) Lucia Bradford (Amneris) Richard Wagner Lohengrin, "Mein lieber Schwan" Issachah Savage (Lohengrin) (1813 - 1883)Florence Price Kenneth Overton "Song to the Dark Virgin" (1887 - 1953)Margaret Bonds "Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho" Lucia Bradford (1913 - 1972)Lena McLin "Hold Your Light" Reginald Smith, Jr. (1928 - 2023)"He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" Tutti **Bonds** 

**RUNNING TIME**: 85 minutes with no intermission



The Black Leadership Arts Collective (B.L.A.C.) started as a way for Black classical artists to reconnect in the wake of the pandemic. In just a few years, the organization has grown significantly, and now offers masterclasses and mentorship to a select group of young singers from across the country. Here, Executive Director Alyson Cambridge reflects on this concert, marking the group's second gala, and on the very personal aspect of helping young talent find their way.

## Echoes of Excellence is quite a collection of talent and repertoire — how did it come about?

Late last year, the Board and I were brainstorming about this project and talking about how we wanted to move the gala from a music school here in Manhattan into other major cities around the country. Chicago came up right away. And we said, "Well, if we're going to be in different cities each year, we should make it specific to each city, right?" So, we decided to pay tribute to some of the greatest Black opera singers who have appeared at Lyric.

## A great idea — but just a concept at first.

Once we got the different artists involved, we knew that we wanted to play on every individual's strengths. With the great baritone Kenneth Overton, one of our B.L.A.C. Board members, I sent out a survey of repertoire choices and suggestions. Kenneth is encyclopedic in general, but he did his research and we came up with a robust list of the Black operatic legends who have sung at Lyric. Leontyne Price. Some great Verdi men. Jessye Norman. We also asked the current artists for ideas about spirituals or songs

by composers, living or past, with connections to Chicago. And from those results we put together a program where everyone would be able to shine.

# So you, for instance, will sing the *Habanera* from *Carmen*.

We're a bit short of mezzos. Although I classify myself as a soprano, I'm also a bit of a zwischenfach, so while I sing roles like Bess and Tosca, Carmen has actually also become one of my signature roles over the past few years. So yes: I'll be honoring Grace Bumbry, who sang 10 or 11 roles at Lyric, including Carmen in 1964. Interestingly, her career was similar to mine in that she sang a range of both mezzo and soprano roles.



class. In the years in between, it became clear that there was a need amongst young Black singers for mentorship and scholarship, and for creating more performance opportunities for them. I became a part of B.L.A.C. at the end of 2024, and our goal continues to be to keep growing and building, raising awareness of the importance of our mission and creating more of these important opportunities and experiences for the artists we support.

# There wasn't something like this in place for those talents?

There are many organizations that do support young artists and musicians in wonderful ways. What I think is so important and special about B.L.A.C. is that it is so

specific. Our mentorship weekend is a good example. We have our four mentees, and we fly them into New York for three days. They arrive on a Friday afternoon, then they leave Sunday evening. We took them to the Met — the first time ever for several of them. We took them out to dinners and got to spend quality time with them. Voice lessons, a master class, career panels, and a headshot photoshoot session for all of them.

## She is one of the many legendary singers referenced on this program.

I have had the honor of meeting several of the legends we are paying tribute to, including Ms. Bumbry.

## Amazing!

Yes. Way, way back when I was a young artist at Opera Theatre of St. Louis. I actually sang in a master class for her. There are people who just have that "It factor" and have a wow presence and a regal bearing, and she was certainly one of them.

# In a way, you are a perfect example for the concept of this concert. Is this kind of an embodiment of what B.L.A.C. does?

B.L.A.C. officially formed in 2023, but it was initially just meant to be people getting together and finding community after the pandemic. In the summer of 2021, the founding members had the idea to have a gathering (they called it the "Cuzzins Cookout") in New York City, where Black vocalists and musicians could attend, for good times, food, and kinship. At the cookout, they noticed a lot of the younger artists were asking the older artists for advice. So, the next summer, they thought to incorporate a master

## The whole Board was involved with this?

Yes. It is one of the things about which we are most proud. We all remember when we were coming up in the industry. When I moved to New York, I was 23. I had just won the Met Competition, and started in the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. I was so green. And there was Morris Robinson, who, of course, has sung at Lyric, and he was a third-year artist in the program. He said, "I just want you to know I'm here for you." Frankly, 25 years ago, there weren't lots of singers of color singing on major operatic stages. There just weren't. Morris was one of them, and he was so supportive and kind to me. A few years later, Larry Brownlee would make his Met debut. I remember becoming friends with him, too. I remember the fellowship, the nurturing, and the advice that they gave to me as a young Black singer. But it was

few and far between. We've realized there's still a need for more. We have all gotten to a certain point in our respective careers, and we want to pay it forward.

## What are some other examples of the specificity you mentioned?

These young singers ask questions like, "Hey, I've got an audition. What do I wear?" "I have an audition for such and such company. I don't want to sing something from *Porgy and Bess* because I don't want to be typecast." "I'm auditioning for this particular agent, but I want to be considered for all repertoire. What do you suggest?" We go through their repertoire. There are lots of audition fees, travel fees, wardrobe, voice lessons, coachings — the list goes on. If you're not in a program like the Lindemann or the Ryan Opera Center, you've got to do it on your own. All of those things are expensive. And so we, as an organization, provide that financial support.

## For so many artists, being smart in the area of finances can be challenging.

That's part of why we provide much more than just that weekend in New York. Taxes, and international currencies, and even commissions, agents, and what percentages you should expect to be paying — all of that. The opera world is ever-changing. The climate in this country is ever-changing, and these young singers are having to navigate it. We want to be the organization to help them do that in the most loving and supportive way.

## I know you'll be thinking of Grace Bumbry as you prepare for this performance. Do your fellow singers feel similarly about their predecessors?

Absolutely. They paved the way for us all to be here. This is really a one-of-a-kind concert. To do an 85-minute recital comprised of all Black singers, arguably some of the best in the world, one night on stage paying tribute to those legends that inspired them — that's a big moment. I think all of us, all of us on the program, realize the profound significance and wonder of it all. Presenting this concert at the Lyric Opera of Chicago is just an immense moment of pride.





NYC Mentee Weekend, Spring 2025, with Alyson Cambridge, J'Nai Bridges, Larry Brownlee, and mentees Audrianna Hughes and Kathiana Dargenson.

# **Artist profiles**



## ANGELA BROWN SOPRANO

Brown has appeared on leading opera and symphonic stages on six continents including Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center,

National Opera of Paris, Vienna State Opera, Cape Town (South Africa) Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Edmonton Opera, Calgary Philharmonic, Shanghai World Expo, Moscow Performing Arts Center, the Metropolitan Opera, Bilbao Opera, Teatro La Fenice, Hamburg Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Cincinnati Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and more. She has been presented in solo recital throughout the United States, Canada, Spain, New Zealand, China, and Africa. She is a featured artist on the two-time Grammy winning recording Ask Your Mama, and originated the roles of Addie Parker/Charlie Parker's Yardbird and Cilla/Margaret Garner. Brown's repertoire includes the roles of Tosca, Aida, Amelia/Un Ballo in Maschera, Elisabetta/Don Carlo, and Leonora/Il trovatore. She is the founder of Morning Brown, Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to the development of multicultural role models and audiences in the performing arts, and serves as the Artistic and Educational Ambassador of Indianapolis Opera.



## ALYSON CAMBRIDGE SOPRANO

The soprano has made numerous appearances on the world's leading opera and concert stages for more than two

decades, including the Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, Washington National Opera, London's Royal Albert Hall, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and New York's Broadway Theatre, among others. She made her debut at Lyric as Giulietta/ Les contes d'Hoffman, followed by Julie LaVerne/Show Boat (both 2011/12). Cambridge is particularly known for her diverse vocal range and repertoire. Her most frequently performed operatic roles in recent seasons include the title roles of Tosca and Carmen. as well as Bess (Porgy and Bess), as well as both Mimi and Musetta (La Bohème), Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni), and Hanna Glawari (The Merry Widow). Equally at home in musical theater, jazz, and modern works, Cambridge has made Julie La Verne in Show Boat, a signature role, and has portrayed both Baroness Elsa Schraeder and Mother Abbess in various productions of The Sound of Music. She recently took on the title role in the new opera-play hybrid The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson. She has three albums including: From the Diary of Sally Hemings, a song cycle by William Bolcom and Sandra Seaton; Until Now, jazz and musical theater standards; and Sisters In Song, opera, song, and African-American spiritual duets with soprano Nicole Cabell.

Also an active producer, model, and actress, she has created multiple cross-genre musical productions, been featured in ad campaigns for fashion and beauty brands, and currently stars in Bravo and Peacock's new series, *Kings Court*. Cambridge serves as the Executive Director of B.L.A.C., the Black Leadership Arts Collective, and on artistic advisory boards for The Glimmerglass Festival, Daniel's Music Foundation, and Sing for Hope.



## JACQUELINE ECHOLS SOPRANO

Recent highlights for Echols include a reprisal of the role of Julie in Rhiannon Giddens *Omar* with the Quad City Symphony

(a role she first sang with LA Opera) as well as the world premiere of She Who Dared at Chicago Opera Theater in the role of Rosa Parks. Other recent engagements include the role of Juliette in Roméo et Juliette with both Arizona Opera and Opera San Antonio and the role of Mary Dee in the Liverpool Oratorio with Cincinnati Opera. This season, she will be featured at Virginia Opera as Mary Jane in Jake Heggie's Intelligence, and appear with the Reno Chamber Orchestra. Echols has been featured at the Metropolitan Opera as Clara in Porgy and Bess, Noémie in the family adaptation of Cendrillon, Poussette in Manon, and Musetta in La Bohème. She has also appeared as Clara with The Atlanta Opera and in her company debut with Des Moines Metro Opera. At Washington National Opera she sang Violetta in La traviata, Sister Helen in Heggie's Dead Man Walking, and Woglinde/Forest Bird in Der Ring des Nibelungen. She has also sung Violetta with Palm Beach Opera and has performed the role of Pip in Heggie's Moby Dick with LA Opera, The Dallas Opera, and Pittsburgh Opera.



## LAQUITA MITCHELL SOPRANO

Mitchell was recently nominated for a Grammy for her contribution as the soprano soloist in the world premiere of

Paul Moravec's Sanctuary Road at Carnegie Hall with Oratorio Society of New York. Last season, she made her début as Aida with Dayton Opera. She also joined California Symphony for Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Charleston Symphony for Sanctuary Road, the Bilkent Symphony in Turkey for a concert of American songs, Cleveland Orchestra for their 45th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Concert, and Austin Symphony as Bess in a concert production of Porgy and Bess. In concert this season, Mitchell will perform Strauss's Four Last Songs with Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, Dvorak's Te Deum and Beethoven's Choral Fantasy with Charleston

Symphony Orchestra, *Porgy and Bess* with Greenville Symphony Orchestra, and the world premiere of Nkeiru Okoye's *A Time for Jubilee* with Montgomery Symphony Orchestra and later Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra. Mitchell recently returned to the role of Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* with New Orleans Opera and Portland Opera and reprised her lauded performance of *Sanctuary Road* with Virginia Opera, Princeton Pro Musica, and the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park. She also appeared in concert with Saint Thomas Church for Poulenc's *Stabat Mater*, Chattanooga Symphony for Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, the Cleveland Orchestra for their community chamber concert series, the Waterbury Symphony for their performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 4, and Bard Summerscape to sing Verveine in Viardot's chamber opera *Le dernier sorcier*.



## LUCIA BRADFORD MEZZO-SOPRANO

Highlights this season for the mezzo-soprano include Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Cathedral Choir and Orchestra in New

York, and Adolphus Hailstork's Crispus Attuck with Cantori New York Chorus. She has performed a number of operatic roles including Zita/Gianni Schicchi, La Principessa/Suor Angelica, The Mother/L'Enfant des Sortileges, Mercedes/Carmen, Mrs. Quickly/ Falstaff, The Sorceress/Dido and Aeneas, Gertrude/Gounod's Romeo and Juliet, Hippolyta/A Midsummer Night's Dream, Miss Todd/The Old Maid and the Thief, Carmen in the Peter Brook adaptation of La Tragedie de Carmen, the Duchess of Plaza Toro/ The Gondoliers, Azelia Dessalines in the historic return of William Grant Still's Troubled Island with New York City Opera, Mamie Till/Emmett Till, Maria/Porgy and Bess with Des Moines Opera Company, Opera Carolina North Carolina Opera, the Mother of Paul Dunbar in the premiere of The Mask in the Mirror, and MLK's grandmother in the premiere of *I Dream*. She sang Berta/ Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Marcellina/Le Nozze di Figaro, and The Stepmother/Cendrillonwith North Carolina Opera. A frequent concert and recital performer, Bradford has sung at the Kimmel Center with Christoph Eschenbach, Bach's St. Matthew Passion with the Atlanta Symphony, the DeFalla ballet suite with the Greenwich Symphony orchestra, Julia Perry's Stabat Mater with Resonance Works, on New York City Opera's VOX concert series, with the Harlem Chamber Players in their annual Bach series and the St. Luke's orchestra in a concert version of Dido and Aeneas, and in the New York Festival of Song at Merkin Hall and the Kennedy Center performing Leonard Bernstein's Songfest.



## **ISSACHAH SAVAGE** TENOR

The tenor has sung the title roles in Tannhäuser, Otello, Peter Grimes, and Rienzi; Siegmund in Die Walküre; Radamès

in Aida; Bacchus in Ariadne auf Naxos; Der Kaiser in Die Frau ohne Schatten; Manrico in Il trovatore; and Narraboth in Salome, performing with the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera, Seattle Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Opéra National de Bordeaux, Dutch National Opera, Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse, and the Salzburg Festival, among others. Savage has appeared with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, and the Melbourne Symphony. His wide-ranging symphonic repertoire includes Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Smyth's Mass in D, Giddens and Abel's Omar's Journey, Mozart's Requiem, Verdi's Requiem Mass, Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde, and Schoenberg's Gurre-Lieder. This season, he makes debuts with the Milwaukee Symphony in Beethoven's Missa Solemnis and with the North Carolina Symphony in Mozart's Great Mass in C minor. He also returns to the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo for Puccini's Messa di Gloria and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.



## CHAZ'MEN WILLIAMS-ALI TENOR

Recent successes for the tenor include his return to Washington National Opera as First Prisoner/Fidelio, where he also sang the role

of Florestan. He made his debut in Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde with Wisconsin Youth Symphony, and sang Cavaradossi/ Tosca at Cedar Rapids Opera, a role to which he returns later this season at Florentine Opera. Past highlights include Nate/ Highway One USA at Los Angeles Opera, his return to Rodolfo/ La Bohème at Florentine Opera, and Zorn/Die Meistersinger in his debut at the Metropolitan Opera, where he also covered Spinner/Fire Shut Up in My Bones, a role he inaugurated in 2019 in the original production at Opera Theatre of St Louis. He sang Narraboth/Salome at Madison Opera and Rodolfo at Kentucky Opera following his work as principal tenor at Theater Heidelberg in Germany, where he appeared as Pinkerton/Madama Butterfly, Florestan, Canio/Pagliacci, Tebaldo/I Capuleti e i Montecchi, and Der Prinz/Rusalka. Williams-Ali made his international debut with English National Opera for the roles of Robbins and The Crab Man/Porgy & Bess, roles he also sang in Amsterdam. Originally from St. Louis, Williams-Ali spent two years in the Artist-in-Training program at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and then studied voice at the University of Iowa School of Music.



## LESTER LYNCH BARITONE

Lynch has appeared on major stages around the world, including Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera, Semperoper Dresden, Seattle

Opera, Berliner Philharmoniker, Vienna Volksoper, English National Opera, Norway's Bergen National Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and San Francisco Opera, among others. Notable contemporary highlights include roles in Dallapiccola's II Prigioniero, Busoni's Doktor Faust, and Nico Muhly's The Glitch. He made his debut at Teatro alla Scala singing the role of Crown in Porgy and Bess and at the Royal Opera House as Shylock in The Merchant of Venice. Other recent highlights include Zemlinsky's Symphonische Gesänge under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle in Munich and Frankfurt, and at Carnegie Hall with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. He appeared as Escamillo in Carmen with Edmonton Opera and Bluebeard in a new production of Bluebeard's Castle with both the Edinburgh Festival and New Zealand Opera. He made his film debut in 2021 as Merrivale in Gordon Getty's new opera, Goodbye, Mr. Chips. Lynch's recordings on Pentatone include Iago in Verdi's Otello, Michele in Puccini's Il Tabarro, Germont in La traviata, and his 2017 debut solo album, "On My Journey Now." His 2024 recording, Full Circle, features Mussorgsky's Songs and Dances of Death and Brahms's Vier ernste Gesänge. Lynch recently joined San Francisco Conservatory of Music as Professor of Voice.



## KENNETH OVERTON BARITONE

The baritone is a 2020 Grammy Award winner for Best Choral Performance in the title role of Richard Danielpour's *The* 

Passion of Yeshua with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by JoAnn Falletta. Operatic highlights include appearances with the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Royal Danish Opera, L'Opera de Montreal, Palacio Bellas Artes (Mexico City), Deutsche Oper Berlin, Capetown Opera, Opera Carolina, North Carolina Opera, Opera Montana, Connecticut Opera, Skylark Opera, Opera Memphis, Nashville Opera, Chattanooga Symphony and Opera, Sacramento Opera, Fresno Grand Opera, Pensacola Opera, Mobile Opera, Opera Tampa, Opera Idaho, Houston Ebony Opera, Opera Delaware, New Orleans Opera, Opera Ebony, New York City Opera, Bregenzer Festspiele (Austria), Fort Worth Opera, and the Welsh National Opera, among others. Overton has been a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, the Washington Chorus, Oregon Bach Festival, Chamber Music North West, NDR Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Lithuanian Philharmonic, Sopot Festival Poland, Klagenfurt Philharmonic, New Jersey Symphony, Lancaster Symphony Orchestra, Harrisburg Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, New Haven Symphony, Indianapolis Symphonic Choir, the National Chorale, Bard Music Festival, Austin Symphony, Duluth Superior Symphony, New York Chorale Society, Oregon Symphony, Annapolis Symphony, Harlem Chamber Players, Bard Music Festival, American Symphony Orchestra, and Spartanburg Philharmonic. This season, he makes his main stage directorial debut with *The Anonymous Lover*at Opera Columbus.



## **REGINALD SMITH, JR.**BARITONE

This season Smith makes his Carnegie Hall debut in Carlisle Floyd's *The Pilgrimage*, a role and house debut at Seattle Opera as the

Pirate King in The Pirates of Penzance, a house debut at Minnesota Opera as Tonio in Pagliacci, and at the Oakland Symphony in his first performance of Verdi's Requiem. He appears at Houston Grand Opera to make his role debut as Peter in Hansel und Gretel, and he performs the title role in Mendelssohn's Elijah with the Windsor Symphony Orchestra. He also returns to The Phoenix Symphony and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra for holiday performances. Previously at Lyric, he sang Amonasro/Aida and Emile Griffith/Champion (both 2023/24). Last season, the baritone made several notable debuts, including his role and house debut at Washington National Opera in the title role in Porgy and Bess, his Sacramento Philharmonic debut as Alfio in Cavalleria rusticana, and his Baltimore Symphony Orchestra debut as Amonasro in a staged version of Aida. In addition, he sang the role of Scarpia in *Tosca* with the New Orleans Opera and the New Mexico Philharmonic, and performed as a soloist in concerts with the New Jersey Symphony led by Xian Zhang, The Phoenix Symphony and Chorus, the Memphis Symphony, and St. Croix Valley Opera. He also made his Santa Fe Opera debut in Tosca and returned to the Houston Grand Opera to take on the title role in Falstaff.



## **KEVIN SHORT**BASS BARITONE

The bass-baritone's current and future engagements include The Old Duke/
Guntram (Carnegie Hall American

Symphony Orchestra) and Il Re/Aida (Washington Opera), as well as Angelotti/Tosca, Lepidus/John Adams' Anthony and Cleopatra, and Frazier/Porgy and Bess at the Metropolitan Opera. Other recent highlights include Porgy/Porgy and Bess (NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester Hamburg), Headmaster/Preacher/ Mr. Dingleas in Paul McCartney's Liverpool Oratorio (Cincinnati Opera), Beethoven's 9th Symphony (Philadelphia Orchestra), Mahler's 8th Symphony (Grant Park Music Festival), Rivers/ Ralston/Goodbye, Mr. Chips (recording and film), and the title role in Don Giovanni (Joburg Theatre). Short has performed more than 20 roles at the Met, including Sam/Un Ballo in Maschera, Uncle Paul in Terence Blanchard's Fire Shut Up in My Bones, Doctor Grenvil/La traviata, and Pfleger/Elektra. Other role highlights include the title role in Der fliegende Holländer, Sarastro/Die Zauberflöte, Rocco and Don Fernando/Fidelio, Nick Shadow/The Rake's Progress, Mephistopheles/Faust, Phillippe II/Don Carlos, Zaccaria/Nabucco, Sparafucile/Rigoletto, and Jack Rance/La Fanciulla del West.



## KEVIN MILLER PIANIST

Recent collaborations for the American pianist include recitals with Lawrence Brownlee at Carnegie Hall and Houston

Grand Opera, countertenor John Holiday at the Kennedy Center and The Barbican in London, and Joseph Calleja and Nadine Sierra at the Supreme Court of the United States, as well as an appearance with Calleja on NPR's Tiny Desk Concert series. Miller prepared soprano Jessye Norman for performances of Laura Karpman's Ask Your Mama, which was performed at Carnegie Hall. He also collaborated with countertenor David Daniels in a recital at the Glimmerglass Festival. Miller can be heard on the recording of Been in De Storm So Long, which features baritone Kenneth Overton. He has participated in some of the country's most prestigious festivals and young artist apprenticeships, including The Tanglewood Institute of Music, Aspen Summer Music Festival, The Cleveland Art Song Festival, San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program, Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, and the Glimmerglass Festival, where he was also invited to serve as a vocal coach. While a student at the Boys Choir of Harlem, he studied piano with the late conductor and pianist Warren Wilson, and accompanied the choir on tours of Europe, Israel, Austria, and Japan. Miller received his Bachelor of Music in Piano at the Mannes College of Music and received both a Master of Music degree and the Artist Diploma in Collaborative Piano under the tutelage of Martin Katz at the University of Michigan School of Music. L



# **About us**

B.L.A.C. is comprised of eight of the leading Black classical vocal artists and musicians performing and teaching around the world today. All of B.L.A.C.'s founding Board Members and Executive Director share the singular common goal to uplift, empower and create mentorship, scholarship and performance opportunities for others in their community so that the greater musical arts community may benefit from their enormous gifts and talents.

**Executive Director**Alyson Cambridge

**Board Members** 

J'Nai Bridges Lawrence Brownlee Kenneth Kellogg Laquita Mitchell Kenneth Overton Morris Robinson Kevin Short

# The **2025 | 26** Season

Mascagni / Leoncavallo

Cavalleria rusticana & Pagliacci

November 1 - 23, 2025

Black Leadership Arts Collective

**Echoes of Excellence: Celebrating** the Legacy of Chicago's Black Voices

November 8, 2025

Orff

Carmina Burana

November 14, 16, 18, 2025

Billy Corgan

A Night of Mellon Collie and Infinite Sadness

November 21 - 30, 2025

Richard Strauss

Salome

January 25 - February 14, 2026

Mozart

Così fan tutte

February 1 - 15, 2026

Renée Fleming in Recital

Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene

February 5, 2026

Puccini

**Madama Butterfly** 

March 14 - April 12, 2026

Gabriela Lena Frank & Nilo Cruz

El último sueño de Frida y Diego

March 21 - April 4, 2026

Movie Nights at Lyric

Mary Poppins in Concert Live to Film

April 10 & 11, 2026

avery r. young

safronia

April 17 & 18, 2026

Create your own series and save!

Lyric

CHICAGO

lyricopera.org 312.827.5600