



FACULTY RECITAL

Sidney Outlaw, baritone
Warren Jones, piano

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2022 | 7:30 PM
GORDON K. AND HARRIET GREENFIELD HALL

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PROGRAM

RICKY IAN GORDON
(b. 1956)

The Genius Child
(Text by Langston Hughes)

Winter Moon
Genius Child
Kid in the Park
To Be Somebody
Troubled Woman
Strange Hurt
Prayer
Borderline
My People
Joy

ROBERT OWENS
(1925–2017)

3 Songs for Baritone and Piano, Op. 41
(Text by Claude McKay)

The Lynching
If we must die
To the white fiends

DOROTHY RUDD MOORE
(1940–2022)

Fourth of July Speech
from the opera *Frederick Douglass*
(Text by Frederick Douglass)

HARRY T. BURLEIGH
(1866–1949)

Five Songs on Poems by Laurence Hope
(Text by Adela Cory as Laurence Hope)

The Jungle Flower
Among the Fuchsias
Till I Wake
Worth While

TRADITIONAL SPIRITUALS

To be announced from the stage

PROGRAM NOTES

The Genius Child

Ricky Ian Gordon

Text by Langston Hughes

For many listeners, the writings of Langston Hughes (1901–1967) may need no introduction. Hughes was a leader in the Harlem Renaissance and a central figure of American poetry in the early 20th century. Today, he is considered by many one of the greatest American poets of all time.

Ricky Ian Gordon is an American composer whose musical language emerges from the traditions of American musical theatre and cabaret. His songs have been performed by many of America’s leading classical singers and his operas championed by many of the country’s most significant opera companies.

The Genius Child is a collection of ten poems, with an intriguing organization. The first six songs are each settings of brief, scenic poems. After the first song, *Winter Moon*, a prologue of sorts, each of the following five focuses on an image of a single person (or in the case of *To Be Somebody*, two people). Ricky Ian Gordon’s theatrical settings breathe life into each of these characters, helping to pull from the page the hopes and pains inscribed in Hughes’s poems.

The final four songs in the collection mark a sudden change in style. Ricky Ian Gordon’s settings suddenly more than double in length, meditating on the texts, rather than setting them once through from beginning to end. At the same time, all of the poetry moves to the first-person voice—suddenly our speaker is the subject of each poem and both the music and text take on an aspect both deeply intimate and personal.

The first of these, *The Prayer*, sees the singer asking a simple question of God, “Which way to go?,” which Ricky Ian Gordon answers with an endless series of step-wise descents, creating a sense of searching, but never finding. This constant reaching in the accompaniment continues across the entire piece, even over the singer’s final note—perfectly capturing the sense of uncertainty that Hughes’s brilliant 33-word poem conveys.

3 Songs for Baritone and Piano, Op. 41

Robert Owens

Text by Claude McKay

Throughout his considerable career as a composer and concert pianist, Robert Owens contributed over a dozen extended works for voice and piano to the repertoire. His songs set poetry by an incredible range of authors, American and European alike, but seemed to give special favor to the poets of the Harlem Renaissance.

One of these was the distinguished Jamaican-American poet and journalist Claude McKay (1889–1948). Nearly forty years exactly after the poet's death, Owens undertook setting three of McKay's most difficult sonnets: "The Lynching" (1920), "If We Must Die" (1919), and "To the White Fiends" (1912). Each offers an indictment of racism and proffers a solution or answer, in typical sonnet fashion, although McKay frequently thwarts his audience's expectations by manipulating that aspect of the form.

In the first setting, *The Lynching*, McKay's opening eight lines depict, through a variety of traditional Christian imagery, a picture of a man burned to death, hanged from a tree. At the poem's turn, instead of offering some answer to the horrible crime that has occurred, McKay's final lines simply depict onlookers in the morning that follows. Owen's setting heartbreakingly draws out the word "danced," and gives life to that dance in the piano, underlining the horrible truth in McKay's final lines:

And little lads, lynchers that were to be,
Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.

Fourth of July Speech from *Frederick Douglass* **Dorothy Rudd Moore**

Text by Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass gave his famous speech “What, to the slave, is the Fourth of July?” on July 5, 1852, in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, New York. He challenged his audience that day to consider the ideals of freedom and liberty for which that Independence Day was meant to stand, and the bitter irony of inviting a Black American to speak upon them, when most Black Americans were still enslaved. In this aria from her 1985 opera *Frederick Douglass*, noted American composer and educator Dorothy Rudd Moore captures not only the force of Douglass’s biting criticism, but also the powerful resolve with which he must have delivered those words.

Five Songs on Poems by Laurence Hope **Harry T. Burleigh**

Text by Adela Cory as Laurence Hope

Adela Cory (1865–1904), also known as Adela Florence Nicolson, was an English author who wrote under the pseudonym Laurence Hope. Her short but remarkable career led her to fame in the first few years of the 20th century, following her 1901 publication of *Garden of Kama* (or *India’s Love Lyrics*). This was a collection of poems which she claimed were translations of earlier poets; however, fairly shortly thereafter a consensus that these had in fact been her own original poems was reached. After her early death, her son published another volume of her work, *Selected Poems*.

Harry T. Burleigh was an American composer and arranger, as well as a professional baritone. His influential friendship with Anton Dvořák, to whom he introduced spirituals, is often remarked upon, as well as his performance career, which helped to open several historically white performance spaces to Black performers. Perhaps most remarkable, however, were his accomplishments as a composer of art song. During his lifetime, Burleigh was one of America’s most famous song composers, performed on concerts all over the country by the most highly regarded performers of his day.

Five Songs on Poems by Laurence Hope is a prime example of why Burleigh’s music was so successful. While unabashedly romantic sounding, with an extended harmonic language that could just as easily arise from influences of early jazz as from the chromatic context, the songs are still entirely approachable. The

melodies are intuitive and well supported by the piano part; the text is clear; and its setting is always dramatically compelling. The music is fundamentally vocal in nature, crafted with the singer in mind, from its first note to its last.

Traditional Spirituals

Over My Head / Fix Me Jesus,

City Called Heaven (arr. Hall Johnson),

Git on Board (arr. Evelyn Simpson Curenton)

The individual origins of American spirituals are often difficult to trace.

Sometimes these songs were carefully handed down through generations of enslaved Black Americans, only to have one person commit them to the page and claim sole credit decades later. Other times, so-called folklorists, claiming to have collected traditional songs, instead passed off their own original work as found, rather than composed.

Perhaps more important than their origin, however, is their function. The spiritual is without question the richest and most complex folk tradition found in American music, but its most significant quality, by far, is the impact that it has had. *Git on Board*, for instance, first published in 1872, is sometimes credited as traditional, but other times attributed to a Baptist minister by the name of John Chamberlain. By the 1950s, however, it had become a protest song, with revised lyrics, such as “As fighters we go hungry, / sometimes don’t sleep or eat, / But when you fight for freedom, / In the end, you’ll be free.” Those words and their music helped to inspire in a people’s fight for equality: an incredible accomplishment, wherever they had begun.

—Evan L. Snyder

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Sidney Outlaw

Lauded by the *New York Times* as a “terrific singer” with a “deep, rich timbre,” and the *San Francisco Chronicle* as an “opera powerhouse” with a “weighty and forthright” sound, Sidney Outlaw, the grand prize winner of the Concorso Internacional de Canto Montserrat Caballe in 2010, delights audiences in the U.S. and abroad with his rich and versatile baritone and engaging stage presence. A graduate of the Merola Opera Program and the Gerdine Young Artist Program at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, this rising American baritone from Brevard, North Carolina recently received a Grammy nomination for the Naxos Records recording of Darius Milhaud’s 1922 opera trilogy, *L’Orestie d’Eschyle* in which he sang the role of Apollo. The 2021–22 season featured Mr. Outlaw as Salieri in *Mozart and Salieri* with Opera San Jose, Jake in *Porgy and Bess* with Greensboro Opera, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Pensacola Opera and Opera Saratoga, and Marcello in *La bohème* with Florentine Opera. Engagements for the COVID-affected 2019–20 season included his San Francisco Opera debut as the First Mate in *Billy Budd*, *Messiah* with the National Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony, Tommy McIntyre in *Fellow Travelers* with Madison Opera, Dizzy Gillespie in *Yardbird* with New Orleans Opera (cancelled), Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis* with the Colorado Symphony, Mahler’s *Songs of a Wayfarer* with the Toledo Symphony, and Frank in *Die Fledermaus* with Opera Theatre of St. Louis (cancelled). In previous seasons, Mr. Outlaw sang Dizzy Gillespie in Charlie Parker’s *Yardbird* with both Atlanta Opera and Arizona Opera, returned to the Baltimore Symphony as a soloist in Handel’s *Messiah* and Minnesota Opera for the world premiere of *The Fix*, sang Fauré’s Requiem at Augustana College, Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem* at Cornell University, and made his debut with Mill City Summer Opera as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*. Mr. Outlaw has been a featured recitalist with Warren Jones at Carnegie Hall and performed *Elijah* with the New York Choral Society. He traveled to Guinea as an Arts Envoy with the U.S. State Department, where he performed a program of American music in honor of Black History Month and in remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King. Mr. Outlaw made his English National Opera debut in the 2011–12 season as Rambo in *The Death of Klinghoffer* and joined the Metropolitan Opera roster in 2014–15, also for *The Death of Klinghoffer*. Recent engagements include Tommy in *Fellow Travelers* with Minnesota Opera, Frank Lloyd Wright in *Shining Brow* with UrbanArias, Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* with Madison Opera, Dandini in *La Cenerentola* with Greensboro Opera, Bach’s B Minor Mass with the Oratorio

Society of New York, his Spoleto Festival debut as Jake in *Porgy and Bess*, Dallapiccola's *Il Prigioniero* with the New York Philharmonic, Schaunard in *La bohème* with the Ash Lawn Festival, and Guglielmo in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with North Carolina Opera. Other roles include Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Atlanta Opera, the title role in *Moses* with the American Symphony Orchestra, *Malcolm X* at New York City Opera, Prince Yamadori in *Madame Butterfly* at Opera on the James, Ariodante in Handel's *Xerxes* and Demetrius in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the International Vocal Arts Institute, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, and his international debut as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, in both Germany and Israel.

A sought-after concert singer and recitalist, Mr. Outlaw made his Schwabacher Recital debut at the San Francisco Opera center with pianist John Churchwell and collaborates regularly with renowned pianists Warren Jones, Carol Wong, Steven Blier, and Michael Barrett. His concert and recital appearances include debuts of renowned works at major concert halls: Haydn's *Creation* and Handel's *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 at Avery Fisher Hall, Mahler's *Lieder eines Fabrenden Gesellen* with Music Academy of the West and "Wednesday At One" at Alice Tully Hall, John Stevens in the world premiere concert of H. Leslie Adam's opera *Blake* at the prestigious Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, and the world premiere of Wayne Oquin's *A Time to Break Silence: Songs Inspired by the Words and Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, commissioned by the Juilliard School.

Mr. Outlaw won second prize in both the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation's International Competition and the 2011 Gerda Lissner Foundation Awards; was a National semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, a semi-finalist in the Francisco Viñas International Singing Competition, and finalist in both the Concours International Musical de Montreal and the George London Foundation; and won grand prize in the Florida Grand Opera/YPO Vocal Competition. He holds a Bachelor's degree in music performance from the University of North Carolina and a Master's degree in vocal performance from the Juilliard School.

Warren Jones

Warren Jones—pianist, master teacher, chamber musician, conductor, and vocal coach—was born in Washington, D.C. and grew up in North Carolina. A resident of New York City, Mr. Jones is a former member of the Collaborative Piano faculty at Manhattan School of Music. He has served as Artist-in-Residence in Music at the Mason Gross School of Music at Rutgers University and Artist-in-Residence in Opera at New England Conservatory and at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. For many years he was the head of the Vocal Piano program during summers at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, California.

His credentials as a musical jurist are impeccable: he was on the jury of the First China International Piano Competition in Beijing in 2019, as well as the Montreal International Vocal Competition in 2018, and has served on the juries of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, the Naumburg Awards, and the Metropolitan Opera Auditions.

Having enjoyed a long performing career, he has occupied the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Chair in Principal Piano at Camerata Pacifica and been recital partner for Stephanie Blythe, Anthony Dean Griffey, Eric Owens, Andrew Garland, Kathleen Battle, Sidney Outlaw, Samuel Ramey, Dame Kiri TeKanawa, Christine Brewer, Barbara Bonney, James Morris, Martti Talvela, Thomas Hampson, Marilyn Horne, Carol Vaness, Richard O'Neill, and Lynn Harrell. Mr. Jones has toured with both the Juilliard Quartet and the Borromeo Quartet and has performed several times with members of the Takacs Quartet in varied repertory.

Mr. Jones has been invited three times to the White House in Washington to perform at state dinners, and he has been a guest at the United States Supreme Court for their annual musicales on three occasions.

As a conductor Mr. Jones has led opera performances of Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti, Mascagni, Bernstein, and Menotti, as well as the 2014 world premiere at Houston Grand Opera of Iain Bell's setting of *A Christmas Carol*, starring Jay Hunter Morris and directed by Simon Cowell.

His discography includes 32 recordings on every major label, featuring diverse content, styles, and periods. Most recently his newly released recording with Sidney Outlaw, *Lament*, is garnering critical acclaim and reflects their ongoing interest in Black American music and poetry.

In his spare time, Mr. Jones enjoys cooking, history, politics, exercise, and music. . . .

ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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