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orchestra**

**David Robertson**  
The Lowy Chair of  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

**2016  
SEASON**



**THE GERSHWIN<sup>®</sup>  
PORGY AND BESS<sup>®</sup>**

SPECIAL EVENT

**Saturday 26 November 7pm**

**Thursday 1 December 7pm**

**Friday 2 December 7pm**

**Saturday 3 December 7pm**

■ A BMW Season Highlight



A BMW  
Season Highlight



Principal Partner



FREE EVENTS



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**Program to be announced**

Presented by Sydney Festival

**Sat 14 Jan 8pm**

Sydney Domain

**Symphony in Parramatta Park**

**Program to be announced**

**Sat 28 Jan 8pm**

Parramatta Park

CLASSICAL



**Victory Lap**

*Mozart & Haydn in the City*

**MOZART** Piano Concerto No.12 in A, K414

**HAYDN** Symphony No.68

**Toby Thatcher** conductor (pictured)

**Andrey Gugin** piano

*Winner of the 2016 Sydney International Piano Competition*

Mozart in the City

**Thu 2 Feb 7pm**

City Recital Hall

Tea & Symphony

**Fri 3 Feb 11am**

*complimentary morning tea from 10am*



**Music under the Moon**

*Lantern Festival Celebration*

**TAN DUN** Passacaglia – Secret of

Wind and Birds **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**

**BARTÓK** The Miraculous Mandarin: Suite

**TAN DUN** Nu Shu – The Secret Songs of Women

**Tan Dun** conductor • **Louise Johnson** harp

**Sat 11 Feb 8pm**



**Organ Grandeur**

*Joseph Nolan in Recital*

**LISZT** Fantasy and Fugue on 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam', S.259

**WIDOR** Organ Symphony No.5

**Joseph Nolan** organ

Tea & Symphony

**Fri 17 Feb 11am**

*complimentary morning tea from 10am*



**Vengerov plays Brahms**

*Tchaikovsky 5*

**BRAHMS** Violin Concerto

**TCHAIKOVSKY** Symphony No.5

**David Robertson** conductor

**Maxim Vengerov** violin

Special Event

Premier Partner Credit Suisse

**Fri 17 Feb 8pm**

**Sat 18 Feb 8pm**



**Robertson conducts Tchaikovsky**

**LIGETI** Romanian Concerto

**BARTÓK** Four Orchestral Pieces

**TCHAIKOVSKY** Symphony No.5

**David Robertson** conductor

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**sydney symphony  
orchestra**

**David Robertson**  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

OPERA IN THE CONCERT HALL  
SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER, 7PM  
THURSDAY 1 DECEMBER, 7PM  
FRIDAY 2 DECEMBER, 7PM  
SATURDAY 3 DECEMBER, 7PM

.....  
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

**THE GERSHWINS'  
PORGY AND BESS®**

**Porgy and Bess – an opera in three acts  
by George Gershwin, DuBose Heyward,  
Dorothy Heyward and Ira Gershwin**

**David Robertson** *conductor*

Porgy           **Alfred Walker** *soprano*  
Bess           **Nicole Cabell** *soprano*  
Sporting Life   **Jermaine Smith** *tenor*  
Crown           **Eric Greene** *baritone*

*Featuring*

**Julia Bullock, Karen Slack, Gwendolyn Brown, Leon Williams  
with Calvin Lee, John Fulton, Alison Buchanan, Chloé Zuel,  
Cornelius V. Johnson III, Eddie Muliaumaseali'i, Michael  
Redding, Brendan Taylor, Richard Sydenham, Steve Rodgers  
and Djakapurra Beatty**

**Sydney Philharmonia Choirs**  
Brett Weymark, Music Director

**Mitchell Butel** *stage director*

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.....  
Pre-concert talk by Genevieve Lang at 6.15pm in the Northern Foyer. For more information visit [sydneyssymphony.com/speaker-bios](http://sydneyssymphony.com/speaker-bios)

.....  
Estimated durations: 80 minutes, 20-minute interval, 75 minutes  
The performance will conclude at approximately 10.05pm

.....  
The SSO thanks Kenneth R Reed AM for his generous support as Principal Patron of these performances

.....  
The performance on 3 December is a BMW Season Highlight



A BMW  
Season Highlight



Principal Partner

# **PORGY AND BESS®**

**An opera in three acts**

**by George Gershwin, DuBose Heyward,  
Dorothy Heyward and Ira Gershwin**

**David Robertson** *conductor*

Porgy	<b>Alfred Walker</b> <i>bass-baritone</i>
Bess	<b>Nicole Cabell</b> <i>soprano</i>
Sporting Life	<b>Jermaine Smith</b> <i>tenor</i>
Crown	<b>Eric Greene</b> <i>baritone</i>
Clara	<b>Julia Bullock</b> <i>soprano</i>
Serena	<b>Karen Slack</b> <i>soprano</i>
Maria	<b>Gwendolyn Brown</b> <i>contralto</i>
Jake	<b>Leon Williams</b> <i>baritone</i>
Mingo / Nelson / Crab Man	<b>Calvin Lee</b> <i>tenor</i>
Robbins	<b>John Fulton</b> <i>tenor</i>
Lily / Strawberry Woman	<b>Alison Buchanan</b> <i>soprano</i>
Annie	<b>Chloé Zuel</b> <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Peter	<b>Cornelius V Johnson III</b> <i>tenor</i>
Frazier	<b>Eddie Muliaumaseali'i</b> <i>baritone</i>
Jim / Undertaker	<b>Michael Redding</b> <i>baritone</i>
Policeman	<b>Brendan Taylor</b> <i>actor</i>
Detective	<b>Richard Sydenham</b> <i>actor</i>
Mr Archdale / Coroner	<b>Steve Rodgers</b> <i>actor</i>
Scipio	<b>Djakapurra Beatty</b> <i>actor</i>

## **Sydney Philharmonia Choirs**

Brett Weymark, Music Director

## **Mitchell Butel** *stage director*

Amy Campbell Assistant Director and Movement Consultant

Toby Thatcher, Assistant Conductor

Christopher Cartner, Repetiteur and Prompt

## **PRODUCTION**

Des O'Neill, Sound Design

Max Wilkie, Lighting Design

Laura Daniel, Stage Design (SSO Production Manager)

David Thomas (Thomas Creative)

Peter Silver, Artist Liaison Coordinator

*and* Sydney Theatre Company, Company B and Opera Australia for  
donations of props and costumes

# SYNOPSIS

## The Setting

The action of Porgy and Bess takes place in 'Catfish Row', a black tenement near the wharves of Charleston, South Carolina. The time is 'the recent past' – around 1930.

## ACT I

### Scene 1: Catfish Row – A Summer Evening.

The orchestra sets the scene, introducing piano blues, dancing and a crap game. We meet Clara singing her baby to sleep (Summertime) and her husband Jake, a fisherman; Porgy, a crippled beggar; Crown, a dockhand, and his girlfriend Bess. Crown kills Robbins (one of the crap players) and flees, abandoning Bess. Sporting Life, a drug dealer, sells Bess 'happy dust' and tries to persuade her to go to New York with him. While the community shuns Bess, Porgy shows compassion and takes her in.

### Scene 2: Serena's Room – The Following Night.

Mourners gather to sing spirituals with Serena, Robbins' widow. Detectives arrive to investigate the murder.

## ACT II

**Scene 1: Catfish Row – A Month Later.** It's the day of the community picnic and Porgy sings a high-spirited banjo song (I got plenty o' nuttin').

Frazier, the lawyer, proposes to Porgy that he can arrange Bess's divorce from Crown. (This will cost more since she has never been married!) Sporting Life again pursues Bess, but once more she rejects him, and now his 'happy dust' too. Jake and Clara invite Bess to the picnic; she's reluctant to leave Porgy, but he urges her to go (Bess, you is my woman).

## INTERVAL

**Scene 2: Kittiwah Island – Evening, the Same Day.** Sporting Life sings the supremely cynical 'It ain't necessarily so'. It turns out Crown has been hiding out on the island, and he pulls Bess away from the picnic, despite her protests.

### Scene 3: Catfish Row – Before Dawn, A Week

**Later.** Bess, who has returned days after everyone else, is sick and delirious. She pleads with Porgy to protect her from Crown, who has promised to return for her. A storm breaks.

### Scene 4: Serena's Room – Dawn of the Following

**Day.** As the storm rages Crown enters, mocking his frightened neighbours. But when Clara realises in terror that Jake's boat has capsized, only Crown is willing to follow her to help.

## ACT III

**Scene 1: Catfish Row – The Next Night.** Jake, Clara and Crown are all believed dead. But Crown returns under the cover of darkness to claim Bess and Porgy kills him.

**Scene 2: The Next Afternoon.** The police investigate the second murder and Porgy is taken away to identify Crown's body. Sporting Life tries yet again to seduce Bess with his happy dust and promises of life in New York. She sends him away, but he leaves a packet of dope behind...

**Scene 3: A Week Later.** Porgy – who has refused to identify Crown – returns to find Bess gone. Undaunted, he's determined to go after her (Oh Lawd, I'm on my way).

# Gershwin's Vision: An American Folk Opera

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*In the composer's words...*

No story could have been more ideal for the serious form I needed than *Porgy and Bess*. First of all, it is American, and I believe that American music should be based on American material. I felt when I read *Porgy* in novel form that it had 100 per cent dramatic intensity in addition to humour. It was then that I wrote to DuBose Heyward suggesting that we make an opera of it... Mr Heyward and I, in our collaboration on *Porgy and Bess*, have attempted to heighten the emotional values of the story without losing any of its original quality. I have written my music to be an integral part of that story.

Since the opening of *Porgy and Bess* I have been asked frequently why it is called a folk opera. The explanation is a simple one. *Porgy and Bess* is a folk tale. Its people naturally would sing folk music. When I first began work on the music I decided against the use of original folk material because I wanted the music to be all of one piece. Therefore I wrote my own spirituals and folk songs. But they are still folk music – and therefore, being in operatic form, *Porgy and Bess* becomes a folk opera.

It is true that I have written songs for *Porgy and Bess*. ...I realised I was writing an opera for the theatre and without songs it could be neither of the theatre nor entertaining... Of course, the songs in *Porgy and Bess* are only a part of the whole. The recitative I have tried to make as close to the Negro inflection in speech as possible, and I believe my song-writing apprenticeship has served invaluablely in this respect, because the song writers of America have the best conception of how to set words to music so that the music gives an added expression to the words. I have used sustained symphonic music to unify entire scenes, and I prepared myself for that task by further study in counterpoint and modern harmony.

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## ‘Writing an Opera for the Theatre’

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David Garrett on *Porgy and Bess*, the most ambitious project of George Gershwin’s career

As a child I laboured for a time under the delusion that George Gershwin was African-American. The truth was embarrassing to discover, but perhaps the confusion was understandable: At the time I knew of his music only *Rhapsody in Blue*, which seemed enough like jazz. And I realised he had composed an opera about African-Americans, *Porgy and Bess*. Perhaps at that time in my life the assumption was already in the air that only a black composer could have composed a ‘black’ opera. The same prejudice was strong enough, even when Gershwin composed *Porgy and Bess*, to work against its acceptance by aware African-American intellectuals and artists. If I’d had a chance to see the opera staged, that would have been – under the terms of the Gershwin Estate’s control of performing rights – a performance by an all-black cast.

So I had my excuses – but the truth, as usual, is complex. *Porgy and Bess* emerged at a time of increasing African-American self-consciousness, awareness and confidence. Its eventual public success made it a commercial property, and also an advertisement that a major American music drama could be about black people, performed by black people – a useful propaganda line in the 1950s and 60s when the opera toured the world, often under US State Department auspices.

### An American folk opera

George Gershwin, a New York-born Jew of immigrant stock, chose to make the most ambitious project of his career a full-scale black opera. It was his own choice to forgo some income from his highly lucrative career as song-writer and pianist-performer to devote the better part of two years to a single work. Although he called *Porgy and Bess* an ‘American folk opera’, Gershwin also said: ‘If I am successful it will resemble a combination of the drama and romance of *Carmen* and the beauty of *Meistersinger*.’ Critics have taken a long time to accept this ambitious comparison as anything more than vain boastfulness, by a musician of whom Irving Berlin said ‘the rest of us were songwriters. George was a composer’.

George Gershwin’s ‘black’ experiences were acquired mainly in Harlem nightspots, and a nodding acquaintance (according to his biographer Charles Schwartz) with a number of black musicians and entertainers. Nevertheless Gershwin’s long-held interest in black culture was more than 1920s chic – it went back to his

### GEORGE & IRA GERSHWIN



The all-too-brief life and career of George Gershwin (1898–1937) reads like a metaphor for the American Dream. The Brooklyn boy born Jacob Gershovitz to Russian Jewish parents started out as a Tin Pan Alley song plugger before conquering Broadway and Hollywood. After Ira Gershwin (1896–1983) had made his own foray into songwriting, the two brothers collaborated on their first Broadway hit, *Lady, Be Good* (1924). Their songwriting partnership produced a string of hit shows and songs that defined an era and brought them popular success.

But George also longed to be accepted as a ‘serious’ composer, and he made a distinctively American contribution to the classical tradition with concert works such as *Rhapsody in Blue* and the Piano Concerto in F. The opera *Porgy and Bess*, his last major work, hinted at the yet-to-be-fulfilled promise of a soaring artistic trajectory cut short by his untimely death of a brain tumour at 38. At his funeral service on 15 July 1937 at Temple Emanu-El on New York’s Fifth Avenue, Rabbi Stephen S Wise described George Gershwin as ‘the singer of the songs of America’s soul’. Even Ira couldn’t have put it better.



**The set for the 1935 premiere of Porgy and Bess**

interest in ragtime as a teenage pianist, his borrowing of blues vocabulary for songs, and his public identification after *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) as a 'jazz' composer. The Gershwin family had lived in Harlem, filling up with African-Americans during and after World War I. George admired black pianists such as James P Johnson and Eubie Blake, and studied piano for a time with Charles Luckeyth 'Luckey' Roberts. Another black musician, Will Vodery, helped Gershwin by orchestrating his *Blue Monday* (1922), a 20-minute one-act opera 'à la African-American' written for a Broadway revue.

### **Heyward's Porgy**

In 1926 Gershwin happened upon the novella *Porgy* by Edwin DuBose Heyward, published the previous year. He immediately wrote to Heyward proposing collaboration in an opera based on his novel. DuBose Heyward (1885–1940) came of Southern 'aristocratic', plantation-owning stock. He was born and grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, where *Porgy* is set, and even worked for a time on the Charleston waterfront, checking cotton bales. Heyward's idea for the story came from a newspaper article about a badly crippled black beggar, Samuel Smalls, who had shot at a woman and then tried to escape from the police on the goat-drawn packing case on wheels in which he moved about the city, hence his nickname 'Goat Cart Sam'.

**'Samuel Smalls, who is a cripple and is familiar to King Street, with his goat and cart, was held for the June term of court of sessions on an aggravated assault charge. It is alleged that on Saturday night he attempted to shoot Maggie Barnes... His shots went wide of the mark.'**

**CHARLESTON NEWS AND COURIER**



Heyward's identification with the character on whom he modelled Porgy no doubt owed something to suffering himself from the effects of a crippling attack of polio in his youth. The setting of *Porgy*, Catfish Row, was based on Cabbage Row in Charleston, a dilapidated tenement formed by a pair of once luxurious three-storey buildings, joined by an arcade leading to a courtyard. (See page 12, The Real Catfish Row)

### From book to play to opera

At first, the idea of an opera was put aside because DuBose and his wife Dorothy were working on a dramatisation of the book, successfully produced by New York's Theatre Guild in 1927. Gershwin saw the play, and remarked years later that *Porgy* was 'still the most outstanding play that I know about the coloured people'. Meanwhile, Gershwin was willing not to get in the way when the singer and actor Al Jolson showed an interest in playing Porgy, in a musical version by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein. (Al Jolson, a Jewish-American, is perhaps best remembered for performing in black-face, including in *The Jazz Singer*, the first feature film to include synchronised sound.) 'The sort of thing I have in mind for *Porgy*,' Gershwin wrote to Heyward, 'is a much more serious thing than Jolson could ever do...If you can see your way to making some ready money from Jolson's version, I don't know that it would hurt a later version with an all-coloured cast.' So there is some irony in Duke Ellington dismissing *Porgy and Bess*, deploring 'Gershwin's lampblack negroisms'.

### A New Yorker in Charleston

The Jolson *Porgy* came to nothing, and in November 1933 the Theatre Guild announced it would produce an operatic version of *Porgy*, to be written by Gershwin, Heyward, and Gershwin's brother Ira. Gershwin began to visit Charleston to work with Heyward. In the summer of 1934 he lived in a rented cottage on Folly Island, off the Carolina coast, gathering ethnographical experiences to add to black churches, homes, nightclubs and prayer meetings. 'James Island, with its large population of primitive Gullah Negroes lay adjacent,' Heyward recalled, 'and furnished us with a laboratory in which to test out theories, as well as an inexhaustible source of folk material.' Gershwin joined in the complicated rhythms of Gullah 'shouting' – DuBose even claimed the composer stole the show from the champion 'shouter' – and the hurricane scene in *Porgy and Bess*, with its six different prayers sung simultaneously, was inspired by what he and Heyward heard standing outside a 'Holy Rollers' church.

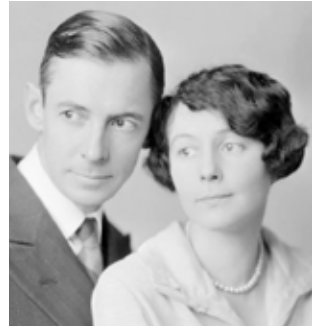


PHOTO: FLORENCE VANDAMM

### DUBOSE & DOROTHY HEYWARD

DuBose Heyward (1885–1940) came from an aristocratic Charleston family but he did not grow up in privilege: he was poorly educated and plagued by illness, including (at 18) polio. As a young man he worked in a hardware store and, most significantly, among the stevedores and fishermen on Charleston's wharves as a kind of customs agent. Eventually he moved into the insurance business in partnership with a friend and found the financial independence that would allow him to write. In 1922 he met Dorothy Kuhns (1890–1961), an Ohio-born playwright, during a fellowship at a New Hampshire artists colony, and they married the following year. It was Dorothy who recognised the dramatic potential of DuBose's *Porgy*, and together they transformed it into a play, which ran for 367 performances on Broadway during 1927–28 and featured an African-American cast. Five years later the couple collaborated with the Gershwins in creating *Porgy and Bess*, often working at the Heywards' Folly Island holiday retreat. After DuBose's death, Dorothy had to fight to ensure her proper credit for *Porgy and Bess* – winning on Broadway but losing out to movie giant MGM when the film starring Sidney Poitier was made in 1959.

## The Real Catfish Row

...not a row at all, but a great brick structure that lifted its three stories about the three sides of a court. The fourth side was partly closed by a high wall, surmounted by jagged edges of broken glass set firmly in old lime plaster, and pierced in its centre by a wide entrance-way. Over the entrance there still remained a massive grill of Italian wrought iron, and a battered capital of marble surmounted each of the lofty gate-posts. The court itself was paved with large flag-stones, which even beneath the accumulated grime of a century, glimmered with faint and varying shades in the sunlight.

*Porgy* [DuBose Heyward]

The 'Catfish Row' setting for DuBose Heyward's novella *Porgy* was based on a neighbourhood near the fishing wharves of Charleston, South Carolina. (The word 'porgy' itself refers to the local catfish,

a seafood delicacy.) The fictional address was inspired in part by Cabbage Row in Church St. At the turn of the 20th century, more than a hundred black people lived in the communal tenement – a dilapidated structure hinting of former grandeur – growing vegetables in the courtyard and selling them to passersby through the front windows.

One of the colourful figures of the period was Samuel Smalls, a crippled black man who would ride around Charleston in his goat cart, selling peanuts and gambling in the notorious Bull Pen. 'Swear to God,' declared a local old-timer some years ago, 'you could never tell which one smelled the worse, the goat or Sammy Smalls!'

In March 1924, Goat Cart Sam – as he was known – was hauled before court and charged for attempting to shoot a girlfriend. DuBose Heyward read the report in the local newspaper and created the more saintly figure who would become the central character of *Porgy and Bess*.

PHOTO: JOHN BENNETT (CHARLESTON MUSEUM)



Cabbage Row in Charleston, 1928

## The music of *Porgy and Bess*

Gershwin began with what came most easily to him: 'I am starting with the songs and spirituals first.' 'Summertime', sung in the opening scene by Clara as a lullaby to her baby, was the first music to be written. This song locates Catfish Row in a pre-industrial Eden, where innocence will be tragically betrayed. Ultimately it is the drama of *Porgy and Bess*, and its treatment in music, by which the opera is most satisfyingly assessed, but the 'folk' element, with its race dimensions, has obscured this, while contributing to *Porgy and Bess's* special character.

In *Porgy*, DuBose Heyward, an intellectual as well as a creative artist, had written a novel, then a play, about black life that captured wide attention, more so than any such work since Harriet Beecher Stowe's pre-Civil War *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. But inevitably Heyward, a courtly and reserved Southerner, was far from the point of view of the 'Harlem Renaissance' of the 1920s, whose black writers moved beyond white writers' dialect works and conventional negro imitations. The Harlem literary movement included sophisticated explorations of black life and culture. They stimulated a new confidence and racial pride. James Weldon Johnson, one of the leaders of this movement, gave the 'Negro spiritual' an entirely new twist in his *God's Trombones* (1927).

The Theatre Guild production of *Porgy* as a play had incorporated traditional spirituals, but Gershwin composed his own. As he explained: '*Porgy and Bess* is a folk tale. Its people would naturally sing folk music. When I first began work on the music I decided against the use of original folk music because I wanted the music to be all of one piece. Therefore I wrote my own spirituals and folk songs. But they are still folk music – and therefore, being in operatic form, *Porgy and Bess* becomes a folk opera.' In the 1920s this was a somewhat naïve account of 'folk', which by then was beginning to gain the connotation of 'respect for otherness'. Gershwin was in danger of unwitting racial stereotyping – 'Uncle Tom' indeed.

### Mastering opera

The fact that Gershwin was a Jewish songwriter with a Broadway career also raised questions when he used the term 'opera'. After the success of *Rhapsody in Blue*, Gershwin accepted a commission to compose a concerto, and it was rumoured he had needed to look up what a concerto was. His acquaintance with opera was thin, having attended only a few performances. But his ambition was to master opera as he had mastered his other skills, knowing it would take a longer effort.

*Porgy* has been described as the first major Southern novel to present African-Americans realistically and without condescension. At the same time, Heyward offers a one-sided view: fired by his observations in Charleston's downtown, his story virtually ignores the elite and the 'strivers' of the community and personal aspiration is given ambiguous treatment: we see the lawyer selling phony divorces, or the dapper city slicker Sporting Life. The three male archetypes are the powerful 'bad man', the seducer and, in *Porgy*, the saint. Ironically, the real life Goat Cart Sam was a drinker, gambler and womaniser, prone to violence and abuse – characteristics dramatised in Crown rather than *Porgy*. Bess is torn between the life she knows, but fears, with Crown and the new possibilities of life with *Porgy*; her choices are further complicated by drug addiction and when Sporting Life takes her away to New York the implication is that she has returned to prostitution.

This is a continuing controversy of *Porgy and Bess*, says soprano Nicole Cabell, 'because it depicts an African-American community in not exactly the best light'. Referring to the confronting themes of drug use and domestic violence in the story, she suggests that perhaps it was 'considered safer' to treat these themes in the context of an African-American community, that the Catfish Row community was used 'as a voice for things that were going on everywhere'.



George Gershwin, DuBose Heywood and Ira Gershwin around the piano in 1935.

George's autograph gives the notes for 'It ain't necessarily so'.

It was DuBose Heyward's idea, not Gershwin's, to involve the composer's brother Ira in devising the libretto. As a kind of middleman, Ira could bring the 'Gershwin' flavour to the scenes and lyrics Heyward submitted, and help ensure their theatrical viability. Heyward remembered how 'the brothers Gershwin, after their extraordinary fashion, would get at the piano, pound, wrangle, sweat, burst into weird snatches of song, and eventually emerge with a polished lyric'. DuBose Heyward was understating his own role: since *Porgy and Bess* tends to be advertised as the work of 'the Gershwins', we should remember Heyward's authorship not only of the original literary property, but also of the draft scenario, and the lyrics of 'Summertime', 'My man's gone now', and 'A woman is a sometime thing'. Ira Gershwin could claim exclusive credit for 'It ain't necessarily so' and other songs, but across the libretto 'one cannot easily tell', Charles Schwarz observes, 'where Southerner Heyward leaves off and New Yorker Ira begins'. The consistency of style that George Gershwin wanted began with the text.

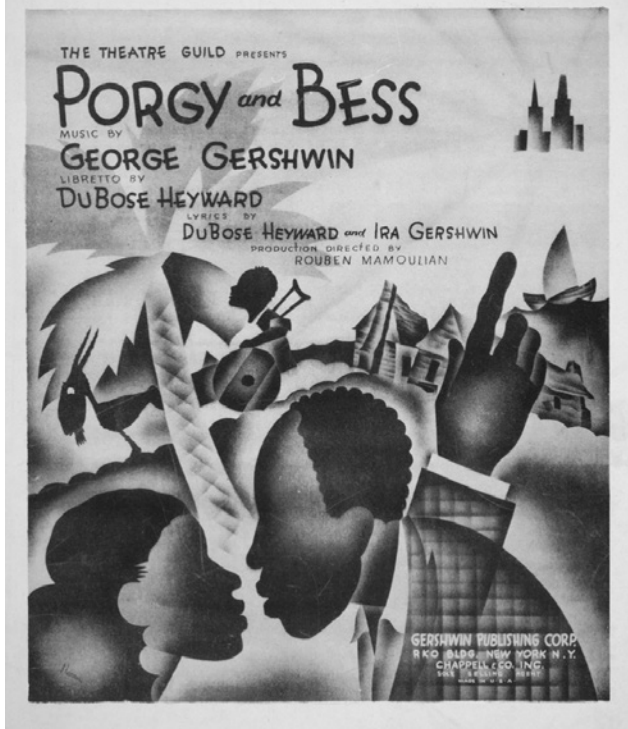
### Opera on Broadway

When music from *Porgy and Bess* became truly popular and widely heard after Gershwin's death, it was mainly a few famous songs, out of context. Do people realise that 'It ain't necessarily so' is a kind of anti-Credo – a secular parody of call-and-response – sung by Sporting Life, the serpent of this Garden of Eden, to shock Serena and her God-fearing friends on their Kittiwah Island picnic? Without that knowledge, and without the inflexions of a singer who has acted Sporting Life on stage, the song's humour can seem harmless, indeed benign. These songs can make an impact outside their dramatic setting, but that

**DuBose Heyward 'has largely gone unrecognised as the author of the finest set of lyrics in the history of the America musical theatre.... most of the lyrics in *Porgy* – and all of the distinguished ones – were composed by Heyward. His work is sung, but he is unsung.'**

**STEPHEN SONDHEIM**

IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO



‘Sometimes people say, “It can’t be a serious opera. You can’t have that many good tunes.” But you look at the first act of Mozart’s *Figaro* and every single aria is a hit. It’s the same with Gershwin.’

DAVID ROBERTSON

doesn't make *Porgy and Bess* less operatic. Gershwin defended himself: 'I am not ashamed of writing songs at any time as long as they are good songs. In *Porgy and Bess* I realised that I was writing an opera for the theatre and without songs it could be neither of the theatre nor entertaining from my viewpoint.' And he added that Verdi's operas contain 'song hits', whereas *Carmen* 'is almost a collection of song hits'.

'Of course', Gershwin concluded these remarks, 'the songs in *Porgy and Bess* are only a part of the whole...I have used symphonic music to unify entire scenes.' Nowadays *Porgy and Bess* is often performed complete or with minimal cuts, coming in at around three hours. But Gershwin was a practical man of the theatre – even between the Boston try-out premiere of 30 September 1935 and the New York opening at the Alvin Theater on 10 October, he had cut out 15 minutes from the production, saying: 'You won't have a Porgy by the time we reach New York. No one can sing that much, eight performances a week!' (Remember that the crippled Porgy does most of his singing on his knees.)



The highbrow critics' reactions were mostly unfavourable, if implicitly contradictory: 'much too long', 'many miles from opera', 'essentially a series of song hits'. The Gershwins had invested in the production in hope of making money from the novelty of an (almost) all-black cast, but the run of 124 performances was considered a box-office failure, and the investment was not recouped. (They lost close to half a million dollars by today's reckoning.) The opera's first real success came in 1941, when Cheryl Crawford mounted a version of *Porgy and Bess* from which 45 minutes had been cut, and the sung recitatives replaced by spoken dialogue. (In 1976 Houston Grand Opera famously restored the full, original score.)

DuBose Heyward thought from the start that dialogue would be preferable to recitatives, but Gershwin was intent on composing a fully sung opera. Perhaps his main concern was to get away as far as possible from the conventions of Broadway entertainment, his sphere of music theatre up to then. Gershwin's ambition produced a work asking to be judged as a full-scale music drama.

### **'Porgy lived in a Golden Age...'**

With or without recitatives and 'symphonic' unification, reminiscences and even leitmotifs, *Porgy and Bess* stands or falls by its music for the main characters and their tragedy. The story, above all, is Porgy's – the title *Porgy and Bess* was adopted in part to avoid confusion between the opera and the play. Wilfrid Mellers has written that 'DuBose Heyward's novel *Porgy* is a parable about alienation, oppression, and the inviolability of a radical innocence of spirit, even in a corrupt world'. This was what attracted Gershwin, even though the book, Mellers admits, 'offers a synthetic picture of Negro life'.

Heyward had transcended the limitations of his white Southern culture's understanding of black life, and touched on a universal theme. The opening paragraph of the novel begins: 'Porgy lived in a Golden Age...an age when men, not yet old, were boys in an ancient, beautiful city that time had forgotten before it destroyed.'

**'Gershwin was both shrewd and advanced for his time. He was shrewd in the sense that *Porgy* had had tremendous success on Broadway in 1927. The play's director [Rouben Mamoulian] had used all sorts of musical ideas, which the public went crazy for. And Gershwin had the same director for the opera. Many of the elements that would have been shocking at the time were already common currency because people knew the play. It's similar to Da Ponte and Mozart using Beaumarchais' *Marriage of Figaro* – a play which already existed and had that cachet of being slightly dangerous, but which had already got past the censors and been accepted.'**

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Porgy, already an old man, is waiting, and lonely, with the loneliness perhaps only a cripple can experience. 'When Gawd made cripple,' he sings, 'he mean him to be lonely. Night time, day time, he got to trabble that lonesome road.' The opera is about Porgy's fulfilment of his manhood, so a production is on the right track if he discards his crutches, at the end of the opera, as he goes to seek Bess in New York. To achieve this manhood, Porgy kills Bess's other lover, Crown, and Mellers senses Gershwin and Heyward's hint that Crown and Porgy are not villain and hero, but separated parts of one human whole: Porgy as man before the fall, innocent and good, but broken and unfulfilled; Crown, as fallen man, 'yet a Lucifer figure, impressive in his pride, brute strength, and self-reliance'.

Gershwin, after auditioning literally hundreds of black bass-baritones, found just one he thought would be suitable for either Porgy or Crown. He wanted singers who could bring out character, whether in the set pieces or in the recitative which is potential song. What mattered to Gershwin, as Mellers underlines, is that moments of feeling should all be musically true. His facility and experience in the theatre enabled him to draw on many musical styles: spiritual, blues, Gospel chants, frenzied drumming, jazz and burlesque elements (in *Sporting Life's* music), and lyrical melodies, notably in the great duets for the title characters. That Gershwin was able to absorb these elements into a recognisable, distinctive style 'all of one piece', is a credit to his technique and artistic determination. If the most memorable tunes stand out, that was what Gershwin would have wanted. 'Summertime', 'My man's gone now', 'I got plenty o' nuttin'" and 'Bess you is my woman now' – these are some of the best tunes Gershwin wrote, at least as memorable as in any other 20th-century opera. They make the most persuasive case for coming to the opera house to find out what they really mean.

DAVID GARRETT © 2006/2016

In performances with full orchestra, *Porgy and Bess* calls for two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes (one doubling cor anglais), four clarinets (one doubling bass clarinet) and a bassoon; two alto saxophones and one tenor saxophone; three horns, three trumpets, two trombones and a tuba; timpani and percussion; piano (including a 'de-tuned' piano); banjo; and strings.

*Porgy and Bess* was first presented in Australia in a touring production by the New Zealand Opera Company in 1965–66. The SSO has performed the *Catfish Row* symphonic suite and other concert selections (on occasion with singers), most recently in 2012, conducted by Bramwell Tovey. In 1995 Andrew McKinnon staged the first Australian-mounted production with a concert version at the Sydney Opera House featuring Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Pacific Islander singers. And in 2006 a touring production with an African-American cast led by Cedric Cannon and La-Rose Saxon was staged at Sydney Lyric with an orchestra of about 25 players.

**'Porgy and Bess showed that musicals could go beyond the idea of just entertainment by welding things of a deeper nature onto the story. This is really the beginning of things like *Oklahoma* or *Carousel*, Weill's musicals, *West Side Story*... This idea that you could take a serious story and tell it through music.'**

**DAVID ROBERTSON**

## MORE MUSIC

### READING PORGY

*Porgy and Bess* has its origins in Dubose Heyward's novella *Porgy*, which is still available in print and as an ebook (Kindle, Kobo, Nook, etc.). Charleston native Kendra Hamilton, of the University of Virginia, has also prepared a hypertext version that can be read online, together with illustrated essays. Find it here: [bit.ly/PorgyNovella](http://bit.ly/PorgyNovella)

### READING GERSHWIN

Among the most recent biographies and studies is *George Gershwin: His Life and Work* by Howard Pollack, who devotes four chapters alone to *Porgy and Bess*. (University of California, 2006) Florence Stevenson De Santis's biography in the Portraits of Greatness series is generously illustrated with photographs and artwork, including Gershwin's own paintings, and original imagery from the early productions of *Porgy and Bess*. (Treves Publishing, 1987)

### PORGY AND BESS

Recordings of *Porgy and Bess* fall into two groups: those that capture the 'operatic version' reflecting Gershwin's original conception, and those that present the work as a Broadway production.

Most significant among the latter is John Mauceri's 2006 recording with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, which adopts the original 1935 production. The cast includes Nicole Cabell (as Clara) and Calvin Lee (Peter), both appearing with the SSO this week, with Alvy Powell (Porgy) and Marquita Lister (Bess).

DECCA 475 7877

The New Broadway Cast recording captures the controversial rethinking of *Porgy and Bess*, directed by Diane Paulus in 2011/12 with Audra McDonald as Bess and Norm Lewis as Porgy. Paulus's production has been described as 'politically radical and dramaturgically original' and it includes revisions to the 1935 libretto in which Paulus and playwright Suzan-Lori Parks set out to 'excavate' and modernise the story 'and particularly Bess'. Cellist and composer Deidre Murray has adapted the music for an 18-piece orchestra.

PS CLASSICS 1206

Among classic recordings is Lorin Maazel's from 1976 with the Cleveland Orchestra and Chorus and a cast led by Willard White (Porgy) and Leona Mitchell (Bess).

DECCA 478 5785

More recently the San Francisco Opera filmed its 2009 Francesca Zambello production of *Porgy and Bess* for DVD/Blu-ray release. The cast is led by Eric Owens (Porgy) and Laquita Mitchell (Bess) with some faces familiar from these SSO performances: Karen Slack (Serena), Eric Greene (Jake) and Calvin Lee (Peter).

EUROARTS 2059638 (DVD), 2059634 (Blu-ray)

## Broadcast Diary

### December



92.9 ABC  
Classic FM

### [abc.net.au/classic](http://abc.net.au/classic)

SSO concerts are regularly recorded for broadcast across Australia. For concert broadcasts in December and into the new year, please check the ABC Classic FM website.

### SSO Radio

Selected SSO performances, as recorded by the ABC, are available on demand:

[sydneyphilharmonic.com/SSO\\_radio](http://sydneyphilharmonic.com/SSO_radio)



### SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR

Tuesday 13 December, 6pm

Musicians and staff of the SSO talk about the life of the orchestra and forthcoming concerts.

Hosted by Andrew Bukencya.

[finemusicfm.com](http://finemusicfm.com)





MICHAEL TAMMARO

## David Robertson

THE LOWY CHAIR OF  
CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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David Robertson is a compelling and passionate communicator whose stimulating ideas and music-making have captivated audiences and musicians alike. A consummate musician and masterful programmer, he has forged strong relationships with major orchestras throughout Europe and North America.

He made his Australian debut with the SSO in 2003 and soon became a regular visitor to Sydney, with projects such as *The Colour of Time*, a conceptual multimedia concert; the Australian premiere of John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* Symphony; and concert performances of *The Flying Dutchman* with video projections. In 2014, his inaugural season as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director, he led the SSO on a seven-city tour of China.

Last year he launched his 11th season as Music Director of the St Louis Symphony. Other titled posts have included Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Music Director of the Orchestre National de Lyon and resident conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. An expert in 20th- and 21st-century music, he has also been Music Director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris (where composer and conductor Pierre Boulez was an early supporter). He is also a champion of young musicians, devoting time to working with students and young artists.

David Robertson is a frequent guest with major orchestras and opera houses throughout the world and in recent seasons he has conducted the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras, as well as the Berlin Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2014 he conducted the controversial but highly acclaimed Metropolitan Opera premiere of John Adams' *Death of Klinghoffer*.

His awards and accolades include Musical America Conductor of the Year (2000), Columbia University's 2006 Ditson Conductor's Award, and, with the SLSO, the 2005–06 ASCAP Morton Gould Award for Innovative Programming. In 2010 he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and in 2011 a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

David Robertson was born in Santa Monica, California, and educated at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied French horn and composition before turning to conducting. He is married to pianist Orli Shaham.

*The position of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director is also supported by Principal Partner Emirates.*



## Alfred Walker *bass-baritone*

### Porgy

Alfred Walker was born in New Orleans and is a graduate of Dillard University, Loyola University and the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Program. He has since gained international acclaim for his commanding performances, and in the 2016–17 season will make role debuts as Wotan (*Das Rheingold*) and Méphistophélès (*The Damnation of Faust*), and create the title role of baseball player Josh Gibson in Sonenberg’s *Summer King* (Pittsburgh Opera). Among his most oft-performed roles is the title role in *The Flying Dutchman*, with recent performances including Oper Köln, Luxembourg, Seattle Opera, Boston Lyric Opera and Theater Basel, and Orestes in *Elektra*, which he has sung at La Scala, Seattle Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin. Other highlights include the Four Villains in Barrie Kosky’s production of *The Tales of Hoffman*, *Bluebeard’s Castle* with the New Japan Philharmonic, return visits to Basel to sing Amfortas (*Parsifal*) and Amonasro (*Aida*), Kurwenal (*Tristan und Isolde*). He has sung the role of Porgy for Los Angeles Opera, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Tanglewood and Boston. His concert repertoire includes Beethoven’s Ninth, Verdi’s Requiem, *The Kingdom* by Elgar and Mahler’s *Kindertoten-Lieder* and *Rückert-Lieder*, and he has appeared with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the BSO at Carnegie Hall, and the New York Philharmonic (Colin Davis), among others.



## Nicole Cabell *soprano*

### Bess

California-born Nicole Cabell studied at the Eastman School of Music before joining the Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Center for American Artists. In 2005 she won the Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, followed by her BBC Proms debut in 2006, and she is now one of the most sought-after lyric sopranos in the world. In the 2016–17 season she will sing the Countess (*The Marriage of Figaro*) for Angers Nantes Opéra and, following an acclaimed role debut as Mimì (*La bohème*) for Paris National Opera, she sing this role with Cincinnati Opera and Minnesota Opera. Last season she made her company and role debut as Alcina for Grand Théâtre de Genève. Full lyric roles are equally prominent in her repertoire, including Giulietta (*I Capuleti e i Montecchi*), and Violetta (*La Traviata*) for San Francisco Opera and Covent Garden. She also sings Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*), Hanna (*The Merry Widow*) and Adina (*The Elixir of Love*), and, in addition to the Countess, Mozart roles such as Pamina and Donna Elvira. She is especially adept in French operatic and concert repertoire and has sung Leïla (*The Pearlfishers*), Juliette (*Roméo et Juliette*) and *La damoiselle élue* by Debussy (London Symphony Orchestra) as well as Poulenc’s Gloria (Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Charles Dutoit) and Poulenc’s Stabat Mater (Orchestre National de France). Her award-winning debut album, *Soprano*, was a Gramophone magazine Editor’s Choice.



## **Jermaine Smith** *tenor*

Sporting Life

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Jermaine Smith is closely associated with the role of Sporting Life, which he has sung for Teatro San Carlo in Naples, Seattle Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Washington National Opera, Opera Pacific, Los Angeles Opera and at the Tanglewood Music Festival with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, as well as the Hollywood Bowl and in the Cape Town Opera's guest engagement at the recently opened opera house in Oslo, Norway. He has also sung the role in Japan, Germany, Sweden, Austria, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Sicily and the Grand Canary Islands. Most recently his portrayal has been heard at the Opéra-Comique in Paris, Théâtre de Caen, Opera de Luxembourg, Granada Festival and Santa Fe Symphony, and in Latvia's Cesis Arts Festival for that country's first complete performance of *Porgy and Bess* since 1973. His other operatic repertoire includes the title role in *Joshua's Boots* (premiered at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and revived at Kansas City Lyric Opera), and Henry Davis in *Street Scene* and Zdzetrick in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha* (both with Opera Theater of St Louis). He has also made numerous appearances with the St Louis Symphony. Jermaine Smith was in the first cohort of high school singers accepted into the Opera Theatre of St Louis Artists-in-Training; he subsequently studied at the New England Conservatory of Music and University of Missouri–St Louis.



## **Eric Greene** *baritone*

Crown

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Eric Greene studied at the Baltimore School for the Arts and the Juilliard School, and is now making his mark throughout the world, with current roles including Bank Account Billy in *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (Rome Opera), the lead in the new opera *The Knife of Dawn* (London Roundhouse), Gunther in *Götterdämmerung* (Palermo) and Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* (Birmingham Opera). This season he will also sing Crown for the Spoleto Festival USA. He has previously sung Crown for Toledo Opera, Springfield Symphony, Atlanta Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the role of Jake for Los Angeles Opera. He made his first foray into Wagnerian repertoire singing Melot (*Tristan und Isolde*) for the Casals Festival, Puerto Rico, subsequently appeared as Donner (*Das Rheingold*) in Palermo, and sang Gunther in Opera North's *Götterdämmerung*. His repertoire also includes Amonasro (*Aida*), Germont (*La Traviata*), Ping (*Turandot*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) Ivan Khovansky (*Khovanshchina*) and Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), and he created the role of Robert Garner in *Margaret Garner*. American company highlights include Washington National Opera, Portland Opera and San Francisco Opera, and in Europe he has appeared for Paris Opéra-Comique, Granada International Festival and in Luxembourg and Lisbon. In the UK he has sung Billy Bigelow (*Carousel*) for Opera North, and created the roles of the Janitor in *Between Worlds* (English National Opera) and Segismundo in *Life is a Dream* (Birmingham).



## **Julia Bullock** *soprano*

Clara

As a young singer Julia Bullock participated in the Artists-in-Training program with the Opera Theater of St Louis, subsequently graduating from the Eastman School of Music, Bard Conservatory and the Juilliard School. In 2012 she won the Young Concert Artists International Auditions and she holds the YCA Lindemann Vocal Chair. Recent accolades also include a 2016 Sphinx Foundation Medal for Excellence, the Lincoln Center's 2016 Martin E Segal Award and first prize in the 2014 Naumburg International Vocal Competition. This season she will sing Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) at Aix-en-Provence and Kitty Oppenheimer in the BBC Symphony Orchestra production and recording of John Adams' *Dr Atomic*, conducted by the composer. She will also appear for the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Adams' *El Niño, West Side Story* at the Hollywood Bowl and in recital with tenor Ian Bostridge. She has performed with the London Symphony Orchestra (with Simon Rattle), New World Symphony, Orchestra of St Luke's, New York Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony, and sang the lead role in the Berlin Philharmonic's Orchestra Academy performance of Saariaho's *Passion de Simone*, directed by Peter Sellars, which she reprised at the 2016 Ojai Festival. Her operatic roles also include Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Monica (*The Medium*) and the title roles in *The Indian Queen*, *Cendrillon*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*.



## **Karen Slack** *soprano*

Serena

A native of Philadelphia, Karen Slack graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music and is an alumna of the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program and the Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival. At 18 she was the youngest-ever winner of the Rosa Ponselle International Competition for the Vocal Arts held in New York and she went on to win numerous competitions and awards, including the Montserrat Caballé International Competition, Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Marian Anderson ICON Award and the inaugural José Iturbi International Competition for Voice held in Los Angeles. The 2016–17 season brings Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (Nashville Opera), Sister Rose in *Dead Man Walking* (Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Vancouver Opera), her Scottish Opera debut, and Serena with the National Chorale, New York. Previous appearances as Serena include Washington National Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. Among her recent performance highlights are the title role in *Aida* (Austin Lyric Opera), Emelda Griffith in *Champion* (Opera Parallèle), her role debut as Alice Ford in *Falstaff* (Arizona Opera), her Metropolitan Opera and international broadcast debuts in the title role of *Luisa Miller*, her Carnegie Hall debut as Agnès Sorel in Tchaikovsky's *Maid of Orleans* (a role she also performed with San Francisco Opera) and her featured role in Tyler Perry's film and soundtrack *For Colored Girls*.



## **Gwendolyn Brown** *contralto*

Maria

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Originally from Memphis, Gwendolyn Brown studied music at Fisk University, Nashville (where she is now Assistant Professor of Voice), the University of Memphis and the American Conservatory of Music, and participated in the young artist programs of Des Moines Metro Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. She has since performed for many of the top opera companies and orchestras throughout the United States as well as in Germany, Italy, Spain, Amsterdam and Brussels. Earlier this year, she performed a tour de force of four contralto character roles for the Utah Festival Opera, including the Principessa in *Suor Angelica*, and the coming season will include performances for the Ojai Festival. Her recent performances in George Lewis's new opera *Afterword: The AACM (as) Opera* were met with critical acclaim, and other highlights include creating the lead role, Marie Laveau, in *Crescent City* for Los Angeles' new opera company The Industry, as well as appearances as Queenie in *Show Boat* and Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*. An expert in American Negro spirituals, she was a soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in its Beyond the Score project: *Dvořák's New World Symphony*. Gwendolyn Brown has performed her signature role of Maria with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, New Orleans Opera and Washington National Opera as well as in Germany, Amsterdam and Brussels.



## **Leon Williams** *baritone*

Jake

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Born in New York, Leon Williams is a graduate of Westminster Choir College of Rider University and the Juilliard School. He has performed the role of Jake with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra and Dallas Opera, as well as the roles of Porgy (St Petersburg Philharmonic) and Sporting Life (Duluth-Superior Symphony). Other opera credits include Anthony (*Sweeney Todd*) for Toledo Opera, and Mozart's Papageno and Figaro for Hawaii Opera Theatre. His concert repertoire includes Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Britten's *War Requiem*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Mahler's Eighth, Handel's *Messiah*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Vaughan Williams' *Dona nobis pacem* and *A Sea Symphony*, and the Brahms, Verdi and Fauré requiems, and he has performed with orchestras throughout the United States, collaborating with conductors such as Marin Alsop, Bramwell Tovey and Raymond Leppard. Highlights include a Charles Wuorinen program with James Levine at New York's Guggenheim Museum. His song recital appearances include Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall, the 92nd Street Y and San Francisco's Herbst Theater as well as in Japan. He has also appeared on Broadway and on tour in the musical *Ragtime* and is equally in demand as a guest artist for programs of show tunes, standards and spirituals. His recordings include Delius's *Appalachia* and *Sea Drift* (Florida Orchestra and Stefan Sanderling), *The Art of Leon Williams* and *Leon Sings Noël*.



### **Calvin Lee** *tenor*

Mingo / Nelson / Crab Man

Calvin Lee was born in Bronx, New York and grew up in Miami, Florida. He studied at the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, Trento Conservatorium in Italy, and the New World School of the Arts in Miami. After graduating, he was invited to sing in Houston Grand Opera's international tour of *Porgy and Bess*, performing at La Scala in Milan, Opéra Bastille in Paris, and in Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka. Since then he has appeared in *Porgy and Bess* at the Paris Opéra Comique, Théâtre de Caen and Royal Danish Opera Copenhagen, and performed in concert versions with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl and with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Tanglewood and Boston. He sings Peter in the Nashville Symphony Orchestra's recording of *Porgy and Bess*, conducted by John Mauceri, and appears on DVD/Blu-ray (again as Peter) with San Francisco Opera. He has performed for major opera companies and festivals such as San Francisco Opera, Grand Théâtre de la Ville de Luxembourg, Teatro Real in Madrid, the Granada Festival, Atlanta Opera, Tulsa Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Connecticut Opera, Opera Memphis, Opera Colorado and Opera Naples in Florida. And in concert he has been heard in Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Haydn's *Creation*, Mozart's Requiem, Schubert's Mass in G, Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.



### **John Fulton** *tenor*

Robbins

American baritone John Fulton is best known for his outstanding portrayals of the leading baritone roles in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, including engagements as Jake at the Royal Danish Opera House in Copenhagen, with the Chicago Lyric Opera, with Lorin Maazel at the Castleton Festival, and with Bramwell Tovey and the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood. As a member of the New York Harlem Productions tour, he sang the roles of Jake, Crown and Jim in numerous European opera houses, as well as making his debut with the Berlin Philharmonic in a concert version conducted by Simon Rattle. Other engagements include Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) and Schaunard (*La Bohème*) for Arizona Opera, and Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*) and Marquis d'Obigny (*La Traviata*) for Opera Colorado. John Fulton is a native of Charlotte, North Carolina, and studied at UNC Greensboro before completing a master's degree at Eastman School of Music and his Professional Studies Degree at Manhattan School of Music.

**Alison Buchanan** *Lily / Strawberry Woman*

British soprano Alison Buchanan is a graduate of London's Guildhall School of Music, the Curtis Institute and San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship young artist program. She has worked with Colin Davis, André Previn, Simon Rattle, Marin Alsop, David Robertson and Donald Runnicles, appearing with the London Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Her recordings include *Peter Grimes* (LSO and Colin Davis).

**Chloé Zuel** *Annie*

Chloé Zuul graduated from ED5 International in Sydney in 2007, after which she spent two years performing in numerous shows at Universal Studios, Japan. Her music theatre credits in Australia include Dynamite in *Hairspray the Musical*, Pilar in *Legally Blonde the Musical*, Éponine understudy in *Les Misérables* and Joanne in *Rent*, and in New Zealand a Maid in *The Mikado*. Most recently she toured Australia in *Little Shop of Horrors*.

**Cornelius V Johnson III** *Peter*

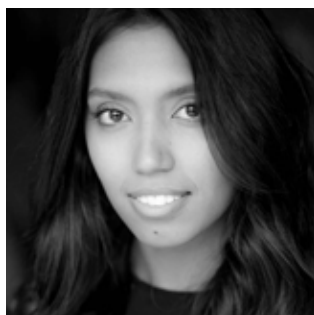
Career highlights for tenor Cornelius Johnson include performances at the Opéra Bastille in Paris, La Scala in Milan, Tokyo's Bunkamura Theater, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Theatre of St Louis, Teatro Real in Madrid, Lincoln Center, and the Ravinia Music Festival. His repertoire includes Don José (*Carmen*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Rodolfo in (*La Bohème*), Tamino (*The Magic Flute*), Sporting Life and Peter (*Porgy and Bess*), Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Mozart's Requiem and Handel's *Messiah*.

**Eddie Muliaumaseali'i** *Frazier*

Bass Eddie Muliaumaseali'i studied at the Brisbane Conservatorium and won the McDonald's Aria before joining the Tiroler Landestheater in Innsbruck. He has appeared with Opera Australia, The Production Company, Melbourne Opera, Short Black Opera, NZO, Stopera and Co-Opera, and in concert at St Johns Smith Square and Wigmore Hall, as well as the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic and Queensland Pops Orchestra. Role highlights include Joe (*Showboat*), which earned him a Helpmann nomination.

**Michael Redding** *Jim / Undertaker*

Baritone Michael Redding has performed in Europe, Africa, Russia and Asia, appearing with the Berlin Philharmonic, Dresden Opera, Zurich Opera and (in December) the Giuseppe Verdi Symphony Orchestra of Milan. He has sung Crown with Syracuse Opera, Seattle Opera, the Princeton Festival and Toledo Opera, and Porgy with Virginia Opera and in his hometown with Atlanta Opera. His repertoire also includes Escamillo (*Carmen*) and the title role in *Don Giovanni*.



JIM LEE/PIX

**Brendan Taylor** *Policeman*

Stage credits: *Low Level Panic* (Old Fitzroy Theatre), *Hamlet* on Fort Denison (Sydney Shakespeare Company), *Trainspotting* (Black Box Productions), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Furies Theatre), *La Ronde* (Enigma), *Antony and Cleopatra* (Punchbug), *Room* (Blender Productions/Sydney Fringe), *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Winter's Tale* (Shakespeare on the Green), *Twelfth Night* (Bard on the Beach). Screen credits: *Deadly Women*, *Silence Is Golden*, *The Devil Walketh About*, *The Yowie* and *The Majesty of the Wetlands*. Brendan Taylor is a graduate of the University of Wollongong and Actors Centre Australia.



**Richard Sydenham** *Detective*

Stage credits: *Spring Awakening* (ATYP); *The Dapto Chaser* (Griffin Theatre); *Absent Friends*, *Clybourne Park*, *Murderers* (Ensemble Theatre); numerous productions for Bell Shakespeare and Belvoir St Theatre; *Rock 'n' Roll* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *The Tempest*, *Love for Love* (Sydney Theatre Company). Television: *The High Road*, *Love Child*, *Gina v Rose: The House of Hancock*, *Wonderland*, *Carlotta*, *Power Games: The Packer Murdoch Story*, *Rake*, *Home & Away*, *All Saints*, *Changi* and *Water Rats*. Feature films: *Blood Pulls a Gun* and *Matrix 2*. Richard Sydenham is a NIDA graduate.



**Steve Rodgers** *Mr Archdale / Coroner*

Recent stage credits: *Power Plays* (Sydney Theatre Company), *Jasper Jones* (Belvoir). Other STC productions: *Three Sisters*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, *Democracy*, *The Miser*, *Riflemind*, *Dance Better at Parties*. Has also appeared with: Burning House Theatre, Pork Chop Production, Griffin Theatre, Ensemble Theatre and Bell Shakespeare. Recent screen credits: *Goldstone* and *The Daughter*. Television: *The Code*. Steve Rodgers trained at Theatre Nepean.



**Djakapurra Beatty** *Scipio*

Born in Los Angeles, DJ started dancing with his mother and sisters at the age of four, sharing his indigenous culture through song and dance. He has performed on *Play School* and was cast in Billie Pleffer's award-winning short film *Baby Baby* (2014). He has also performed in South Korea with his family at the Suseong Lake Festival, and with his mother at Ocean Park Hong Kong.

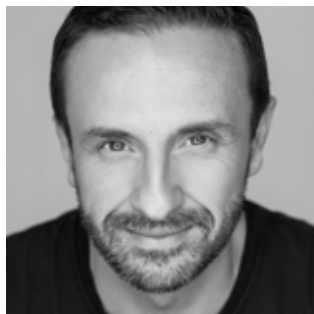




## Mitchell Butel

*stage director*

Mitchell Butel brings to his directing work experience as an actor, singer and writer, and his extensive career has ranged from Shakespeare, Molière, Williamson and O'Neill to Gilbert & Sullivan and musicals such as *Avenue Q* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, as well as film and television. He has worked as a performer and director for the Melbourne, Sydney and Queensland theatre companies, State Theatre Company of South Australia, ATYP, Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare, Griffin, Malthouse, Opera Australia, The Production Company, David Atkins Enterprises, New Theatricals, Gordon Frost Organisation, and the Sydney, Adelaide and Perth festivals. He has received multiple Helpmann, Green Room and Sydney Theatre awards, as well as two AFI nominations. Most recently, he directed the Sydney and Melbourne seasons of *Violet*, which received three Sydney Theatre Awards including Best Director of a Musical and Best Production of an Independent Musical. Other directing credits include *Spring Awakening* (ATYP), *Approximate Balance* (Griffin), *The Frogs* and *She Stoops to Conquer* (NIDA), and *Killing Time*, which he also wrote. He has also written for Meow Meow's *Little Match Girl* (Sydney Festival/Malthouse), *The Government Inspector* (Malthouse/Belvoir) and *The Mikado* (Opera Australia).



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**David Robertson** Chief Conductor and Artistic Director  
 Clocktower Square, Argyle Street, The Rocks NSW 2000  
 GPO Box 4972, Sydney NSW 2001  
 Telephone (02) 8215 4644 Box Office (02) 8215 4600  
 Facsimile (02) 8215 4646 www.sydneyssymphony.com

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 E-mail: admin@playbill.com.au Website: www.playbill.com.au

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# THE CHOIR

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KEITH SAUNDERS



## Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs exists to share the joy of choral music with choristers and audiences alike. Founded in 1920, it has become Australia's finest choral organisation and now regularly performs at the Sydney Opera House and other leading concert halls around the country. Brett Weymark has been the Music Director since 2003.

The choristers, numbering 1500 people, volunteer their time and talents to rehearsing and singing in extraordinary performances, not only in the organisation's own concerts but in collaborations with major international artists and orchestras, including the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Ballet. In 2002, Sydney Philharmonia was the first Australian choir to sing at the BBC Proms (Mahler's Eighth Symphony under Simon Rattle), returning again in 2010.

The choirs appear regularly in the SSO's subscription series. Last season they performed with the SSO in Holst's *Planets*, *Tristan und Isolde*, Danny Elfman's music from the films of Tim Burton, and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. The SPC Chamber Singers recently appeared with the SSO in a Haydn and Mozart program and the Symphony Chorus sang in performances of Haydn's *Creation*. SPC also presents its own series of programs each year, concluding the 2016 season with *Carols at the House*, directed by Mitchell Butel (9, 10 December). Their 2017 season will include choral masterpieces such as Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* and Handel's *Messiah*.

## Brett Weymark *Music Director*

Brett Weymark studied singing at the University of Sydney and conducting at the Sydney Conservatorium alongside studies in Europe and America. He has held positions with the Song Company, Opera Australia, Pacific Opera, Sounds Baroque, Cantillation and the University of Western Sydney, as well as working many of the major musical organisations in Australia, and in 2002 he was awarded a Centenary Award for his services to music.

In 2003 he was appointed Music Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. He has conducted the SPC in premieres of works by composers such as Elena Kats-Chernin, Andrew Schultz and Peter Sculthorpe and has also prepared the choirs for conductors such as Simon Rattle, Charles Mackerras, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Paul McCreesh, Edo de Waart and Charles Dutoit as well as David Robertson. In 2005 he initiated the ChorusOz project, which now attracts a thousand singers each year. Recent highlights have included conducting the premiere of *Jandamarra* by Paul Stanhope and Steve Hawke (SSO), Haydn's *Creation* (Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra), Bach's *St John Passion* (SPC), Handel's *Hercules* (Canberra Choral Society) and *Heavenly Creatures*, a program of Haydn and Mozart choral works for the SSO. In 2016 he also conducted *King Arthur* for Brisbane Baroque and *Jephtha* for Canberra Choral Society.

[sydneyphilharmonia.com.au](http://sydneyphilharmonia.com.au)

## Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

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## DAVID ROBERTSON

THE LOWY CHAIR OF  
CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

.....  
PATRON Professor The Hon. Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO  
.....

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the SSO also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

Well on its way to becoming the premier orchestra of the Asia Pacific region, the SSO has toured China on four occasions, and in 2014 won the arts category in the Australian Government's inaugural Australia-China Achievement Awards, recognising ground-breaking work in nurturing the cultural and artistic relationship between the two nations.

The orchestra's first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux,

Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013. The orchestra's history also boasts collaborations with legendary figures such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky.

The SSO's award-winning Learning and Engagement program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, developing audiences and engaging the participation of young people. The orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and commissions. Recent premieres have included major works by Ross Edwards, Lee Bracegirdle, Gordon Kerry, Mary Finsterer, Nigel Westlake, Paul Stanhope and Georges Lentz, and recordings of music by Brett Dean have been released on both the BIS and SSO Live labels.

Other releases on the SSO Live label, established in 2006, include performances conducted by Alexander Lazarev, Sir Charles Mackerras and David Robertson, as well as the complete Mahler symphonies conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

This is David Robertson's third year as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

# THE ORCHESTRA



**David Robertson**

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David Robertson

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KEITH SAUNDERS

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*Stuart Challender, SSO Chief Conductor and Artistic Director 1987–1991*

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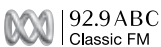
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