

Amistad
Opera in Two Acts

Music by Anthony Davis
Libretto by Thulani Davis

Cast
(in order of vocal appearance)

The Trickster God	Thomas Young
Navigator	Mark Baker
Don Pedro	Wilbur Pauley
Kinnah	David Lee Brewer
Grabeau	Timothy Robert Blevins
Burnah	Patrick Blackwell
Margru	Kimberly Jones
Bahia	Anisha M. McFarland
Kaleh	E. Mani Cadet
Cinque	Mark S. Doss
American Lieutenant	Bruce Hall
Antonio	Eugene Perry
Reporters	Brad Cresswell, William Andrew Stuckey, Andrew Funk, Kevin Kees, Misha Royzen, Paul Grizzell
Phrenologist	Richard Markley
Abolitionist Tappan	John Daniecki
John Quincy Adams	Stephen West
Southern Senator	Philip Kraus
The Spaniard (Calderon de la Barca)	Wilbur Pauley
President Martin Van Buren	William Watson
Judge	Bruce Hall
Goddess of the Waters	Florence Quivar
Cook	Kevin Maynor

Captives: Kenne Anders, Gerard Burns, LeVon Campbell, Tony Drake, Michael Hill, Gregory Johnson, Danny Milon
Sailors and Guards: Roman Babul, Tom Lentz, Kurt Merrill, Leslie Oswald, Tom Tefft

Orchestra and Chorus of Lyric Opera of Chicago

Conductor	Dennis Russell Davies
Stage Director	George C. Wolfe
Set Designer	Riccardo Hernandez
Costume Designer	Toni-Leslie James
Lighting Designer	Paul Gallo
Chorus Master	Donald Palumbo
Choreographer	Hope Clarke
Fight Director	Nicolas Sandys
Puppet Designers	Barbara Pollitt, Matthew Owens
Wig and Makeup Designer	Stan Dufford
Assistant Stage Director	Thor Steingraber
Stage Manager	John W. Coleman
Associate Lighting Designer	Christine Binder
Assistant Chorus Master	Elizabeth Buccheri
Musical Preparation	William C. Billingham, Elizabeth Buccheri, Philip Morehead
Prompter	Timothy Shaindlin
Text Adaptation for Projection	Francis Rizzo
English Diction Coach	Gillian Lane-Plescia

DISC ONE 61:51

1. **Overture** 3:12

ACT ONE

Scene 1: “The Unknown Is My Realm”

2. Aria: “The unknown is my realm” (Trickster) 7:11

Scene 2: “Cloth for the Dead”

3. Duet: “We may yet get away” (Navigator, Don Pedro);

Duet (Trickster, Cinque with Chorus) 4:25

4. “Lord, you cannot see” (Cinque) 1:04

5. “It’s an English word, an Englishman’s word” (Trickster) 2:52

6. Recitative: “Land! We’ve hit land!” (Navigator) 1:37

7. “Ahoy there. Who are you?” (American Lieutenant) 2:12

8. “Not just *Nduo*. Not just a slave” (Cinque) 1:53

9. “We, at last, have come to naught.” (Cinque, Chorus) 3:10

10. Recitative: “He’s mad too” (American Lieutenant, Don Pedro) 1:02

11. “I believe, sir. You should be glad for your life” (American Lieutenant) 1:17

12. Aria: “And me, am I save’?” (Antonio) :59

Scene 3: “Savages of Legend”

13. Parade I :50

14. “So these are the savages” (Sextet of Reporters) 3:23

15. Aria: “They yap and snap” (Trickster)

“Are they going to kill us?” (Chorus) 1:41

Scene 4: “Ankle and Wrist”

16. Aria: “They wanted a girl” (Margru) 4:59

17. “Chief, what will become of us?” (Grabeau) :57

18. Aria: “The past is a fading daylight” (Cinque, Chorus) 4:14

19. Parade II :31

20. “The base of his brain” (Phrenologist, Reporters);

Chorus: “Are they going to kill us?” (Captives) 2:04

Scene 5: “The Greatest Liberty”

21. “Deep in the festering hold” (Chorus) 2:23

22. “We are grateful, sir” (Abolitionist Tappan) 3:06

23. “This is where the case lies” (Adams) 1:49

24. Aria: “The greatest liberty” (Adams) 5:00

DISC TWO 59:01

ACT TWO

Scene 1: “Posers, Dandies, Hacks”

1. Sextet: “It’s quite a show” (Reporters) 2:40

Scene 2: “What the Navigator Saw”

2. Aria: “The moonlight died” (Navigator) 4:31

Scene 3: “A Foreign Appeal”

3. “Mr. President” (Southern Senator, the President, Calderon de la Barca) 2:29

Scene 4: “What Antonio Saw”

4. Aria: “That day each get one banana” (Antonio) 3:23

5. “I see we’re in a spot” (Tappan) :30

Scene 5: “They Saw a God”

6. Sextet: “We thought they came for salt” (Bahia, Kinnah, Grabeau, Burnah, Kaleh, Margru, Cinque with the Trickster and Judge) 5:03

7. Aria: “In this white village” (Cinque) 2:19

8. Recitative: “They were forced” (Adams) :16

Scene 6: “Skin of Clouds”

9. Aria: “They come as if from the heavens” (Goddess of the Waters) 9:58

Scene 7: “Freed by Lord and Chief”

10. “How did you come to kill?” (Judge) 1:57

11. “Nansi, Brer Nansi” (Chorus, Trickster, Cinque) 3:06

12. “C’mon, now the party’s over” (Cook) 1:00

13. Recitative: “These fools don’ b’lieve you” (Antonio) 1:01

14. “I’m not like you” (Antonio) 1:44

15. Orchestral introduction to Scene 8: “As the Crew Sleeps” 1:11

Scene 8: “The Rising”

16. Aria: “It’s time to take the helm” (Trickster) 2:00

17. “The Rebellion” 1:07

18. Aria: “He sleeps at his master’s feet.” (Cinque) 1:44

Scene 9: “Bird on the Wing”

19. Aria: “To own one’s life, one’s very breath” (Adams) 4:50

20. “This is a great day” (Tappan) :28

21. Duet: “Hush now, Translator” (Trickster, Cinque) 5:09

22. “The courts say you are free” (Margru, Reporters) 1:07

23. “The meaning is clear” (Chorus) 1:28

The Dancer of All Dancers: Anthony Davis and *Amistad*

The retelling of the story of the slave ship *Amistad*, the staging ground for an 1839 slave revolt that exercised international consequences during its era, was bound to be controversial even in the late 1990s, given the persistent reluctance of the American national imagination to come to terms with the full implications of slavery. As the historian Herbert Aptheker showed in the 1940s, in both the United States and in the Caribbean, slave revolts were frequent, contrary to the accepted wisdom of the period that tended to erase the phenomenon as inconsistent with the professed nature of enslaved Africans as docile and accepting of their supposedly biblically-ordained fate. Aptheker and generations of subsequent historians revised this conventional wisdom to show that the theory of the docile African was aimed not at history, but at the present, designed to influence the now ostensibly free descendants of these slaves, who were in the process of searching for justice. To keep information regarding precedent for resistance was a prime goal of this erasure of history.

Jointly commissioned by Lyric Opera of Chicago and the American Music Theatre Festival of Philadelphia, the world premiere of *Amistad* in Chicago on November 29, 1997 (which I attended) was something of a media event, with feature segments on National Public Radio's widely heard "Morning Edition with Bob Edwards" and Charles Osgood's "CBS Sunday Morning." A two-hour-long opera in two acts with full orchestra, double chorus, and an integrated jazz ensemble with trap drums that drove its motoric rhythmic flow, the work broke any number of molds. *Amistad* was resolutely postmodernist, not only in its compositional idiom, but also in the manner of its production. The African-American director of *Amistad*, George C. Wolfe, was best known for his successful Broadway productions, including *Jelly's Last Jam*, about the life of the early jazz composer Jelly Roll Morton; Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*; and the even more spectacularly successful extravaganza *Bring In Da Noise, Bring In Da Funk*.

It was while the latter production was in full swing that Wolfe, Anthony Davis, Davis's cousin, the widely read novelist, poet and opinion columnist Thulani Davis, and the diversely talented conductor and pianist Dennis Russell Davies, began the final stages of bringing Davis's *Amistad* to fruition. This was hardly Davis's first foray into the world of opera, however. His 1986 opera *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* hit the opera world with the force of a hurricane, introducing an entirely new set of issues and methodologies. Certainly the African-American experience had been engaged in the opera medium before, from composers such as Louis Gruenberg and Paul Bowles to the African-American composers Lawrence Freeman and the widely acknowledged dean of black composers, William Grant Still. However, it is fair to say that these earlier works have not exercised the lasting impact of *X*, particularly on African-Americans.

For many concertgoers, according to contemporary newspaper accounts, *X* represented a watershed event, the transformation of the medium of opera to embrace the richness and complexity of black history and culture. From a *New York Times* article published on the occasion of the work's New York premiere, we learn that among the throngs in attendance was the young filmmaker Spike Lee, the auteur of his own epic of Malcolm's life in 1992. Summing up the reception among many African-Americans, one member of the audience simply told the *Times*, "I just think that I should be here, it's important."

Bringing a new class of operagoers to the stage, however, was only part of the estimable service that *X* performed. The work itself combined contemporary classical compositional practice with a panoply of influences that had been heretofore deemed as somehow outside the purview of American opera, including a decided turn to the treatment of contemporary political issues, a turn that *X* has been widely credited as sparking. Subsequent Davis operas, notably his third, the chamber opera *Tania* (1992), continued in this direction. This opera's frank and audacious, partially surrealist treatment of the history surrounding Patty Hearst and the Symbionese Liberation Army presaged by a number of years the serious engagement by the contemporary polity with issues of domestic terrorism.

However, the most widely touted of these influences was the direct inclusion of jazz elements. At the time *X* was written, its composer was in the process of becoming widely known as one of the finest improvisers currently performing. Born in 1951 in Paterson, New Jersey, the son of the innovative academic literary critic Charles T. Davis, by the mid-1970s Anthony Davis had become part of the New York experimental improvised music scene. A virtuoso pianist, his approach to the instrument, which is now discussed in many standard reference texts on jazz and improvised music, drew not only upon traditional and experimental African-American musical sources, but also upon the Javanese gamelan, American Minimalism, and the European and American avant-garde.

Prior to the composition of *X*, Davis had been working intensively on incorporating improvisation into larger-scale formal conceits. Performing Davis's early, hybrid chamber music works required not only virtuoso technique and an ability to rapidly code-switch between different musical idioms, but also a bifurcated concentration that obliged performers to consider the impact of their improvisations upon the overall form of the work they were operating within. In other words, a Davis chamber work required its performers to think like composers.

Many of these techniques found their way into *X* and his subsequent operas, and it was these diverse sources that have informed all of Davis's subsequent music, which ranges from solo piano to chamber and orchestral works. By including improvisation as a central constituent element of the work, *X* foreshortened the distance between art and life. By embodying jazz within its corpus, and not merely for purposes of depiction, parody, satire, or heavy-handed political commentary, *X* expressed the diversity of the American experience.

In many ways, *Amistad* revisits aspects of *X* and *Tania*, but in a form that exhibits maximum focus and a tightened compositional practice. Practically absent are the long improvisations that marked *X*, replaced by a single-mindedness that affirms the centrality of the composer even as the opera itself expresses the multi-voiced nature of postmodernity. A decade after *X*, and well into the third decade of what David Harvey called "the postmodern condition," *Amistad*'s compositional style seems now to eschew the conventional postmodern pastiche that its composer arguably helped introduce to American opera. Rather than a now conventional postmodernism, *Amistad* seems to pursue a dogged decolonization of art music (to use composer Michael Dessen's memorable phrase). The musical language is marked by constant motion and kaleidoscopic permutation of the same elements, including a four-note ending cadence that appears constantly, but in ever-shifting guises. The musical structure seems to refuse any notion of rest, thereby mirroring the uncertainty of its subjects, who are, in the last analysis, men without a country, free though they eventually prove to be under the laws of a young United States, the majority of whose black inhabitants have no such freedom.

As a performer, Davis's ear for greatness in performance is astute, and he tends to return to the same figures in an active approach to casting. The Trickster figure, so eloquently theorized by Davis's longtime friend and his father's greatest student, Henry Louis Gates, in his classic of African-American literary criticism, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, becomes embodied in the multiple vocal persona of the great tenor Thomas Young, whose tonal accuracy and full range of expression endeared him to Elliott Carter. In *X*, Young performs a dual role, which in the story by Thulani Davis and Christopher Davis (Anthony Davis's brother), embodies the double-facedness (what was once called "Janus-like") of the Yoruba trickster god Esu-Elegba: "Street," the blustering yet melancholy hustler who introduces the young Malcolm to the black underground's version of an endless *Walpurgisnacht*, and the radical evangelist Elijah Muhammad, draft resister and founder of the Nation of Islam.

Born Elijah Poole in 1897, Muhammad credited the mysterious W.D. Fard's 1930s teachings on the vision of Ezekiel's wheel as foundational to the Nation's belief in the "Mother Plane," a technologically advanced artificial planet whose capabilities are eventually deployed in an Armageddon that ensures the ultimate triumph of the black race over its enemies. I want to highlight here the connection between this science-fiction trope and the theme of Davis's second opera, the space-fiction drama *Under the Double Moon* (1989), with a libretto by Deborah Atherton about telepathic miscegenation on the mythical planet Undine. As with all of Davis's operatic work, this one raises the issue of whether the realities of operatic reception in the West could ever be subsumed under the narrative of radical, populist, post-agrarian high art.

In *Amistad*, Young again takes on the Trickster's role, this time by combining Esu-Elegba with the image of the Greek blind "seer" Teiresias. Attending opening night, I was struck by Young's unique ability to seemingly sing impossibly difficult passages that were obviously written expressly for him while climbing through the constructed riggings of an onstage ship.

Certainly, the exigencies of opera seem to require any such moments of depiction. In Act One, Scene 4 ("Ankle and Wrist") the blues and the sorrow-song are used to underscore the horrors of captivity. Or, in another section of Act One, Scene 5, Quaker-like hymnals provide an illusion of whistling in the dark:

Deep in the festering hold
thy father lies,
of his bones
New England pews are made,
those are altar lights
that were his eyes.

Moments of satire abound in *Amistad*, as when the slave Cinque is paraded before a group of white phrenologists in early pursuit of the pseudoscience of eugenics (Act Two, Scene 4), and a depiction of media obsession with the magnification of trivia and the practice of misdirection that seems to redound to our own day:

Phrenologist examines Cinque, measuring his head in close detail, then examining other parts of his body. Phrenologist emerges and talks to the Reporters.

Phrenologist
(Reading notes)

Reporters
(Taking notes)

The base of his brain
is smaller than other parts
Parts of the brain.
Lower-animal propensities
do not dominate.
He's not that bad.
The cerebral organization
is superior

Base of his brain
What parts?
And so?
Ah, ha!
What's that?
Oh? (*disappointed*)
Cerebral organization
Superior?
You don't mean that.

Superior
to most Negroes here

Oh good!

As Thulani Davis observed, this scene was meant to evoke a certain empathy, letting the audience “see how the citizens of a town saw these exotic beings who were brought through the town, and allows the audience also to see how these Africans may have perceived these people who were gawking at them and pointing and screaming.”

For the most part, however, the sound world of *Amistad* is Davis's own, internally consistent, palindromic, and driven by the Javanese-like odd and continually shifting meters that proved so influential on later generations of improvisers, such as Steve Coleman and Vijay Iyer.

An important part of every Davis opera involves a hard, socially committed look at race. Indeed, the contemporaneous reception of *Amistad* emphasized (either positively or negatively) the connection with contemporary American dislocations of race. For the African-American community of Chicago (in which I was born and raised) the reception of *Amistad* recalled New York's reception of *X*—that is, a story suppressed and waiting to be told, albeit in a medium still somewhat distanced from the center of black culture. As the CBS show noted, “The opening of the opera inspired *Amistad*-related events all over Chicago.”

One new operagoer happened to be a member of the “Amistad Committee,” a group that took its name from the original 1839 committee of citizens, including the abolitionist Lewis Tappan, who banded together for the defense of Cinque and his comrades. As he put it, “I was taught African-American history in a fashion that I've labeled the peanut butter way of teaching history. I was taught early on that George Washington Carver worked with peanuts, had peanut oil and peanut butter. And that finished my education of the contributions that the abolitionists and the African-Americans made to U.S. history.” In this new operagoer's view, the Davis work made it clear that “we have the responsibility of bringing this story to our young people to inspire them, to show what can happen when black and white come together in common cause.”

Of course, not everyone saw it quite that way. One critic expressed a frequently encountered view, to the effect that “The premiere of *Amistad* was a politically correct event; all the performances were sold out in advance, over 50 critics from around the world traveled to pay their respects.” Another objected to what he saw as the demonization of whites, calling the work “a cardboard-cutout morality sermon” that failed to show “the United States behaving with wisdom and compassion toward the helpless and downtrodden.” If nothing else, this view indicates that its writer did not manage to stay till the end of the opera to hear one of the most moving passages in the entire work, when the verdict freeing the *Amistad’s* captives, rendered by a bass-baritone playing the American icon John Quincy Adams, and backed by dramatic, stentorian brass chords in the finest Coplandian tradition, clearly shows precisely that:

Adams

Here our laws permit bondage,
even beastly vengeance,
within our shores.
But now with men taken hostage,
we seek to deny even nature’s law.

This cannot stand in our land.
We cannot chase slaves
for other slaving men.
And we must not make
slaves of free men.
Such a moral outrage
puts us all in bondage.

This socially committed view of music is common to African-American music—a commitment to moving past an above-the-fray individualism that eschews contact with the realities of the Afrodiasporic political, economic, and social situation. As with the products of black classical composers more generally, Davis combines the classical idiom and its associated art-world tropes with vernacular and contemporary ideals of social justice. Or, as the Trickster puts it in the very first scene,

What they call tragedy
I will make my history.
I will make a story to be told
of genius born of necessity, . . .

In the end, it is certain that one attraction that the *Amistad* story held for the composer and librettist was the optimistic perception that America, despite all its faults, continues to be the best hope for a freedom marked by justice. Davis himself recalls first encountering the story in the Robert Hayden poem *Middle Passage*, which vividly depicts the horrors associated with the slaver’s voyage with direct reference to the *Amistad* voyage and the heroism of the revolt leader Cinque, but culminating in the final, hopeful passage:

Voyage through death
to life upon these shores.

In a sense, then, with both Hayden and the Davises we have the American Dream, seen from a postcolonial perspective, the view of the colonized; or, as Thulani Davis put it to an interviewer, “I think coming through the ’70s into the early ’80s we were looking for stories that showed the—the victory of a kind of justice that we continue to struggle with in this country. Like: Can anyone get justice in America?”

In response, the Trickster himself puts it this way, in deciding to make his way in a wild new land at the close of the opera:

Trickster

I will take my leave of you,
evaporate like ether.
But you have suffered enough,
You must return to Africa.

I have seen the gods
of the New World,
beleaguered and in despair.
I mean to spark them up a bit
with wild dance and fanfare.
They need invention and wit;
a little color will help.
I think I will live very well.

—George E. Lewis

Composer-performer George E. Lewis is the Case Professor of American Music at Columbia University. A 2002 MacArthur Fellow, Lewis is the author of A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Composer's Note

Amistad is an opera that was ten years in the making. Thulani Davis and I first discussed the idea of creating an opera on the *Amistad* Rebellion in 1986, after the premiere of our opera *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. We were drawn to the drama of the story, a successful uprising of captives on a slave ship, and the implications of the *Amistad* incident in an understanding of ourselves and the American experience. Through the *Amistad*, we could revisit the story of the Middle Passage, the contradictions implicit in the ethos of America, and also explore the emergence of the African-American as a cultural entity.

The story presented a special musical challenge: I would have to create distinct and separate musical languages for the divergent cultures represented by the characters in the opera. The challenge would be to differentiate character with music, yet at the same time maintain musical unity and coherence. The libretto, as conceived by Thulani, employs a broad spectrum of language from the poetic, metaphoric language of the Captives to the vulgar exhortations of the Reporters. Similarly, the music reflects this spectrum of language with the violent speech rhythms of the Reporters and the rhapsodic tones of the Captives in Act Two.

Among the major characters, there are similar contrasts of text-setting and musical idiom. The Trickster, who begins and ends the opera, moves from a rhythmically syncopated musical line to sudden lyricism. His emotions and music literally turn on a dime, triggered by his recurring motif in the bass. The Trickster's melodies at times are jagged and angular, with an emphasis on rhythm. His music has the most overt jazz influence; Miles Davis and Thelonius Monk, two formidable musical tricksters, are conjured into his musical equation, and he is almost always accompanied by a drum set. John Quincy Adams's music, on the other hand, features long musical lines that express his belief in the American Ideal of freedom and liberty. The gamelan-inspired texture framing Adams's Act One aria is a reflection of the tenuous balance that Adams and the nation must maintain between slave and free, among belief, vision, and reality.

In my music the *ostinato* (repeating rhythmic pattern) takes a pivotal role, as recurring motives denote both character and the physical and psychological environment affecting the characters. I have already mentioned the rhythmic *ostinato* associated with the Trickster, and there are other recurring motifs for the Goddess of the Waters, Antonio, Adams, the Navigator, and Lewis Tappan, the Abolitionist. Repeating motifs are also employed for the physical and emotional presence of the Ocean and the magical transformative powers of the Bush. The Reporters are always accompanied by a jagged, swirling "beehive" motif that modulates and evolves throughout their malevolent discourse, moving from oboes to flutes and bassoons. The orchestra not only supports the delineation of character in the opera, but propels the story, recognizing the underlying forces at play in the drama.

In *Amistad* there are two choruses. One chorus represents the Captives on board the ship and in jail in Act One; later in Act Two they become slaves in Cuba, working on the docks. The second chorus represents Americans in all their vulgarity and ambivalence. The choruses interact in two scenes in the opera. The antiphony of the choruses is literally a collision of worlds. In my choral writing I translate the repeating rhythmic interplay in the orchestra into musical building-blocks of sections of the chorus. The chorus, particularly in the eighth scene of Act Two, becomes the drum as its members summon "Esu," the Trickster God, in all his manifestations. This contrasts with the monolithic, rhythmic unison of the second chorus, which berates the slaves. *Amistad* is my most ambitious work to date, and has given me the opportunity to expand upon what I have learned from my previous operas (*X*, *Under the Double Moon*, and *Tania*), as well as the chance to explore new musical areas. *Amistad* is the product of a wonderful collaboration with Thulani Davis and George C. Wolfe. With the miraculous support of Lyric Opera of Chicago, a slave ship arrives on the shores of Lake Michigan. (1997)

Anthony Davis has composed music in a wide range of genres including opera, orchestral, choral, and chamber music. He has been on the cutting edge of improvised music and jazz for more than three decades. Mr. Davis has composed five operas. *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, with a libretto by Thulani Davis, had its world premiere at the New York City Opera in 1986. The recording of the opera earned a Grammy nomination for music composition. *Under the Double Moon*, with a libretto by Deborah Atherton, premiered at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis in 1989. *Tania*, an opera based on the kidnapping of Patty Hearst with a libretto by Michael John La Chiusa, premiered at the American Music Theater Festival in 1992 and received its European premiere in Vienna in November, 2003. His fourth opera, *Amistad*, premiered at the Lyric Opera of Chicago on November 29, 1997. *Wakonda's Dream*, with a libretto by Yusef Komunyakaa, debuted with Opera Omaha in March 2007. He is also collaborating with the director Robert Wilson and the writers Alma Guillermoprieto and Charles Koppelman on a new opera about the Cuban Revolution and with the playwright Allan Havis on a chamber opera entitled *Lilith*. He has two music theater works in development: *Shimmer*, a music theater work about the McCarthy Era with Sarah Schulman and Michael Korie; and *Tupelo*, a music theater work about the life of Elvis Presley, written with Arnold Weinstein.

He has composed numerous works for orchestra and chamber ensemble commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, Kansas City Symphony, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His other works include the music for the critically acclaimed Broadway production of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches, Part One*, and *Part Two, Perestroika*.

A graduate of Yale University in 1975, Mr. Davis is currently a professor of music at the University of California, San Diego. In 2008 he received the "Lift Every Voice" Legacy Award from the National Opera Association acknowledging his pioneering work in opera. In 2006 Mr. Davis was awarded a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation. Mr. Davis has also been honored by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the New York Foundation of the Arts, the National Endowment of the Arts, the Massachusetts Arts Council, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, Chamber Music America, Meet-the-Composer Wallace Fund, the MAP fund with the Rockefeller Foundation, and Opera America. He has been an artist fellow at the MacDowell Colony and at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center in Italy.

Thulani Davis is a journalist, novelist, playwright, and screenwriter. Her most recent book, *My Confederate Kinfolk*, is a memoir exploring her mother's ancestry among former slaves and slaveholders during and after the Civil War. Her other works include two novels, *1959*, and *Maker of Saints*. She has written several plays, most recently, *Everybody's Ruby: Story of a Murder in Florida*, and two books of poetry, *Playing the Changes* and *All the Renegade Ghosts Rise*, as well as the scripts for the films *Paid in Full* (Miramax, 2002) and *Maker of Saints* (2009). Her work also appears in several award-winning documentaries shown nationwide on PBS.

As a journalist she has been both a staff writer and senior editor at *The Village Voice* and has written for an array of national publications including *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, *Washington Post Book World*, *Newsday*, and *The Nation*.

Davis was the first woman to win a Grammy Award in the liner notes category for "The Atlantic Recordings" by Aretha Franklin and she wrote the words for another Grammy nominee that year, the Anthony Davis opera *X, The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. She has written the librettos for two other operas, *The E & O Line* (Anne LeBaron) and *Amistad* (Anthony Davis), as well as several other musical works.

She was educated at Barnard College and New York University. In 2003 she received a Revson Fellowship on the Future of New York City at Columbia University. In 2007, she was awarded a Newington-Cropsey Foundation Fellowship at NYU and in 2008 she was named a writing fellow for the Leon Levy Center for Biography at the City University of New York. She has also been awarded a Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Writers Award, a Pew Foundation National Theatre Arts Residency and other fellowships and grants in the arts. Following the successful premiere of *Amistad* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, she was awarded the first Paul Robeson Cultural Democracy Award from Columbia College in Chicago for her work on that opera and also became the youngest inductee in the International Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent at Chicago State University. Davis is an ordained Buddhist priest, co-founder of the Brooklyn Buddhist Association, and now leads the Three Refuges Sangha.

Mark Baker (Navigator) has appeared at Lyric Opera most recently singing Froh in *Das Rheingold* for the company's 2005 *Ring* cycle. One of America's leading dramatic tenors, Baker debuted at Lyric during the 1993-94 season's new production of *Wozzeck*, portraying the Drum Major. He has recorded that role under Daniel Barenboim and has sung it at the Metropolitan Opera, as well as in Paris, Berlin, Buenos Aires, and Spoleto. The Oklahoma-born artist has sung more than twenty roles with the Met, among them Froh (which he has recorded with the Met orchestra under Levine), Florestan in *Fidelio*, Erik in *Der fliegende Holländer*, Narraboth in *Salome*, and Tom Buchanan in John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby* (world premiere). Baker has performed with virtually every major North American company, including six roles at San Francisco Opera, most recently as Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, Froh, and Vladimir in *Prince Igor*. In Janáček's *Jenůfa* he has portrayed both Laca (Santiago, Dallas, Edmonton) and Steva (Glyndebourne Festival Opera's company premiere, released on DVD). He has also appeared with leading Italian, Dutch, and German opera companies.

Grammy Award-winner **Mark S. Doss** (Cinque) has been featured in several roles with Milan's Teatro alla Scala: Jochanaan (*Salome*); Argante (*Rinaldo*); Escamillo (*Carmen*); Brussels's Théâtre de la Monnaie—Escamillo; Amonasro (*Aida*); Oper Frankfurt—the title role in Boito's *Mefistofele*; Zaccaria (*Nabucco*); Mephistopheles (*Faust*); Scarpia (*Tosca*); San Francisco Opera—Escamillo; Thoas (*Iphigénie en Tauride*); and Lyric Opera of Chicago—Escamillo; Alidoro (*La Cenerentola*). Doss left Chicago as a Ryan Opera Center alumnus on January 20, 1986, and the very next day joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera. The bass-baritone created the central role of Cinque in Anthony Davis's *Tania* at Philadelphia's American Music Theater Festival, and performed the title role in the composer's *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, having already participated in its New York City Opera world premiere. Doss is a highly praised guest artist not only with major opera companies, but also with the major American orchestras, including those of Cleveland, Chicago, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. His 1993 Grammy Award is for Handel's *Semele*.

The Ryan Opera Center alumna **Kimberly Jones** (Margru) has performed on Lyric's mainstage as Xenia in *Boris Godunov*, Olga in *Fedora*, Pedro in *Don Quichotte*, and Despina in *Così Fan Tutte*. She appeared as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* and Adele in *Die Fledermaus* with the Center, at the Grant Park Music Festival. With Houston Grand Opera, she performed the role of Clara in *Porgy and Bess*. Concert performances include Mahler's Symphony No. 2 at Mandel Hall (University of Chicago), an evening of Vivaldi arias at Alice Tully Hall, and a radio broadcast of the Dame Myra Hess recital at the Chicago Cultural Center. She has performed *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with Maestro Bruno Bartoletti (Orchestra della Toscana) as well as the Philip Glass Symphony No. 5 at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig and Ludwigsburg, Germany, and in Copenhagen. Last year she made her debut as Fiordiligi in *Così* under the baton of Maestro Willie Anthony Waters.

American baritone **Eugene Perry's** (Antonio) association with Anthony Davis's music includes the title role of *X* on CD and the world premiere of *Under the Double Moon* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. The Illinois native has made a specialty of contemporary opera, including Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* and Toshiro Mayuzumi's *Kinkakuji* at the New York City Opera; the world premieres of Philip Glass's *Orphee* (American Repertory Theatre Boston); Noa Ain's *The Outcast* (Houston Grand Opera); and most recently Wolfgang Rihm's *Séraphin* in Stuttgart. Perry's other recent engagements include Atlanta Opera's *Don Giovanni*, in which he sang the title role, a portrayal that brought him international attention in Peter Sellars's production (available on video.) His varied repertoire also encompasses *La Cenerentola* (Opéra de Nice), *The Pearl Fishers* (The Washington Opera), and *Madama Butterfly* (NYCO). He has recorded John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*, which he sang in the Brussels world premiere and later in Lyons, Vienna, San Francisco, and Brooklyn.

The renowned American mezzo-soprano **Florence Quivar** (Goddess of the Waters) is a regular guest of the world's leading opera companies, orchestras, and festivals. Quivar has appeared frequently at the Metropolitan Opera, and performed the Verdi *Requiem* during a Met tour to Japan. Her varied Met repertoire of nearly 15 roles includes Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera* and Mother Marie in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, both of which she sang on PBS telecasts. A wide range of lyric and dramatic mezzo roles has brought her to major European houses (Covent Garden, Hamburg, Munich, Bologna, the Salzburg Festival), and important American theaters as well. The Philadelphia native has captivated critics and audiences worldwide in recital and in a vast repertoire with orchestra, performing under every significant conductor of our time. Following *Amistad*, Quivar sang Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Berlin Philharmonic under James Levine; reprised her celebrated interpretation of the solo alto part of Mahler's Symphony No. 3 with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa (both in Boston and on a European tour); and returned to the San Francisco Symphony for Mahler's Symphony No. 2 under Michael Tilson Thomas. Quivar's extensive discography includes a solo album of spirituals, *Luisa Miller* and *Oedipus Rex* with Levine, and *Ballo* with Herbert von Karajan.

In his distinguished career, bass-baritone **Stephen West** (John Quincy Adams) has appeared with many of the finest opera companies in the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, the Bayreuth, Salzburg, and Santa Fe Festivals, Opéra National de Paris, Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, Lyric Opera of Chicago, New York City Opera, and San Francisco Opera, among many others. He has also performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Boston, Atlanta, and Montreal symphonies and the Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras. Mr. West's operatic roles include the heroes of Verdi, Wotan in *Das Rheingold*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, Mephistopheles in *Faust*, and the title role in Boito's *Mefistofele* as well as Don Alfonso in *Così fan Tutte*, and des Grieux in *Manon*. He has collaborated with some of the world's finest conductors, including James Levine, Riccardo Muti, Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Charles Mackerras, Julius Rudel, Michael Gielen, and Richard Bonyngge.

The American tenor **Thomas Young** (The Trickster God), one of today's foremost interpreters of contemporary opera, created the dual role of Street/Elijah Muhammad in Anthony Davis's *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (New York City Opera), as well as the Inspector—written especially for him—in Davis's *Under the Double Moon* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis). He created the title role of Tan Dun's *Marco Polo* at the 1996 Munich Festival, later singing the work in Amsterdam and Hong Kong. Young triumphed in his debuts at Covent Garden in Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* and—on 48 hours' notice—at Florence's Maggio Musicale as Aron in Arnold Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* under Zubin Mehta. He has sung Olivier Messiaen's *St. Francis d'Assise* at the Salzburg Festival and John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* at the San Francisco Opera. In concert with American orchestras, Young performs repertoire ranging from Bach (*Mass in B Minor*, Kansas City Symphony) to Elliott Carter (*In Sleep, In Thunder*, Los Angeles Philharmonic). His discography includes *X*, *Marco Polo*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, Schoenberg's *Von Heute auf Morgen*, and a solo album of French and American art songs.

Bass-baritone **Patrick Blackwell** (Burnah) was born in Washington, D.C., and studied at Juilliard. He is an alumnus of several prestigious young-artist programs, including San Francisco Opera's Merola/Western Opera Theater, Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera Studio, and Aspen Opera Theater. Blackwell made his New York City Opera debut in 1995 as Colline in *La Bohème*, and in 1996 debuted at the Florentine Opera of Milwaukee as Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*. He has appeared in a workshop production of *Carmen Jones* at New York's Lincoln Center. Other recent credits include the role of Robert Garner in Richard Danielpour's *Margaret Garner* at the Auditorium Theater in Chicago.

A native of Los Angeles, baritone **Timothy Robert Blevins** (Grabeau) has appeared as Otis in William Schuman's *The Mighty Casey* at the Juilliard Opera Center, Bartolo in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with the Polish National Symphony in Martinique, and Jake in *Porgy and Bess* at Puerto Rico's Casals Festival. Blevins made his Broadway debut in 1993 as Sgt. John in *Miss Saigon*, which he repeated in Stuttgart. His New York credits include *Show Boat* on Broadway; *Sweet Adeline* and *One Touch of Venus* for City Center's "Encore" series; and a recital at Weill Concert Hall (Carnegie Hall). He has also portrayed Crown in *Porgy and Bess* with Connecticut Opera and Michigan Opera Theater. Blevins is a former Pavarotti Competition winner.

The tenor **David Lee Brewer's** (Kinna) experience in contemporary works includes the premiere of John Duffy's *Black Water* at Philadelphia's American Music Theater Festival. Other engagements include debuts at Connecticut Opera (*Sportin' Life*, *Porgy and Bess*) and Virginia Opera (*Camille*, *The Merry Widow*). He recently appeared with the Cleveland Opera and the Metropolitan Opera Guild. The Nebraska native performed in Houston Grand Opera's *Porgy and Bess* throughout this country and in Japan, Paris, and Milan. He has been heard with the Houston Symphony in Elie Siegmeister's *I Have a Dream*, and at Carnegie Hall in Mozart's *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*.

E. Mani Cadet (Kaleh) is a seasoned performer, having achieved great acclaim in opera, musical theater, and as a concert entertainer. Among Mr. Cadet's most cherished roles are Jazz in Blitzstein's opera *Regina*, Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Agwe from *Once on This Island*, and Old Deuteronomy in *Cats*. Most recently, Mr. Cadet appeared as Remus in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha* with North Star Opera, Sam in *The Wild Party* at The Fitzgerald, and Faust in Boito's *Mefistofele* at the Théâtre de la Jeune Lune.

A Ryan Opera Center alumnus, American tenor **Brad Cresswell** (1st Reporter) has performed with Lyric in roles ranging from Sir Bruno in *I Puritani* to the Doctor in Luciano Berio's *Un re in ascolto*. Other milestones in the tenor's career include the American premiere of two operas by Judith Weir, *Blond Eckbert* and *The Vanishing Bridegroom*. Cresswell has sung leading roles with other American companies, including the New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Washington Opera. His international debut came as Canio in *Pagliacci* with the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires.

Since his major opera company debut in 1986-87 at Pittsburgh Opera, the American tenor **John Daniecki** (Abolitionist Tappan) has established himself both in this country and in Europe in diverse repertoire. His many New York City Opera appearances include *Carmina Burana* (a work he has sung with seven important American orchestras), the title role in George Whyte's *The Dreyfus Affair* (world premiere), and Dan White in the New York premiere of *Harvey Milk*. He made his Spoleto Festival debut in 1995 in the title role of Shostakovich's *The Nose*, which he reprised at the Netherlands Opera. His appearances abroad include Hérold's *Zampa* at the Wexford Festival, Mozart's *Die Schuldigkeit der ersten Gebotes* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, and Mime in *Das Rheingold* with the New Zealand Symphony. Daniecki was a 1992 Grammy Award winner for *Carmina Burana*.

Bass **Andrew Funk** (3rd Reporter), a former member of Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center and the Juilliard Opera Center, made his debut at the Los Angeles Opera in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, at The Santa Fe Opera in Berlioz's *Béatrice et Benedict*, at Seattle Opera performing Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*, and was chosen by composer Philip Glass and Tony Award-winning director Mary Zimmerman to sing the world premiere of *Galileo Galilei* in both Chicago and New York. He is a frequent guest artist with Lyric Opera of Chicago, making his debut in the world premiere of *Amistad*, and since appearing in the company's productions of *Falstaff*, *La Gioconda*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Abduction from the Seraglio*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Salome*, and *Aida*, among others.

American bass-baritone **Paul Grizzell** (6th Reporter) recently appeared with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Daniel Barenboim in Chicago and on tour at Carnegie Hall. With the Cygnus Orchestra of England he has recently sung Donizetti's rarely heard *Requiem*, as well as Bach's *Magnificat*. Other engagements have included an opera gala with Florida's Imperial Symphony, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Northbrook Symphony, Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony* with the Illinois Chamber Symphony, and his first performance of the title role of *Rigoletto*. His operatic experience also includes Chicago's Opera Theater's *The Tender Land* and *L'italiana in Algeri*. Grizzell appears on disc in Sowerby's *Forsaken of Man* and Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*, the latter under Sir Georg Solti.

American baritone **Bruce Hall** (Lieutenant/Judge) made his Lyric Opera debut as Potapitsch in *The Gambler* (1991-92), and later returned as the British Ambassador in *The Ghosts of Versailles*. Hall's repertoire ranges from Verdi, Puccini, Rossini, and Mozart to such demanding contemporary works as Philip Glass's *Satyagraha* (which he sang in the world and U.S. premieres). He has appeared with the Cologne Opera, Stuttgart Opera, Netherlands Opera, and the major companies of Seattle, Michigan, and Cleveland. In addition to appearances at the Aspen, Meadow Brook, and Grant Park festivals, he has sung Handel's *Messiah* in the Mormon Tabernacle. Hall can be heard on disc as Jesus in the New World Records recording of Sowerby's *Forsaken of Man*.

American baritone **Kevin Kees** (4th Reporter) made his Lyric Opera of Chicago debut in *Amistad*. He has performed extensively in opera houses throughout the United States, including Virginia Opera, Nashville Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Opera North, Ash Lawn-Highland, and Opera Illinois, among others.

Since 1990 American baritone **Philip Kraus** (Southern Senator) has performed in twenty-one roles for Lyric Opera of Chicago, most recently Dr. Bartolo in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. He has been featured with many important American operatic and orchestral organizations, most recently a debut with Los Angeles Opera as Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*. Kraus has appeared in concert with the Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Milwaukee, and Denver symphony orchestras. With the Grant Park Symphony he has sung under Macal, Pinnocle, Slatkin, and Zinman. Kraus performed *Fidelio* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Solti at Carnegie Hall and on disc.

The late Kansas-born tenor **Richard Markley** (Phrenologist) debuted at Lyric in 1991 as Goro in *Madama Butterfly*. He scored a particular success as Little Bat in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* (1993–94), later singing the role at Houston Grand Opera and then for his European debut at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. He portrayed Goro with the Washington, Florentine (Milwaukee), and Nashville opera companies, as well as Valzacchi in *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Portland Opera and Pedrillo in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* with Skylight Opera. He can be heard on compact disc as Goro in a 1996 recording of all three versions of *Madama Butterfly*.

The American bass **Kevin Maynor** (Cook) has been heard with many major American opera companies, including those of New York City, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Cincinnati, and Spoleto U.S.A. He made his European operatic debut at the Scottish Opera as Hunding in *Die Walküre*, which he has sung at the Teatro Municipal in Santiago, Chile, and at California's Opera Pacific (where he has since returned in *Don Giovanni*). He recently sang Pimen in *Boris Godunov* with the Milwaukee Symphony and Flagello's *The Passion of Martin Luther King* at Carnegie Hall. Maynor's varied recital activities include appearances at South Dakota State University, Bradley University, and South Africa's Grahamstown Festival.

The soprano **Anisha M. McFarland** (Bahia), a Chicago native, began her association with Lyric Opera by portraying Pamina in *The Magic Flute* for "Opera in the Neighborhoods," the program's inaugural production; and by performing her one-woman show, "Believe," for school audiences. McFarland has appeared with the Palm Beach Opera as Frasquita in *Carmen*, and as the First Lady in *The Magic Flute* with the Independent Opera Theatre of Riga, Latvia. McFarland participated in Dallas's African-American Festival, making her Dallas Symphony debut as Bess in *Porgy and Bess*. She studied at the Eastman School of Music and Southern Methodist University.

American bass **Wilbur Pauley** (Don Pedro/The Spaniard) is a Lyric veteran of many seasons, with repertoire including *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Die Zauberflöte*, Berio's *Un re in ascolto*, and Bolcom's *McTeague*. Another Lyric role, Wilhelm in *The Ghosts of Versailles*, was created by Pauley in the Metropolitan Opera world premiere. He has also sung the crucial role of the Compère in Robert Wilson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* production at Houston Grand Opera, and in New York and Edinburgh. Pauley performs on several major film soundtracks, including *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. He sang his first Osmin in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at Opera/Columbus, and debuted at the Salzburg Festival as Trinity Moses in Weill's *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*.

A Ryan Opera Center alumnus, tenor **Misha Royzen** (5th Reporter) made his Lyric Opera debut in 1997 as the High Priest in *Idomeneo*. Royzen has also appeared in the Opera Center's world premiere of *Between Two Worlds (The Dybbuk)* and at Grant Park in *Iolanta*. Born in Moscow, Royzen studied oboe there before moving to New York to earn a master's degree in oboe at the Mannes College of Music. While doing so, he also learned English and freelanced with New York and New Jersey ensembles. He switched to singing in 1994. In 1997 he won a Sullivan Foundation grant and the Encouragement Award in New York's Opera Index competition. He is a former Santa Fe Opera apprentice artist.

Baritone **William Andrew Stuckey** (2nd Reporter) continues to expand his repertoire, adding roles and growing as an artist and is considered a leading interpreter of Verdi roles including Conte di Luna in *Il Trovatore*, the title role in *Falstaff*, and Germont in *La Traviata*. His portrayals of Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Tonio in *I Pagliacci* have been highly praised. Among the many companies with which he has sung are The Santa Fe Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Baltimore Opera, and Syracuse Opera.

With *Amistad*, tenor **William Watson** (President Martin Van Buren), a Chicago native, made his fourth Lyric appearance since his 1983 debut in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Watson's operatic experience includes two seasons at Germany's Aachen Stadttheater; *L'elisir d'amore* in Klagenfurt, Austria; and roles with the Cleveland Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, and Palm Beach Opera. In the concert world, Mr. Watson is a critically acclaimed Bach Evangelist, with performances with Chicago's Music of the Baroque, Noord Nederlands Orkest, Oratorio Society of New York at Carnegie Hall, and the symphonies of New Jersey, Alabama, Portland, Kitchener/Waterloo (ON), and Xalapa, Mexico. Other concert appearances include the Chicago, Cincinnati, Montreal, Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Mexico's National symphonies.

Dennis Russell Davies is highly regarded as a conductor who is at the forefront of both the orchestral and operatic worlds. Davies is also an accomplished pianist, and is sought out by orchestras, composers, and fellow musicians worldwide for his inspiring collaborations and interpretive mastery. A frequent guest conductor with major orchestras and opera companies throughout the world, Davies is Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Bruckner Orchestra Linz, and Chief Conductor of the Linz Opera. He has most recently been appointed Music Director of the Basel Symphony Orchestra in Basel, Switzerland, effective as of the 2009–10 season, and is also Professor of Orchestral Conducting at the Salzburg Mozarteum, as well as Conductor Laureate of the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra. In the United States, he holds the title of Conductor Laureate of the American Composers Orchestra, which he co-founded thirty-one years ago. The year 2009 marks forty years of uninterrupted music directorships of various orchestras, both nationally and internationally. His prolific recordings, as a conductor as well as pianist, number more than seventy, have received numerous awards, and can be found on many labels. The diversity of his recordings extends from Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Bizet, and Satie to Shostakovich, Glass, and Kancheli, to name a few.

Director **George C. Wolfe's** directing credits for the theater include *Jelly's Last Jam*, (Drama Desk and Outer Critics Award) *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* (Tony and Drama Desk Award) and *Perestroika* (Drama Desk Award), *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk* (Tony and Drama League Awards), *Topdog/Underdog* (Obie Award), *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* (Drama Desk Award), *Elaine Stritch at Liberty* (Tony Award–Unique Theatrical Event), *The Tempest*, *The Wild Party*, and *Caroline or Change*, which won the *Evening Standard* and Oliver Awards for Best Musical.

Wolfe directed the film *Nights in Rodanthe*, scheduled for release this fall and *Lackawanna Blues*, for which he earned The Directors Guild Award, a National Board of Review Award, an Independent Spirit Nomination for Best First Feature, a Christopher Award, and the Humanitas Prize. *Lackawanna Blues* won four NAACP Image Awards, earned seven Emmy award nominations and premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

He is the writer of the award-winning *The Colored Museum*, which he also directed for PBS, adapted and directed *Spunk* (Obie Award) and created *Harlem Courage and Her Children* (adapted by Tony Kushner and with Meryl Streep), *Macbeth*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and *Radiant Baby*, based on the life of Keith Haring. Wolfe was named a living landmark by the New York Landmarks Conservancy and from 1993–2005 was the Producer of the Public Theatre/New York Shakespeare Festival.

Donald Palumbo was appointed Chorus Master of Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1991, and during his sixteen-year tenure with the company developed the Lyric Opera Chorus into one of the most distinguished ensembles of its kind in the world. He is the former music director of Boston's Chorus Pro Musica and the former Chorus Master of Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Dallas Opera, and Canadian Opera, where he remains a consultant. Highly respected internationally, Palumbo has undertaken numerous prestigious European engagements, including performances with the choruses of Radio France, the Aix-en-Provence Festival, L'Opéra de Lyon, and the Theatre du Châtelet in Paris. He was the first American to be appointed Chorus Director of the Salzburg Festival, where he remained for three seasons. In 2007, Mr. Palumbo assumed the position of Chorus Master at the Metropolitan Opera.

Choreographer **Hope Clarke**'s collaborations with director George C. Wolfe include the Broadway hit *Jelly's Last Jam* (Tony Award nomination for best choreography, 1992) and the plays *Spunk* and *The Colored Museum* (for which she created movement and staging). The first African-American woman to direct a major production of *Porgy and Bess*, Clarke's staging of Gershwin's opera premiered at Houston Grand Opera in 1995, and has since toured major American cities, La Scala, the Opera National de Paris/Bastille, and Tokyo. Clarke recently directed *Porgy and Bess* for Opera Ebony in Helsinki, Finland. A highly successful television actress, Clarke has acted extensively on television and opposite Bill Cosby and Sidney Poitier in films. Her Broadway performances include *West Side Story* and leads in six other major musicals. She is a former principal dancer with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. She has been featured on "N.Y. Undercover" and "Law and Order."

Synopsis

ACT ONE

Scene 1: “The Unknown Is My Realm”

The Spanish schooner *Amistad*, out of Cuba, drifts off Long Island. The “ghost” ship is legendary—taken over by “slaves,” haunting Eastern waters. Aboard ship is one who shapes their fate—a ragged, boastful African deity. The Trickster God, Esu, is the spirit of rebellion, uncertainty, and mischief. He is the God of the Crossroads, mediating the human and the divine. When humans meet him, they are apt to lose their way yet, ironically, he holds the key to their survival. This Trickster has been led astray himself, and the torturous Middle Passage journey has nearly blinded him and weakened his powers. The Trickster claims that he will yet prevail (Aria: “The unknown is my realm”), but asks for help from the Goddess of the Waters.

Scene 2: “Cloth for the Dead”

The Trickster hears the ship’s two hostages, a navigator and a slaver, scheming (Duet: “We may yet get away”). They tie the helm on a northerly course, as they have every night. The African leader Cinque discovers the trick and realizes they have not headed to Africa, but zigzagged north toward another fate. (Duet: “We’re drifting”)

When the ship runs aground, an enterprising seaman discovers them and seizes the ship to sell the Africans as salvaged cargo. The two Spaniards tell of mutiny and murder and claim to own the Africans, who insist they are free. (Chorus: “We have come to naught”) Cinque believes they are victims of a Mende taboo: to see a god can bring danger. (Aria and Chorus: “The meaning is clear”) Antonio, a lifelong slave and witness to the mutiny, has fears too. (Aria: “And me, am I save’?”)

Scene 3: “Savages of Legend”

Newspaper reporters watch the captives being paraded to jail, and joust over their lot. (Sextet: “So these are the savages”) The Reporters inflame the American Chorus into a racist tirade culminating in (Chorus: “Give them liberty, We’ll give them death!”). Setting foot on American soil seems to restore the god of chance (Aria: “They yap and snap”) and scares the Africans. (Ensemble: “Are they going to kill us?”)

Scene 4: “Ankle and Wrist”

As Americans gawk at the jailed captives, Margru tells of her capture (Aria: “They wanted a girl”) and the captives vow not to reveal where they are from to protect their families. Cinque recalls being in a net. (Chorus: “Ankle and Wrist”; Aria: “The past is a fading daylight”) A “phrenologist” measures the skulls of the Mende prisoners and renders his findings to the press. (“The base of his brain”)

Scene 5: “The Greatest Liberty”

(Chorus: “Jesus Saviour, pilot me”) Abolitionist Tappan comes to plead with Adams to act as lead lawyer for the Africans. The former president resists because he has not been in court in years. He then muses on the young republic’s vision of liberty. (Aria: “The greatest liberty”)

ACT TWO

Scene 1: “Posers, Dandies, Hacks”

The reporters introduce the cast at court. (Sextet: “It’s quite a show”)

Scene 2: “What the Navigator Saw”

The Navigator tells of waking to the touch of a blade. (Aria: “The moonlight died”)

Scene 3: President’s Parlor—“A Foreign Appeal”

The President and the Spaniard plot to sneak the captives to Cuba if the Africans should win in court.

Scene 4: “What Antonio Saw”

Antonio recounts the captain’s death. (Aria: “That day each get one banana”) The court turns against the Africans.

Scene 5: “They Saw a God”

The Captives say the story begins in Africa. (Sextet: “We thought they came for salt”)

Scene 6: “Skin of Clouds”

The Goddess of the Waters, invoked by their tale, recalls Middle Passage. (Aria: “They come as if from the Heavens”)

Scene 7: “Freed by Lord and Chief”

The captives describe how, upon landing in Cuba, the seeds of revolt are sown when Antonio rebukes the Trickster (Chorus: “Nansi, Brer Nansi”) and the Cook threatens the captives. Antonio tells them they are now in a new world. (Aria: “I’m not like you”)

Scene 8: “The Rising”

The Trickster frees the captives and starts the revolt. (Aria: “It’s time to take the helm”) Cinque decides to spare Antonio. (Aria: “He sleeps at his master’s feet”)

Scene 9: “Bird on the Wing”

Adams sums up before the court (Aria: “To own one’s life”) and the Judge renders his verdict. The captives’ case is won. The Trickster reveals to Cinque his decision to stay in the Americas. (Duet: “Hush now, Translator”) The Captives are free to return to Africa. (Chorus: [reprise] “The meaning is clear”)

Notes on Characters (Thulani Davis)

The Trickster God—A master of disguise, who lives on society's edges, he translates all tongues, especially between gods and mortals. He is amoral—appearing as many animals, who will steal, molest, or kill, and eat other animals. Offerings are made to him first to prevent any accidents.

Cinque (died ca. 1879)—Leader of the captives. A rice farmer who lived with his father and a wife and three children. He returned to Mende and later became an interpreter for the American Missionary Association.

Rep. John Quincy Adams (1767–1848) of Massachusetts, sixth U.S. president (1825–29) —At the time the former president was in the House of Representatives. Until his death he was obsessed with exposing the corruption in the Van Buren administration found in the *Amistad* case.

Goddess of the Waters—Like the Trickster, this West African deity, is known throughout the African Diaspora. They both represent culture shared by Africa with the Americas. The mother of waters is known also as the mother of all the other orisha, or gods in African Yoruba, Brazilian Santeria, and Haitian vodun. She is a mature and sensual female spirit. She likes fans made of palm leaves or peacock feathers, and in the Americas is seen in great indigo skirts with white petticoats.

Abolitionist Tappan—Based on Lewis Tappan (1788–1873), member of a New York silk merchant family that helped to finance the abolitionist cause. His brother Arthur was a founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society and both experienced mob violence, vandalism and hate mail for their work. In the South, a price of \$100,000 was put on their heads. At the end of the trials he and others arranged for the slave Antonio (a 16-year-old cabin boy) to escape to Canada.

President Van Buren (1782–1862)—Eighth U.S. President (1837–41). A Jeffersonian Democrat, Van Buren earlier served as Governor of New York, and Secretary of State under Jackson. Van Buren was already unpopular at the time of the case, and worried about reelection. He lost to William. H. Harrison, who died a month into office, succeeded by John Tyler. Van Buren ran for President two more times.

The Spaniard is a composite of two Spanish officials with overlapping terms in this case: Don Angel Calderon de la Barca, Spanish minister to the United States in 1839–40; and Pedro Alacantara de Argaiz, minister in late 1839.

The Navigator and **Don Pedro** are composites based on two survivors of the *Amistad*—Jose Ruiz and Pedro Montes—and the buyer, Pedro Martinez, a major slaver with company headquarters in West Africa where the captives were taken.

The Judge represents both a Connecticut judge and the men of the Supreme Court which, at the time, had just been enlarged from six to eight. Five of them, including Chief Justice Taney, were Southerners who had, at one time or another, owned slaves. One died during the last trial.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Episteme. Episteme. Gramavision 79508.

The Ghost Factory. Shem Guibbory, violin; Anthony Davis, piano; Gerry Hemingway, Pheeroan AkLaff, percussion; Kansas City Symphony Orchestra; William McGlaughlin, conductor. Gramavision R2-79429.

Hemispheres. Episteme. Gramavision R2-79428.

Lady of the Mirrors. Anthony Davis, piano. India Navigation 1047.

Middle Passage. Anthony Davis, piano. Gramavision GRCD-8401.

Tania. Cynthia Aaronson-Davis, soprano, Avery Brooks, bass; Thomas Young, tenor; Episteme; Rand Steiger, conductor. Koch 7467.

X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X. Eugene Perry, baritone; Thomas J. Young, tenor; Priscilla Baskerville, soprano; Hilda Harris, mezzo-soprano; Herbert Perry, bass-baritone; Orchestra of St. Luke's; William Henry Curry, conductor. Gramavision R2-79470.

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Anthony Davis

I encountered this neglected episode in American history first in a poem by Robert Hayden entitled “Middle Passage.” The poem detailed numerous voyages of slave ships to these shores through captains’ logs and sailors’ tales. This narrative culminates with the *Amistad* rebellion and the story of the trial. In the poem Hayden captures the story of slavery and the hope contained within his lines, “Voyage through death to life upon these shores,” which speaks to the essential irony of our people and culture born of the horror of slavery.

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