

The Summer King

Daniel Sonenberg

May 12-20, 2018



MUSIC

Daniel Sonenberg

LIBRETTO

Daniel Sonenberg and Daniel Nester, with additional lyrics by Mark Campbell

WORLD PREMIERE

Pittsburgh Opera

April 29, 2017

CONDUCTOR

Steven Mercurio

STAGE DIRECTOR

Sam Helfrich

CHORUS MASTER

Suzanne Mallare Acton

SCENERY AND PROPERTY DESIGN

Andrew Lieberman

COSTUME DESIGN

Kaye Voyce

VIDEO DESIGN

Darrel Maloney

LIGHTING DESIGN

Robert Wierzel

WIG & MAKE-UP DESIGN

Joanne Weaver

ASSISTANT STAGE DIRECTOR

Christopher Hazlett

ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER

Ted Boyce-Smith

REPETITEUR

Jean Schneider

STAGE MANAGER

Ken Saltzman

SUPERTITLES

Dee Dorsey

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*Co-Production with Michigan Opera Theatre and Pittsburgh Opera
"The Summer King" Music and Libretto
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CAST

(In order of vocal appearance)

Elder Barber:	Norman Shankle
Younger Barber:	Phillip Gay
Radio Announcer:	Raymond Very
Helen Gibson:	Jacqueline Echols
Josh Gibson:	Lester Lynch
Gus Greenlee:	Norman Shankle
Judy Johnson:	Anthony McClain
Cool Papa Bell:	Phillip Gay
Double Duty Radcliffe:	Darius Gillard
Wendell Smith:	Sean Panikkar
Hattie:	Nicole Joseph
Scribe:	Martin Bakari
Girlfriend:	Olivia Johnson
Grace:	Deborah Nansteel
Sam Bankhead:	Kenneth Kellogg
Clark Griffith:	Raymond Very
Calvin Griffith:	Harry Greenleaf+
Senor Alcalde:	Moisés Salazar
Mariachi Singer 1:	Joseph Leppek
Mariachi Singer 2:	Seth Johnson
Mariachi Singer 3:	Matthew Konopacki
Branch Rickey:	Raymond Very
Trash Talking Player:	Martin Bakari
Dave Hoskins:	Branden C.S. Hood

+Michigan Opera Theatre Studio Artist

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

SCENE 1: Cut Off Man barbershop, Brooklyn, NY, 1957

Boys playing stickball hit a ball into a barbershop. When the radio plays "Did Ya See Jackie Robinson Hit That Ball?" the Elder and Younger Barbers argue about the Negro League and the legacy of Josh Gibson. The Elder Barber remembers Gibson's incredible accomplishments and describes the day that Gibson hit a ball completely out of Yankee Stadium.

SCENE 2: Yankee Stadium, NY, 1930

The Elder Barber imagines a Radio Announcer describing the epic battle between pitcher Broadway Connie Rector and a young Josh Gibson.

SCENE 3: A park in Homestead, PA, 1930

Spectators respond to Josh's tremendous home run. Helen, his young wife, arrives with blackberry pie. They look forward to their future (Beautiful Afternoon) and Helen tells Josh that she's pregnant. A musical interlude turns dark. Josh sadly reflects on Helen's death giving birth to their twin children and his commitment to his remaining love—the game of baseball.

SCENE 4: Crawford Grill, Pittsburgh, PA, 1935

Players and fans of the Pittsburgh Crawfords celebrate and praise Mr. Gus Greenlee, owner of both the Crawford Grill and the team. Josh arrives with Hattie. Wendell Smith, from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, introduces himself to Josh. The daily number is

called. Grace is the winner; she bet 440, which was Josh's batting average the previous season. Smith suggests that with numbers like that, Josh might make history by playing for a white team and breaking the color barrier, an idea his teammates, led by Double Duty Radcliffe, disdain. Josh and his teammates scoff at Smith's idea, but Josh is secretly intrigued by it. Grace persuades him to consider it.

SCENE 5: Wendell Smith's office, Pittsburgh Courier, March, 1938

Wendell "Smitty" Smith asks Josh to consider working together to break the color barrier. Smith recalls his experience with segregation in college and admits that he was never "lightning" like Josh. Smith says Josh could change everything. Josh agrees to think about it.

SCENE 6: Josh's apartment, Pittsburgh, PA, March 1938

Josh and Grace, now a couple, return from a night on the town. She scolds him, describes his greatness, and urges him to broaden his dreams.

SCENE 7: Owner's office, Griffith Stadium, Washington, DC, April 1940

Clark Griffith and his nephew meet with Josh and dangle the notion of playing for the Senators. The meeting has clearly been set up to appease the black press. After complimenting Josh's skills, they warn him about the consequences of playing in the majors. The exchange grows threatening (Men such as we). The Griffiths pompously describe their responsibility and their foremost concern with Josh's best interests, making it clear they have no intention of signing him. Clark walks Josh to the door and tells him, "Boy, there's a colored facility at the top of the stairs."

SCENE 8: Outside the Griffith Office, and Crawford Grill, April 1940

Josh, demoralized and frustrated, says all he ever wanted was his wife Helen and the game. He arrives at the Crawford Grill, where players are discussing a lucrative offer from Mexico that hinges on Josh's participation. Smith wants Josh to stay and fight, but Josh eagerly accepts the deal (Hello Mexico). Grace agrees, "as long as it's temporary."

ACT II.

SCENE 1: Escambron Stadium, Vera Cruz, Mexico, October 1941

During a celebration featuring Mexican music, Josh is heralded as player of the year by Señor Alcalde. Sam tells Josh about an offer from back home matching the Mexican pay they receive. Grace is excited to return home, but Josh celebrates the good life the players enjoy in Mexico. As the revelers leave, Grace tells Josh that she's not staying in Mexico. Hattie, now with Double Duty Radcliffe, shares a joint with Josh as he and his friends celebrate "high living." Josh complains that his head isn't feeling so well, and as the celebration begins to spin out of control, Josh proclaims his need to go home, and then loses his balance and collapses.

SCENE 2: Wendell Smith's office, Pittsburgh Courier, March 1945

Branch Rickey tells Smith that he is proudly ready to hire a black player for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Rickey needs someone "with the spirit to fight back, but...the guts not to." Smith tells Rickey, "I may have a name for you."

SCENE 3: An empty ballfield, Homestead, PA, October 1945

Josh, looking haggard and bloated, stands alone on a field hitting balls, lamenting that nothing's changed for him in the four years since Mexico, and then expresses agony at something pressed against his head. Players, including Sam Bankhead, engage in a pickup game. Trash Talking Player takes a turn at bat with Josh catching behind him. The two trade insults, with Josh eventually getting the better of the situation. Sam urges the younger players to respect Josh, and describes his famous Yankee Stadium home run. Wendell Smith then arrives, excitedly telling the news that Jackie Robinson has been hired by the Dodgers. Josh is crestfallen (I got my own league).

SCENE 4: Crawford Grill (now closed), October 1945

Josh has busted into the old Crawford Grill, bringing his own beer cans. Grace chides Josh for being too caught up in his "own league," asking him, "You think you can drink your way into the big leagues?" Josh talks of imaginary

conversations with Joe DiMaggio. Grace tells him that her husband is returning from war, and that she is leaving. She describes the dreams she had of transcending her dreary existence in a loveless marriage with few material comforts; she realizes that she has to face her real life and abandon her fantasies for Josh—fantasies he never shared.

SCENE 5: Bedroom, Josh's mother's house, Pittsburgh, PA, 1947

Josh speaks intently to an imaginary Joe DiMaggio, asking "You ain't gonna answer me?" Josh says that he will die that night. Sam pays his respects to his dying friend and tells him that Jackie Robinson is going to join the Dodgers. They listen to the news on the radio as Josh withdraws into his own delirium. Helen's ghost visits and the two remember their hopes for a bright future (Beautiful Afternoon). Helen disappears. Josh realizes where he is and speaks to Sam about his fabled Yankee Stadium home run: "It went out a long way...I hope you'll remember that." Josh dies. Sam remembers the fallen Summer King, who led all Negro Leaguers to the Promised Land, but was denied entry himself. He then contemplates his own plight, and that of his contemporaries—players who were either too old, or not great enough, to enjoy the fruits of integration. The Elder Barber extolls Josh Gibson's greatness as Sam wonders about fate, asking "Did we need to be greater men than our king to avoid our king's fate?"

SCENE 6: Cut Off Man barbershop, Brooklyn, NY, 1957

The Elder and Younger Barbers continue their argument until the Younger Barber puts on "the damn game."

EPILOGUE: Outside Yankee Stadium, NY, 1930

Children play stickball outside Yankee Stadium. The Radio Announcer calls the legendary home run. The bat cracks and the Street Kids freeze, looking straight up to the sky, asking "Where'd it go? Is it fair?" The kids scatter and one boy emerges with the baseball (Did ya see?).

—*Courtesy of Pittsburgh Opera*

ARTIST PROFILES

Martin Bakari (Scribe, Trash Talking Player)

Martin Bakari has been praised by *Opera News* as a "vocally charismatic performer with a golden tenor." Trained at the Juilliard School, Tanglewood Music Center, and Boston University, he has recently appeared with Pittsburgh Opera, Utah Opera, Portland Opera, LA Opera/Beth Morrison Projects, Opera Carolina, Madison Opera, Virginia Opera, Opera Saratoga and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He has also performed with the New Hampshire Philharmonic, Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and New York Harlem Productions for *Porgy & Bess* tours in Germany, Italy, and Israel. Additionally this season, Mr. Bakari sings Tamino in Opéra Louisiane's *The Magic Flute*, Prince in On Site Opera's *Morning Star*, and Castleman in Pittsburgh Opera's *The Long Walk*. Future engagements include Charlie Parker in Arizona Opera's *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*, Peter the Honeyman in Seattle Opera's *Porgy & Bess*, Pedrillo in Livermore Valley Opera's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and the Visitor in Portland Opera's *In the Penal Colony*. Mr. Bakari's recording of Grigory Smirnov's *Dowson Songs* (Naxos Records) was recently featured by Opera News as a "Critic's Choice" album.



Mark Campbell (Co-librettist)

Mark Campbell's work as a librettist is at the forefront of the current contemporary opera scene in this country. He has written more than 15 librettos, five of which premiered in 2017, and the roster of composers with whom he has worked represents many of the most notable composers of our time. His most known work is



Silent Night, which received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music and is one of the most frequently performed operas in recent history. His other successful operas include *As One*, *Later the Same Evening*, *Volpone*, *Bastianello/Lucrezia*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Inspector*, and most recently, *The Shining*. Awards include: a Grammy® nomination, the first Kleban Foundation Award for Lyricist, two Richard Rodgers Awards, a Larson Foundation Award, a NYFA Playwriting Fellowship, and the first Dominic J. Pellicciotti Award. Mr. Campbell also mentors future generations of writers through such organizations as American Opera Projects, American Lyric Theatre, the University of Colorado's New Opera Workshop, and Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative. Premieres in 2017 included: *Elizabeth Cree*, *Dinner at Eight*, *Some Light Emerges*, *The Nefarious, Immoral but Highly Profitable Enterprise of Mr. Burke & Mr. Hare*, and *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*. (Courtesy Pittsburgh Opera).

Jacqueline Echols (Helen Gibson)

A native of Detroit, lyric soprano Jacqueline Echols has been praised for her "dynamic range and vocal acrobatics" by *Classical Voice* in theaters across the United States. When she debuted as Pip in *Moby Dick* with the Los Angeles Opera, her performance was described by *Opera Today* as having "soared gracefully over Heggie's orchestra, soloists and chorus." Recently, Jacqueline reprised the role of Pip with the Pittsburgh Opera and performed Gilda in the North Carolina Opera's production of *Rigoletto*. Last summer, she made her debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the Tanglewood Music Festival as Woglinde in *Das Rheingold*. A graduate of the Young Artists Program with the Washington National Opera, Jacqueline has performed with the organization as Micaëla in *Carmen*, Woglinde and Forest Bird in the full *Ring Cycle*, the Unicorn in the world premiere of Jeanine Tesori's *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, and Clorinda in *La Cenerentola*.



Phillip Gay (Younger Barber, Cool Papa Bell)

American bass-baritone Phillip Gay is an alumnus of the Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Program, the Glimmerglass Young Artists Program, and a District Winner in the 2014 and 2011 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. A native of Beaumont, Texas, Mr. Gay received his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Lamar University, and his Master of Music in Vocal Performance from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Recent engagements include debuting the role of Cool Papa Bell in *The Summer King* for Pittsburgh Opera and performing the basketball opera *Bounce* with the University of Kentucky. Highlights include Zuniga in *Carmen* with St. Petersburg Opera, Colline in *La bohème* with Syracuse Opera, Hortensius in *Daughter of the Regiment* with Intermountain Opera, and Seneca in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* with New York Lyric Opera Theatre. Other roles include Lodovico in *Otello*, Garibaldo in *Rodelinda*, King in *Aida*, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha*, Balthazar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Silvano in *La Calisto*, and bass soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* with the Erie Philharmonic.



Darius Gillard (Double Duty Radcliffe)

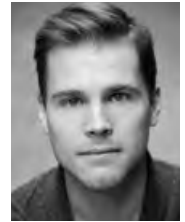
Tenor Darius Gillard is steadily gaining momentum on regional operatic circuits. Praised for his warm legato and charismatic presence, he excels in the lyric repertoire. To date, he has performed a number of roles in operas ranging from the classical works of Mozart to the verismo operas of Verdi and Puccini. He has appeared in leading and supporting roles with several companies including the Connecticut Lyric Opera, Greenville Light Opera Works, Capitol Opera Raleigh, and Hartford Opera Theater. He has also made appearances with the Charleston Chamber Orchestra,



Flint Symphony Orchestra, and the Detroit Festival Camerata as a featured soloist in various oratorio works. Presently, he is concluding doctoral studies at the University of Michigan.

Harry Greenleaf (Calvin Griffith)

Wixom, Michigan native Harry Greenleaf is Michigan Opera Theatre Studio's resident baritone. He made his debut with Michigan Opera Theatre in 2016 in the role of Top in *The Tender Land*. Previous MOT credits also include Le Bret in *Cyrano*, Jack Wallace in *The Girl of the Golden West* and Morales in *Carmen*. This season, he performed with MOT as Marullo in *Rigoletto*, Leo Stein and Man Ray in Ricky Ian Gordon's *27* and Sciarrone in *Tosca*. He has been a Studio Artist with the Wolf Trap Opera Company, an Apprentice Artist with Des Moines Metro Opera and a Young Artist with the Glimmerglass Festival. He holds a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and is an alumnus of the Michigan State University College of Music.



Sam Helfrich (Stage Director)

Director Sam Helfrich makes his Michigan Opera Theatre debut with *The Summer King*, after directing its successful world premiere with Pittsburgh Opera last year. Opera highlights include Haydn's *Creation*, Bach's *St. John Passion* and Handel's *Messiah* with the Pittsburgh Symphony; Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* at New York City Opera; Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Greek* at Boston Lyric Opera; *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Andre Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Virginia Opera; the world premiere of Ben Moore's *Enemies: A Love Story* at Palm Beach Opera; Philip Glass' *Kepler* and Anthony Davis' *Amistad* at Spoleto Festival USA; John Adams' *Nixon in China* at Eugene Opera; Michael Dellaira's *The Secret Agent* at Center



for Contemporary Opera in New York, the Armel Opera Festival in Hungary, and Opera Avignon; and Philip Glass' *Orphée* at various companies. Recent theater credits include Arthur Miller's *After The Fall* at the New York University Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Acting program and off-Broadway productions of *Owned*, by Julian Sheppard, and *Tape*, by Stephen Belber, as well as a double bill of plays by George Bernard Shaw and Alfred De Musset at the Franklin Stage Company. Upcoming projects include *The Magic Flute* with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra as well as a world premiere in development with New York City Opera.

Branden C.S. Hood

(Dave Hoskins)

Branden C.S. Hood is a frequent performer with Michigan Opera Theatre. He sung the role of Mr.

Dashwood in MOT's 2017 production of *Little Women*

and is a member of the MOT Chorus and Community Outreach Programs.

Other performances include Ford in *Falstaff* with Opera MODO in Detroit, *Falstaff* in *Die lustigen weiber von Windsor*, Il Conte in *Le nozze di Figaro* and the title role of *Don Giovanni* with the Lyric Opera of Weimar in Germany. He has attended the young artist programs of the Martina Arroyo Foundation's Prelude to Performance, Pine Mountain Music Festival (2010), Opera Saratoga (Outreach Artist 2010), and Dayton Opera (2009). Mr. Hood holds Master of Music and specialist degrees from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor of Music degree in Opera Emphasis/Vocal Performance from the Boston Conservatory. He is a recipient of The Presser Foundation Award of Encouragement from the Michigan District of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and the Mario Lanza Institute.

Olivia Johnson (Girlfriend)

A native of North Carolina, Olivia Johnson recently earned her master's degree in voice performance at the University of Michigan. This season

she is a member of Michigan Opera Theatre's Touring Ensemble. In October 2017, she placed fifth in the American International Czech and Slovak Voice Competition in Green Bay, Wisconsin. This past summer she won first place in the national Vocal Arts Competition for Emerging Artists sponsored by the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc. She also appeared in the role of Mercédès in *Carmen* at the Martina Arroyo Foundation, Prelude to Performance in the summer of 2017. She attended the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria in the summer of 2016. Her previous roles include Gertrude in Charles Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* and Dorbella in *Così fan tutte* by W.A. Mozart at the University of Michigan.



Seth Johnson (Mariachi Singer 2)

Seth Johnson is a passionate musician who has worked with numerous opera organizations. In addition to Michigan Opera Theatre, he has worked with Opera Youth Outreach, Opera Illinois, Toledo Opera and Ohio Light Opera. In these groups, he performed such roles as Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'amore*, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Archibald Grosvenor in *Patience*. Seth was also a member of the teaching administration for the Great Lakes Light Opera. Seth earned a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Bradley University, where he was the winner of the Concerto/Aria Competition in 2015.



Nicole Joseph (Hattie)

Soprano Nicole Joseph, equally at home on both the operatic and concert stage, is delighted to play Hattie in *The Summer King*. Following the completion of her master's and specialist degrees at the University



of Michigan, Ms. Joseph made her professional debut as Beatrice in Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers* with Kentucky Opera and has recently performed with Opera Modo in Detroit as The Governess in *Turn of the Screw*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*. This past summer, Nicole was awarded the opportunity to attend American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria. She was also featured with the MOT Touring Ensemble as the Miller's Daughter in *Rumpelstiltskin* and Voluptua in *La Pizza con Funghi*. Nicole is the winner of numerous awards and competitions, including the Metropolitan Opera Auditions (MI), James Toland Vocal Arts Competition, Nicholas Loren Vocal Competition, Harold Haugh Light Opera Competition, American Traditions Competition and Career Bridges Foundation award. Originally from Portland, Oregon, Nicole now resides in Berkley, Michigan.

Kenneth Kellogg (Sam Bankhead)

Washington D.C. bass Kenneth Kellogg made his Michigan Opera Theatre debut as Count Montenero in *Rigoletto*. He is reprising the role of Sam Bankhead in *The Summer King*, which he originated with Pittsburgh Opera in 2017. Performance highlights include Zuniga in *Carmen* and Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* with Washington National Opera; Mefistofeles in *Faust* and Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera de Lausanne; Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* with North Carolina Opera and Young Emile Griffith in Terence Blanchard's *Champion* with Opera Parallèle. He holds a Master of Music degree from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor of Music degree from Ohio University. He has also served as a resident artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia and is an alumnus of Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program.



Matthew Konopacki

(Mariachi Singer 3)

Baritone Matthew Konopacki, a native of Livonia Michigan, is an active performer of both classical and contemporary works. Equally comfortable on both the operatic and the concert stage, his repertoire ranges from the cantatas of J.S. Bach to the contemporary operatic music of Kevin Puts. With Michigan Opera Theatre, he has performed the roles of the usher in *Rigoletto*, 1st Scottish Soldier in Puts' *Silent Night*, Servo in *Macbeth*, and was a part of the featured ensembles in *The Magic Flute* and David DiChiera's *Cyrano*. He is also a featured singer on the recent release of DiChiera's legacy album, *Letters & Fantasies*. Matthew holds a master's degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Houston and has appeared as a young artist with Pensacola Opera and the Janiec Opera Company.

**Joseph Leppke** (Mariachi Singer 1)

Joseph Leppke is a tenor originally from Novi, Michigan and is a frequent performer with Michigan Opera Theatre as part of its chorus and community outreach programs. In addition to MOT, he has performed professionally in productions and concerts across the United States, with companies such as Houston Grand Opera and Opera Saratoga. He was also honored this year to be a Great Lakes regional finalist for the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions. Joseph holds a master's degree in Voice Performance from Rice University. This summer, he will star as Tony in the Glimmerglass Festival's new production of *West Side Story*. For the 2018-19 season, Joseph joins the Lyric Opera of Kansas City's resident artist program, where he will be seen in a number of concerts and performances in the area.

**Andrew Lieberman** (Set Design)

Andrew Lieberman is a set designer who has worked with opera companies across the world including English National Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Saarländisches Staatsooper, Boston Lyric Opera, Philadelphia Opera and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. His theater works include *The Glass Menagerie* and *Picnic on Broadway* and *Poor Beck* with the Royal Shakespeare



Company, among numerous other productions. He is a Princess Grace, USA Award Winner, and the Head of Stage Design at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

Lester Lynch (Josh Gibson)

Baritone Lester Lynch makes his return to Michigan Opera Theatre starring as Josh Gibson in *The Summer King*. He is the second



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singer to perform the role since its Pittsburgh Opera premiere in April, 2017. Lester previously performed with MOT in its 2003 production of *A Masked Ball* as Renato. Recognized for his charismatic portrayals and commanding voice, Lester is receiving rave reviews as he tackles some of Verdi's most important baritone roles from Scarpia to *Rigoletto* to Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore*. Highlights of recent engagements include the title role in *Rigoletto* with the Canadian Opera Company, Gerald in *Andrea Chénier* with the Bregenz Festspiel festival, Carbon in *Cyrano de Bergerac* with San Francisco Opera, Herald in *Lohengrin* with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Porgy in *Porgy and Bess* with Washington National Opera, and Scarpia in *Tosca* with the Glimmerglass Festival. Additional engagements include leading roles with Opera Philadelphia, Los Angeles Opera, and with the Cleveland Orchestra, Master Chorale of Washington, Nashville Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and in concert at Carnegie Hall.

Anthony P. McGlaun

(Judy Johnson)

Anthony P. McGlaun is noted for his clarity of tone, musicality and expressive delivery of text. Mr. McGlaun, a Detroit native, received a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Morehouse College and a Master of Music degree from the University of Northern Iowa. Upon his return to Detroit, Mr. McGlaun joined the faculty of Marygrove College where he served as Director of Vocal Activities and Assistant Professor of Music from 2004-2009. He was also member of the Michigan Opera Theatre Chorus and was an apprentice with the company in the 2008-09 season, singing the roles of Uncle Yakuside in *Madame Butterfly* and Remendado in *Carmen*. Mr. McGlaun is a much sought after soloist, recitalist, lecturer and master class presenter. He specializes in the Negro Spiritual and the work of African-American composers. This year has included many recitals and role premiere of Benny Paret in *Champion* by Terrence Blanchard as well Sebastian in *The Little Mermaid*.



Stephen Mercurio (Conductor)

Steven Mercurio is an internationally-acclaimed conductor and composer who has conducted more than 20 productions with Michigan Opera Theatre, including last season's *Cyrano*. He was Music Director of the Spoleto Festival and Principal Conductor of the Opera Company of Philadelphia for five years. Steven is also a sought-after collaborator for many award-winning recordings, arrangements and film projects, most notably "Christmas in Vienna with the Three Tenors." For the stage, he has conducted more than 50 operas in seven different languages in many of the world's best loved opera houses.



Deborah Nansteel (Grace)

Mezzo-soprano Deborah Nansteel recently made her Michigan Opera Theatre debut as La Duegne in *Cyrano* and returns this season to portray the role of Grace in *The Summer King*. Highlights from Ms. Nansteel's career include her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as Gertrude in *Roméo et Juliette*, a world-première performance of Douglas Pew and Dara Weinberg's new opera *Penny* with Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative and the creation of the role of Lucinda in the highly-anticipated world première of the Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Jennifer Higdon's adaptation of *Cold Mountain* at Santa Fe Opera, which she reprised this season with North Carolina Opera. Ms. Nansteel is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music where she earned an Artist Diploma in Opera and a Master of Music in Voice. This season, Ms. Nansteel returns to Lyric Opera of Chicago as Siegrune in *Die Walküre* and sings the role of Alisa in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Metropolitan Opera.



Daniel Nester (Co-librettist)

Daniel Nester is an essayist, freelance writer, poet, writing professor, literary journal editor and reading series curator. He is the author most recently

of the memoir *Shader: 99 Notes on Car Washes, Making Out in Church, Grief, and Other Unlearnable Subjects*.

His previous books include *How to Be Inappropriate*, a collection of humorous nonfiction, and *The Incredible Sestina Anthology*, which he edited. As a journalist and essayist, his work has appeared in a variety of places, such as *Salon*, *New York Times*, *Buzzfeed*, *The Atlantic*, and the Poetry Foundation website, and anthologized in such collections as *Lost and Found*, *The Best American Poetry*, *The Best Creative Nonfiction*, *Third Rail: The Poetry of Rock and Roll*, and *Now Write! Nonfiction*. His poems have appeared in such journals as *Coconut*, *Shampoo*, *Taint*, *Gulf Coast*, *Barrow Street*, *jubilat*, *Crazyhorse*, *Open City*, *Slope*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, and other places. He is the former editor of the online journals *Unpleasant Event Schedule* and *La Petite Zine*. He worked as Assistant Web Editor for *Sestinas* for McSweeney's Internet Tendency. He is an associate professor of English at The College of Saint Rose in Albany, NY. (Courtesy Pittsburgh Opera).



Sean Panikkar (Wendell Smith)

American tenor Sean Panikkar returns to Michigan Opera Theatre as Wendell Smith in *The Summer King*, a role he originated with Pittsburgh Opera at its 2017 world premiere. He previously performed with MOT as Rodolfo in 2015's *La bohème*. Performance highlights include Rodolfo in *Guillaume Tell* with the Metropolitan Opera, Shalimar in *Shalimar the Clown* with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Rodolfo at Royal Albert Hall, Adam in *CO2* with Teatro alla Scala and Nadir in *Les pêcheurs de perles* with Pittsburgh Opera. He holds a master's and bachelor's degree in Voice Performance from the University of Michigan and is an alumnus of San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship and the Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artists Studio. Mr. Panikkar will perform Dionysus in *The Bassarids* for his debut at the Salzburg Festival in 2018.



Moisés Salazar (Senor Alcalde)

California native, tenor Moisés Salazar makes his Michigan Opera Theatre debut as Señor Alcalde in *The Summer King*. Recently Moisés received third place in the Great Lakes Region Metropolitan Opera Council Audition. Last spring he was the featured soloist in Gustav Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in a collaboration with Bowling Green State University. Past roles include Borsa in Verdi's *Rigoletto* with Toledo Opera, Camile Jolidon in Lehar's *The Merry Widow* at the University of Toledo, Rinuccio in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Flaminio in Alessandro Scarlatti's *Il trionfo dell'onore* performed at the Teatro Verdi in Pisa with Opera Network Florence.



Norman Shankle (Gus Greenlee, Elder Barber)

Tenor Norman Shankle made his Michigan Opera Theatre debut as Tamino in *The Magic Flute* and returns this season for the role of Elder Barber/Gus Greenlee in *The Summer King*, a role he recently originated in the world premiere with Pittsburgh Opera. Mr. Shankle's career highlights include his Dallas Opera House debut as Ernesto in *Don Pasquale*; participation in the Metropolitan Opera's productions of *The Enchanted Island* and *Parsifal*; Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with English National Opera, and Dresden Semperoper; the title role in *Idomeneo* and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* with Staatstheater Stuttgart, Arena Opera Festival in Verona, and Teatro Municipale Reggìo Emilia. Mr. Shankle began his career with San Francisco Opera in their Merola Opera Program and as an Adler Fellow. This season, Mr. Shankle has performed the tenor solo in Handel's *Messiah* with Baltimore Symphony, Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, and National Philharmonic, where he subsequently sang the role of Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*.



Daniel Sonenberg (Composer)

Daniel Sonenberg is a composer, performer, and educator living in Portland, Maine. He is best known as the composer of *The Summer King*, a two-act opera on the life of Negro League baseball great Josh Gibson. The opera received its concert world premiere in 2014 in a concert presented by Portland Ovations and co-sponsored by the University of Southern Maine. Michigan Opera Theatre is the second company to produce *The Summer King*, after its world premiere with Pittsburgh Opera in April 2017. In recent years Mr. Sonenberg's music has been presented by Opera America, the Da Capo Chamber Players, American Opera Projects, percussionist Lynn Vartan, Fort Worth Opera, members of the Portland Symphony Orchestra, the Back Cove Festival of Contemporary Music, the Portland Chamber Music Festival, and numerous others. In the past several years he has also been active as a rock musician, releasing a solo album, *Peaks Island Ferry*, in 2014, and both an E.P. (*The Bear* (2013)) and full length album (*Long Overdue* 2015) with his band *Lovers of Fiction*. He is Professor of Music at the University of Southern Maine, where he has taught since 2004. (Courtesy Pittsburgh Opera).



Raymond Very (Radio Announcer, Clark Griffith, Branch Rickey)

Raymond Very makes his Michigan Opera Theatre debut as Branch Rickey, Clark Griffith and the Radio Announcer in *The Summer King*, roles he originated with Pittsburgh Opera's world premiere in 2017. His repertoire spans lyric characters as well as leading dramatic roles, including the title role in *La damnation de Faust*, Albert Gregor in *The Makropulos Affair*, Don José in *Carmen*, Stolzing in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Captain Vere in *Billy Budd*, and Laca and Števa in *Jenůfa*. He has performed in the world's leading opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand



Opera, Seattle Opera and Washington National Opera. Internationally, he has performed with premier companies in London, Munich, Florence, Salzburg (Salzburg Festival), Vienna, Oslo, Frankfurt, Berlin (Deutsche Oper Berlin), Leipzig, Stuttgart, Amsterdam, Strasbourg, Dresden, Zurich and Bilbao. In September 2013 he debuted his dream role, the title role of *Otello*, in Copenhagen, as well as his first Canio in *Pagliacci* in Leipzig. Future plans include his return to Düsseldorf and Vienna, as well as his debut at Oper Hanover.

Kaye Voyce (Costume Design)

Kaye Voyce is a costume designer who has worked with theater companies across the world, including McCarter, Yale Rep, Goodman, Long Wharf, ART, Williamstown, Old Globe, Shakespeare Theatre, Glimmerglass Opera, Royal Shakespeare Company, Theatreworks Singapore, Opera Bern, Theater Bonn and Theater Braunschweig as well as Broadway. Recent credits include *4000 Miles*, *The Great God Pan*, *Detroit*, the world premiere of Sam Shepard's *Heartless*, *A Quiet Place* and Philip Glass' opera *Kepler*.



Robert Wierzel (Lighting Design)

Robert Wierzel is a lighting designer who has worked in theater, dance, opera, contemporary music and museums throughout the country and overseas. His opera credits include work with the Palais Garnier in Paris, Folk Opera (Sweden), Chicago Lyric Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Wolf Trap Opera Company and the Glimmerglass Festival, among others. He has also worked on Broadway productions including *Lady Day At Emerson's Bar & Grill* and *David Copperfield: Dreams and Nightmares* and numerous off Broadway productions. He has also collaborated with dance companies including the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.





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JUNE 8-10

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Detroit Tigers Willie Horton
African American Legacy Award
Sunday, June 10 at 1:10pm

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Take Me Out to the Opera: Exploring the Role of Arts and Sports in Social Equity and Inclusion

By Erica Hobbs

In April 2017, Pittsburgh Opera premiered a groundbreaking work: *The Summer King*, a new opera based on the life of Negro Leagues baseball player Josh Gibson. While he may not be a household name, Gibson was a legend in his own right. As a power hitter with a batting average higher than .350, said to hit almost 800 home runs in his 17-year-career, some called him the “Black Babe Ruth.” He was bound for the Major Leagues.

Of course, that is not what happened. In 1947, Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier to become the first African American baseball player to play for Major League Baseball. It was a reality that Gibson lived to see, heartbroken that he wasn’t the one to do it.

While Robinson has gone down in the history books, Gibson, like far too many African American figures, was excluded the narrative. With *The Summer King*, composer Daniel Sonenberg wanted to change that, and so did Michigan Opera Theatre.

In June of 2017, MOT announced *Take Me Out to the Opera*, a collaborative initiative with a goal of not only sharing Gibson’s story, but the stories of other African American trailblazers. With a range of community partners, the campaign highlights figures in both sports and the arts and explores how the two have been used to promote racial equity and inclusion.

“One of the opportunities available through arts and sports is an ability to bring people together, especially across racial divisions,” said MOT CEO Wayne S. Brown. “We are proud to work with community partners to celebrate those athletes and artists who, like Josh Gibson, were catalysts for change in their communities.”

Throughout the past year, MOT has worked with the Detroit Tigers, the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, the Detroit Historical Society, the Detroit Public Library, the Josh Gibson Foundation,



Rosedale Park Community House and Hamtramck Stadium to present a series of exhibits, panels, performances and presentations on these themes.

Local figures, including George Shirley, the first African American tenor to perform a leading role at the Metropolitan Opera, and Ron Teasley, a former Negro Leagues baseball player with the New York Cubans and the Olean Oilers, have shared their experiences breaking racial boundaries. Local experts such as Wayne State University Associate Professor Dr. Lisa Alexander, a researcher in African Americans in popular culture, and University of Michigan Musicologist Mark Clague, also a researcher in African and Afro-American Studies, have discussed racial representation and inclusion in a larger historical and cultural context. And programs like *I, Too, Sing America* have celebrated African American artists and athletes through poetry, narrative, song and video.

“This has been an incredibly unique opportunity to shine a light on the role arts and sports have played in breaking down barriers for people of color,” said Ellen Hill Zeringue, Vice President of Marketing for the Detroit Tigers. “We are excited that the community will learn about the moving story of Negro Leagues and Hall of Fame player Josh Gibson through the upcoming Detroit premiere of *‘The Summer King.’*”

The initiative has also focused on children through residencies in local schools. The program allows students

to create their own operatic piece which relates the history of Detroit’s own Negro Leagues baseball team with modern-day themes of equity and inclusion.

“Knowing that Hall-of-Famer Josh Gibson played baseball at Hamtramck Stadium is a home run for the hometown crowd,” said Hamtramck Public Schools Superintendent Tom Niczay. “I’m hoping Hamtramck Public School students learn about a historical event, regarding the prejudice African Americans

faced, and that the lessons learned in watching *The Summer King* are relevant in 2018.”

As the campaign winds down to its culmination of the May production of *The Summer King*, the public is invited to participate in its remaining events, including:

April 18, 2018: Opera and Jazz: *The Summer King* at Cliff Bell’s: Michigan Opera Theatre musicians, along with area jazz artists, offer an evening of opera and jazz from the 1920s-40s, when Josh Gibson flourished

April 22, 2018: *I, Too, Sing America:* A Celebration of African American Artists and Athletes: An afternoon of beautiful music and compelling conversation in Rosedale Park

April 26, 2018: *There Was Always Sun Shining Someplace: Life in the Negro Baseball Leagues* at the Detroit Opera House: A film chronicling the history of Negro Leagues baseball with rare historical footage and interviews with Black baseball greats, followed by a discussion with the filmmakers

June 8-10, 2018: Negro Leagues Weekend at Comerica Park (a Detroit Tigers event)

Additional events continue to be added and will be updated on the community page of the MOT website www.MichiganOpera.org.

While the initiative may end with *The Summer King*, the goal of the campaign does not. MOT invites the community to join them in continuing to identify, share and celebrate those who have fought for social equity and inclusion, past, present and future.

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE CHORUS – TOSCA

Soprano

Brandy Adams
Claire Chardon
Fidelia Darmahkasih
Suzanne Grogan
Nicole Joseph
Mary Martin
Kimberley Sanders
Schyler Sheltroun
Giles Simmer
Heidi Bowen Zook

Alto

Carol Ambrogio-Wood
Andrea Apel
Mysti Byrnes
Yvonne Friday
Helen Hass
Madison Montambault
Kristina Reigle
Tiffanie Waldron
Tamara Whitty
Chantel Woodard

Tenor

Francisco Bedoy
Fred Buchalter
Michael Fowler
Richard Jackson, Jr.
Seth Johnson
Adrian Leskiw
Bradley Miller
Brandon Motz
Braun Oldenkamp
Jeff Wilkinson

Bari/Bass

Benton DeGroot
Joseph Edmonds
Kurt Frank
Glenn Healy
Branden C.S. Hood
Matthew Konopacki
Miroslav Manovski
Brandon Spencer
Jacob Surzyn
David Twigg

Michigan Opera Theatre Children's Chorus

April 14 & 17

Abigail Armstrong
Shiloh Beaton
Brooke Bugajewski
Mallory Childs
Cavelle Doucet Lefebvre
Gabrielle Duso
Soleil Garcia-Johnson
Sarahfay Hendin
Selga Jansons
Emily Johnson
Chloe Lee
Brendan Lockhart
Rebecca Lucksom
Mia Martin
Natalie Nikolajevs
Amber Ohlsson
Emma Palmer
McKayla Prew
Emeline Rice
Laura Rosales
Anna Schultz
Breah Marie Willy
Brigitte Zook

April 11 & 16

Alexandra Beck
Amelia Borys
Portteia Davidson
Megan DuRocher
Tyler Edwards
Edward Eichenhorn
Jaeden Footitt
Jehnya Footitt
Nina Georgeff
Anneliese Ingraham
Khalan Isbell
Emily Kinaia
Molly Levin
Kathryn Migrin
Natalie Nikolajevs
Beatrix Reilly
Skylar Reynolds
Kevyn Roessler
Piper Teasdale
Arsh Wasnik
Grace Watson
Natalie Watson
Claire Wolfe

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE CHORUS – THE SUMMER KING

Soprano

Brandy Adams
Alaina Brown
Claire Chardon
Rebecca Eaddy
Suzanne Grogan
Sandra Periord
Kimberley Sanders
Monique Young

Alto

Andrea Apel
Yvonne Friday
Rachel Ann Cirty
Helen Hass

Olivia Johnson
Kristina Riegler
Tiffanie Waldron
Tamara Whitty
Chantel Woodard

Tenor

Francisco Bedoy
Denzel Donald
Michael Fowler
Richard Jackson, Jr.
Seth Johnson
Joseph Leppek
Brandon Motz
Brett Thompson

Bari/Bass

Benton DeGroot
Kurt Frank
Branden C.S. Hood
Matthew Konopacki
Marcus Peterson
Brandon Spencer
Terrence Stewart
Jacob Suryzyn
Gregory Stinson

Children

Shiloh Beaton
Mallory Childs
Portteia Davidson
Tyler Edwards
Anika Lopes
Zaire Polk
Jaylah Fowler
Bennett Vesprini
Eva Vesprini
Isabella Vesprini
Maria Panikkar



In Memoriam

Christine K. Strumbos, Board of Trustees 1991 - 2017

Christine K. Strumbos was a longtime member of the Michigan Opera Theatre Board of Trustees, serving for more than 25 years. Her passion for life and family led to a variety of endeavors ranging from being a homemaker to obtaining her realtor's license to completing her bachelor's degree in psychology in her early 50s. In addition to MOT, Christine and her husband George were strong supporters of the Cranbrook Academy of Art/Cranbrook Art Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts, Women's Committee for Hospice, University of Michigan Center for Hearing Disorders and many other organizations. She was also a founding member of the Modern Greek Cultural Association, which was responsible for the creation of an endowed chair for Classical Greek Studies at Wayne State University. We are grateful for Christine's long commitment to MOT and will miss her. Christine K. Strumbos, 1922 - 2017.

PROFILES FROM THE PIT:



Madison

Principal Viola John Madison

Michigan Opera Theatre Principal Viola John Madison is a man of many talents. As a violist, he has been playing for nearly 50 years, many of which have been with MOT. John first played with MOT from 1982-84 while in graduate school at the University of Michigan. He returned to the company in 1996 after winning the Principal Viola position and has held the title ever since.

John also performs with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and teaches in the Wayne State University Department of Music. He said one of his favorite performance experiences was playing in the Three Tenors concert at the final performance in the old Tiger Stadium in 1999. He said he has since seen many changes in the city.

"The best part about performing in Detroit is being right in the middle of this great city's come back," he said.

Outside of music, John is a master gardener and enjoys spending time both gardening and landscaping. He has also been a hospice volunteer for more than 20 years, specializing in terminal children. He said he eventually wants to open his own hospice center and care for patients full-time.

"I feel called to do it, it's a very personal thing," he said. "The passion comes from just being able to help someone through the greatest event of their life and be able to let them know it's ok."



Deleury

Principal Cello Nadine Deleury

Michigan Opera Theatre Principal Cello Nadine Deleury knew from a young age that she wanted to be a professional cellist. Born in France, Nadine began studying cello at the age of 10, eventually studying at the Paris Conservatory. She moved to Detroit in the 1980s when her husband and fellow-cellist, Haden McKay, joined the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Shortly thereafter, in 1985, she won the Principal Cello position at MOT and has been with the orchestra ever since.

She said the most memorable moment of her time with MOT was the grand opening of the Detroit Opera House in 1996.

"Our years of the crowded pits and backstages of the Fisher Theatre and Masonic Temple were over!" she said. "We now had this magnificent hall!"

Outside of MOT, Nadine runs Chamber Music at the Scarab Club, a performance series she founded with MOT colleague Velda Kelly in 1998. She also enjoys researching forgotten composers, an interest that has led to meeting their families and creating recordings of their music.

In recent years, she has been involved assisting refugee families from Syria settle into their new homes in Windsor, Canada, where she has lived for the past 11 years.

"I enjoy immensely meeting different people," she said, "and seeing the children adapt to schools and to their new country."