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RESIDENT ENSEMBLE OF PROFESSIONAL OPERA SINGERS SELECTED FOR AOP TRAINING PROGRAM

SIX SINGERS TO COLLABORATE WITH COMPOSERS, LIBRETTISTS IN UPCOMING SEASON OF "COMPOSERS & THE VOICE"

BROOKLYN, NY – AOP (American Opera Projects) announces the six singers who will become its Resident Ensemble for the upcoming ninth season of its *Composers & the Voice* training program. Comprised of one each of the basic operatic/vocal categories, the singers for the 2017-18 season will be Coloratura Soprano **Tookah Sapper**, Lyric Soprano **Jennifer Goode Cooper**, Mezzo-Soprano **Blythe Gaissert**, Tenor **Blake Friedman**, Baritone **Mario Diaz-Moresco** and Bass **Adrian Rosas**. The singers will spend a year working collaboratively with composers and librettists who have received fellowships to develop skills for writing for the voice and contemporary opera stage. The Resident Ensemble was selected by Composers & the Voice Artistic Director **Steven Osgood** based on their superior technical and musical skills, as well as their commitment to developing and performing new works.

The Resident Ensemble will be joined by returning Music Directors **Mila Henry**, also serving as C&V's new Head of Music, and **Kelly Horsted** to collaborate on creating new material by the composer and librettist fellows. Singers will each explain how their particular voice works throughout its range, addressing issues of tessitura, negotiating the passagio, demands for vowel modification, and how these affect their performance of text.

"The philosophy of Composers & the Voice since its beginning has been that by immersing composers and librettists in hands-on work with skilled singers and music directors, we empower them to create groundbreaking works that are true to each of their artistic languages," says Osgood. "Composers rarely have the opportunity to work with opera singers during their training, and C&V was designed to address this void."

In closed workshops from October 2017-April 2018, the singers will rotate among each composer, giving demonstrations of proper vocal technique and writing, as well as performing short works. This will culminate with *First Glimpse*, a public concert of songs on May 19 & 20, 2018, in which the singers will perform the composer's revised and final versions. Finally, on September 28 & 29, 2018, the AOP Resident Ensemble will perform *Six Scenes*, an evening of short opera scenes created by the composer-librettist fellows.

Composer Gregory Spears, a fellow in the C&V program from 2007-08 before he created the operas *Paul's Case* (2013, UrbanArias world premiere) and *Fellow Travelers* (2016, Cincinnati Opera world premiere), says that "hearing singers discuss in detail their experience learning and performing a new piece revolutionized the way I write for the voice."

More information about the 2017-19 Composers & the Voice Series can be found at www.aopopera.org/composers_voice.

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BIOS

RESIDENT SINGERS



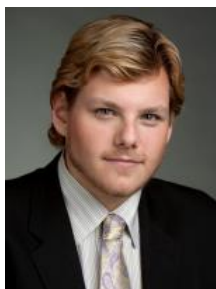
JENNIFER GOODE COOPER is a "lustrous soprano" (*Wall Street Journal*) with "steely eyed ferocity" (*NY Times*) who "fills the theater with her soaring soprano voice" (*Variety*). She specializes in crossing genres, as shown in a career fusing opera, Broadway, song, radio, and new works. She can be heard in recording on Albany Records, MSR Classics, and SKG Music. Career highlights: Title role in Floyd's *Susannah* (Toledo Opera), Nathaniel Stookey's *Ivonne* (Opera Memphis), Miss Jessel in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (New York City Opera), Titania/Hippolyta in the first known a cappella opera, Michael Ching's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Opera Memphis), Musetta in Baz Luhrmann's acclaimed Broadway and LA productions of *La Bohème*, Backup singer for Patti Lupone, Weekly Hip-Hopera singer with celebrity DJ's Ed Lover and Dr. Dre (NY's Power 105.1). Jennifer was a 2013 Arts Envoy of the US Embassy (to Mozambique), and a 2014 recipient of a Professional Development Grant from the Weill

Foundation. www.jennifergoodecooper.com



An active interpreter of art song, opera and new music, baritone **MARIO DIAZ-MORESCO** is garnering attention for his versatility and strong stage presence. Mr. Diaz-Moresco studied at the University of Colorado, the University of Southern California, and is currently a member of the Professional Studies Diploma program at the Mannes School, where he is a student of Diana Soviero. He has been a young artist with Central City Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, Chautauqua Opera and a Stern Fellow

at Songfest. Highlights from recent seasons include recitals with pianist Spencer Myer on California's "In Concert Sierra" series, the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Series in Chicago and the Rocky River Chamber Music Society of Ohio, in addition to Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, The Old Doctor in *Vanessa*, playing the lead role in Robert Ashley's *Oust*, and premiering the song cycle *The Wanderlusting of Joseph C.* by Joan La Barbara.



Tenor **BLAKE FRIEDMAN** has been seen on operatic, concert, and theatrical stages across the country. His recent appearance as Iago in Rossini's *Otello* with LoftOpera earned him praise for "his vast range and clear diction" (*NY Observer*) and "pliant tenor" (*Parterre*). *The New York Times* said, "The most convincing tenor was that of Blake Friedman as Iago whose voice has a plummy fullness and dusky hue. His duet with Otello was taut and exciting...". Other notable New York City performances include: Tenor Soloist in the *Liebeslieder Walzer* with New York City Ballet, Tenor Soloist at Geffen Hall in Mozart's *Vesperi Sollemnes de Confessore*, and Singer in *Tchaikovsky: None but the Lonely Heart* (BAM Fisher). He has also garnered praise for his "silken and strong" (*Tampa Bay*

Times), "fresh lyric tenor" (OperaNews Online) singing roles such as Jimmy O'Keefe in *Later the Same Evening*, Conte Almaviva in *Barbiere di Siviglia*, Nemorino in *L'Elisir D'Amore* and Alfredo in *La Traviata*. He is delighted to rejoin American Opera Projects Composers & the Voice as resident tenor for a second season.



Mezzo Soprano **BLYTHE GAISSERT** mezzo-soprano has established herself as a fresh and exciting artist in great demand in the United States and abroad for opera, concert and recital engagements. In the coming 2017-18 season, Ms. Gaissert will be creating the role of Walker Loats in Mikael Karlsson's cutting edge one woman opera *The Echo Drift* at the Prototype Festival in NYC in a co-production with AOP, reprising the role of Hannah After in *As One* with San Diego Opera, and singing Hester Prynne in the professional premiere of *The Scarlett*

Professor at Amherst College, Sadie in Ricky Ian Gordon's *Morning Star* at On Site Opera. She is also a member of the alt/classical/rock group The Knells, who will be releasing their second album in Fall of 2017. A champion of new music, Ms. Gaissert has worked with numerous composers and librettists on dozens of new works, and has been a part of American Opera Projects Composers and the Voice series since 2014. Ms. Gaissert has worked with companies such as the Metropolitan Opera, LA

Opera, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Opera Colorado, Tulsa Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Aldeburgh Festival in England, Lyrique en Mer in France, Opera Southwest, Opera Saratoga, and more.



Hailed by the *New York Times* as “a stalwart bass-baritone with a burnished voice” and in *Opera News* as a “mellifluous bass-baritone [with] theatrical flair,” **ADRIAN ROSAS** is an emerging young artist with “impressive experience and talent” (*The Boston Globe*). Mr. Rosas has performed with opera companies such as the Seattle Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Opera Saratoga, Houston’s Opera in the Heights, and the Detroit Opera House. As a champion of new and modern music, he has had the opportunity to work on a variety of newly written works,

including Peter Ash’s *The Golden Ticket*, Robert Xavier Rodriguez’s *Frida*, Petr Kotik’s *Master-Pieces*, Matt Aucoin’s *Whitman*, newly written operas with the American Lyric Theater in New York, and with the Ostrava Center for New Music in the Czech Republic. Equally versed in concert and oratorio work, he has performed at Carnegie Hall (Stern Auditorium, Weill Recital Hall, and Zankel Hall), Merkin Concert Hall, and Alice Tully Hall. Mr. Rosas holds a Bachelor of Music Degree from Western Michigan University, and a Master of Music Degree from The Juilliard School. Co-Founder and Executive Director of [Arts On Site NYC \(artsonsite.org\)](http://artsonsite.org), a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to supporting the development of artists and encouraging community collaboration.



Cherokee soprano **TOOKAH SAPPER**, from Oklahoma City, holds a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance with a Minor in Collaborative Piano from University of Central Oklahoma. This summer, she will perform with The Chautauqua Opera Company as a Studio Artist for their 2017 season. This past spring, she performed as a member of the Princeton Singers, under the direction of Steven Sametz. She performed and collaborated with American Opera Projects as a member of their Resident Ensemble for the 2015/16 season of Composers & The Voice. In fall of 2015, she appeared in *Sonic Blossom*, an interactive performance exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, working with artist Lei Mingwei. She currently plays piano at the Princeton Ballet School and is a Cantor and Choral Scholar at St. John the Evangelist in Lambertville, NJ. MSM credits

include: *Cendrillon* (Feè), *Albert Herring* (Cis), Schubert’s *Mass in G Major* (Soloist), Mozart’s *C Minor Mass* (Soprano II Soloist). UCO credits include: *L’Elisir d’amore* (Adina), *The Messiah* (Soloist), *Dido and Aeneas* (Belinda), *Gallantry* (Lola), and *Gianni Schicci* (Nella). Summer program credits include: *The Maid of Orleans* (Solo Angel) with Russian Opera Workshop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and *Pirates of Penzance* (Mabel) and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Barbarina) with Opera in the Ozarks in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

C&V ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



STEVEN OSGOOD is General and Artistic Director of Chautauqua Opera, where the 2017 season will feature new productions of *Don Pasquale*, *Hydrogen Jukebox*, and the US stage premiere of Ottorino Respighi’s realization of Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*. As Artistic Director of American Opera Projects (2001 to 2008) he created Composers & the Voice, and conducted the world premieres of Paula Kimper and Wende Persons’ *Patience & Sarah* at the Lincoln Center Festival, and Janice Hamer and Mary Azrael’s *Lost Childhood* in Tel Aviv. In 2014, he conducted AOP’s acclaimed premiere of *As One* by Laura Kaminsky, Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed. He has conducted premieres by Tan Dun, Iannis Xenakis, David T. Little and Daron Hagen, among others. He has served on the Music Staff of the Metropolitan Opera since 2006. Most recently he conducted the world premiere of *Breaking the Waves* by Missy Mazzoli and Royce

Vavrek for Opera Philadelphia.

MUSIC DIRECTORS



Lauded for her “sublime” playing (*Feast of Music*) and heralding orchestral scores of “incredible range and color” (*OperaPulse*), pianist **MILA HENRY** is returning to Composers & the Voice for her fourth season, now as both music director and Head of Music. An integral member of New York’s contemporary opera community, she frequently collaborates with Beth Morrison Projects, PROTOTYPE, American Lyric Theater and American Opera Projects, where she was Assistant Conductor for the premieres of *As One* (BAM), *The Blind* (Lincoln Center Festival) and *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom* (Irondale Center). She has performed at LA Opera (Thumbprint), Opera Philadelphia (We Shall Not Be Moved, September 2017) and the Library of Congress (OPERA America’s *Fierce Grace: Jeannette Rankin*); served as Vocal Director for Ripe Time’s Obie-winning *The World is Round* (BAM); and appeared on VisionIntoArt’s

FERUS Festival, National Sawdust’s Spring Revolution Festival and the New York Musical Festival.
milahenry.com



KELLY HORSTED enjoys an active career in NYC as an accompanist and vocal coach. Collaborations with AOP have included Sheila Silver’s *Beauty Intolerable*, Herschel Garfein’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, directed by Mark Morris, Tarik O’Regan’s *Heart of Darkness*, and Paula Kimper’s *Patience & Sarah* for the Lincoln Center Festival. He has also collaborated with Chelsea Opera, Center for Contemporary Opera, Opera Company of Brooklyn, Wintergreen Festival, New Jersey Opera Theater, Friends and Enemies of New Music, Five Words in a Line and the Graduate Musical Theater Writing program at the Tisch School. He is a coach at the Hartt School of Music, and has also taught at Mannes College of Music, Hunter College, Intermezzo, Five Towns College and OperaWorks. His Bachelor and Master of Music degrees are from the Eastman School of Music. Kelly has been a music director for Composers & the Voice since

2006. KellyHorsted.com

MORE INFO AND PRESS MATERIALS AVAILABLE AT:

www.aopopera.org

July 6, 2017

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