



Dear Mrs. Kennedy



RYAN TOWNSEND STRAND, tenor

KARINA KONTOROVITCH, piano

To you, the listener:

There is power in the written word. The words we say often go unremembered, spilling out into our world and never reaching another's ear. When words are important enough to write, they gain the power of history. When words are important enough to sing, they gain the power of humanity.

On November 22, 1963, U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, while sitting next to his wife, Jacqueline Kennedy. For years to come after this infamous day, letters were written to Jackie, expressing condolences and confusion, the spectrum of grief memorialized in the written word. This project has sought to give voice to those letters, providing community for listeners sharing in that collective grief. It is a touchstone for turning inward and experiencing grief through the lens of a national tragedy.

The music of *Dear Mrs. Kennedy* provides a communal journey to safely explore grief and spark conversation on the importance of human connection. Rather than President Kennedy or First Lady Jackie explicitly, the central character in this music is Grief itself: the grief of a nation—and of a world.

—Ryan Townsend Strand, tenor

Dear Mrs. Kennedy

Processional

1. Oh Jacqueline — Augusta Read Thomas 4:56
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Recessional

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1. Oh Jacqueline – *Processional*

Texts are excerpts from letters written to Jacqueline Kennedy by:

Annie
Vivian Mackey
Miller A. Alley
Marcia Schwen
Mrs. Alma Snell
A closing phrase written in many letters.
Arlene Simrin and family

The sky is in mourning today.
Our flag is at half-mast.
Why! Why! I ask why!
We will carry the torch light he lit.

2. A Litany of Sympathy

Text adapted by the composer from messages received at the U.S. Embassy in Dublin, Ireland, 1963.

God rest his brave soul.
A novena of masses will be offered for the repose of the soul of John,
with the sympathy of John Reilly . . .
with sincere sympathy from James Lions . . .
to send profound sympathy . . . Richard Mulcahy

With sincere condolences and sympathy, With deepest sympathy,
With sincere sympathy . . .
With profound sympathy . . .

James Crosbie
Patrick Duggan
Jane Ryan
Arthur Quicke

We wish to convey to you personally,
to your children,
and to all members of the Kennedy family our profound sorrow . . .
and our sympathy . . .

At a special meeting of the committee a vote was tendered, a vote of sympathy.
Please convey to Misses Kennedy,
our deepest sympathy, our heartfelt sympathy . . .

with profound sympathy . . .
Our hearts have gone out to you.

3. My Name is Minerva Chapa

SUNDAY NIGHT
WAUSEON, OHIO
1_13 / 64
Dear Mrs. Kennedy,

My Name is Minerva Chapa. I am a Mexican girl. I am fourteen years of age. We are from McAllen, Texas. We are eight in the family four are in school we are all behind in school. Because we have missed a lot of school as you might know my mother & father are laborers. THIS year we stayed here in Ohio.

I am writing you to tell you how sorry I am for what has happened. Ever since he became President of The United States in 1960 I was wishing could meet him and tell him how much I liked him and was behind him all the way in every thing he did. We are Catholics to but that is not the reason why we liked him so much. It was because of all the things he tried to do, for example THE CIVIL RIGHTS, TEX CUT, & THE STRONG SPEECHES HE SAID AND THE STRONG STANDS HE TOOK, and how he tried his best to do his job and he did the most wonderful job think many might not agree with me but this is the way I feel. The world lost a wonderful and great leader.

I saw every thing on television and I could not believe it I still do not believe he is dead. I still keep saying President Kennedy instead of President Johnson. I want you to know how much I admire you took it I know how you must of felt you knew he was dead. I just do not know how any one could do such a thing such a terrible thing to such a wonderful person like he was. I like you to know I will never forget him never. Some people did not like him because he was rich we our selves are poor but we liked him and admired him for his courage. Please answer my letter. I feel so awful and sad when I think about it. Say HELLO to Carolinne, John JR. and the rest of the family from me to them.

(P.S. We have his famous speeches, we also have three MEXICAN records that describe him so wonderful.

PLEASE
ANSWER? WITH
LOVE
ALWAYS,
MINERVA CHAPA

4. may I, may you

Custer, Michigan - November 23, 1963

Most Gracious Lady, Jackie and children,

May I, one of the millions of little people dedicated to serving under our President, and a clerk in a small third class office of the Postal Department extend my deepest sympathy to you and yours at this time.

At the announcement of the tragedy my associate and I immediately began a silent prayer that our beloved leader would live. When the announcement of his death came it was my duty to lower our flag to half mast.

I can not explain the emotion I felt and the sadness in my heart at our loss as I lowered the Flag. Never even with the loss of several of my family have I been more deeply touched than with the loss of President Kennedy.

I only pray that this life taken so unjustly has not gone in vain and our nation survive the loss.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Frances Nash

January 16, 1964
McClellandtown, PA

To Caroline and Little John,

May you always remember History will be filled with the goodness your daddy did. But the poverty stricken, poor people who survive can tell you better.

We all loved him.
Joyce Wise

5. Dear Mrs. Kennedy

CHARLOTTE, N.C
JANUARY 17, 1964

Dear Mrs Kennedy,

May I extend my heartfelt sympathy and prayers to you and your family? I do so admire your courage and strength. It has been an inspiration to me the way you have conducted yourself. You see Mrs Kennedy, my husband died of a heart attack while sitting at the table drinking a glass of milk on Friday, November 22, at about the same time your husband and our beloved President was killed. We were listening to the news about your husband when my husband had his attack, His last words were "how could anyone have such hate in his heart that he could do such a thing to our President." My sixteen year old son came in at that time from school and was with me when he died. He died not knowing for sure the President was dead. My husband was 46 years old also - born in April, 1917. We have five Children - four boys and one girl. Our oldest boy is 22 years old and doing graduate work at Brown University in Prov. RI. My youngest is nine years old and in the 4th grade. My husband was a retired Army Major.

I feel so for your young children. Mine are older and will remember their father real well.

My prayers will be with you and your family in the difficult days ahead. I can truly sympathize with you as I am going through the same adjustment - that of adjusting your life without the man you love by your side.

Sincerely, Margaret McLean

6. A Tribute to Mr. J.F.K.

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CENSORED
COOKCOUNTYJAIL

A Tribute to Mr. J.F.K.
You the congress of these United States and offices of leadership
In the late President John F. Kennedy, yo've lost a very magnificent man into the arms of earth.
His pride and dignity, none could ever surpass, his warmth was one never to be forgotten.
Leaving behind millions to weep, both national and international Also leaving our traitors to joy at our sudden lost,
declaring their friction in
our land of great Freedom
Oh how it must hurt, Mr and Mrs America's hearts, to know that their's
slaughtering going on in these United States of America
Killing each other as tho they were Texas cattle in a pen
Oh God !! bless our nation, and protect our leaders along their path From men whom dignity have no cause.
Spray your loving grace around Jackie and her tots . . .

7. Letter to the Cornell Daily Sun, 12-2-1963

12-2-1963
TO THE EDITOR

CORNELL DAILY SUN:
AS WE THINK ABOUT THE ASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY

AND OF LEE OSWALD, IT SEEMS THATAS MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY EACH OF US BEARS, IN TWO WAYS, PART OF THE GUILT FOR WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

OSWALD WAS TRAINED BY THE MARINES, IN THE NAME OF NATIONAL SECURITY, TO KILL MEN. HE WAS GIVEN A MEDAL FOR DEMONSTRATING HIS ABILITY TO DO SO. HAD HE KILLED AN ENEMY HE WOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN ANOTHER MEDAL, BUT WHEN HIS PERVERTED MIND DECIDED THAT THE ENEMY WAS THE PRESIDENT, THEN IT BECOMES A DESPICABLE CRIME. WE SHOULD ONLY WONDER THAT THIS SORT OF THING DOESN'T HAPPEN MORE OFTEN.

THE SECOND POINT IS THAT THE GENERAL EMOTIONAL CLIMATE IN THE NATION TODAY, PERHAPS MORE PREVALENT IN THE SOUTH, BUT CERTAINLY NOT EXCLUSIVE TO THAT AREA, ENCOURAGES THIS KIND OF RESPONSE BY IRRATIONAL PEOPLE. STATE GOVERNORS REFUSE TO COMPLY WITH THE FEDERAL LAW; PENNSYLVANIA HOME OWNERS ATTEMPT TO FORCE NEGROES FROM THEIR AREA; POLICEMEN BEAT, JAIL AND FINE YALE STUDENTS WHO ARE HELPING TO GET NEGROES TO VOTE IN A MOCK ELECTION; CORNELL FOREIGN STUDENTS ARE HARASSED AND BEATEN WHILE TRAVELING IN THE SOUTH, COURT ORDERED SCHOOL INTEGRATIONS ARE MET WITH HYSTERIA BY WHITE PARENTS; AND NATIONAL LEADERS ARE SPAT UPON. ALL OF THESE ACTIONS ARE COMMITTED BY SUPPOSEDLY NORMAL, RATIONAL CITIZENS, YET WE HAVE THE HYPOCRISY TO PROFESS AMAZEMENT AND HORROR THAT SOME OF OUR LESS RATIONAL CITIZENS, INCITED TO VIOLENCE BY THE ATTITUDES OF THE RATIONAL, ARE CAPABLE OF SHOOTING A NEGRO LEADER, THEN BOMBING A NEGRO CHURCH, AND NOW ASSASSINATING THE PRESIDENT

WHEN SUPPOSEDLY RATIONAL PEOPLE RESORT TO DEFIANCE AND REBELLION TO AVOID ACCEPTING IDEAS AND CUSTOMS THEY DISLIKE, THEN AN EXTREMIST, IN ORDER TO BE EXTREME, MUST RESORT TO EVEN MORE VIOLENT ACTIONS. DALLAS OFFICIALS HAVE DISCLAIMED ANY INFLUENCE OVER OSWALD BY THE RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN THAT CITY AGAINST OTHER NATIONAL LEADERS,

BECAUSE THE DEMONSTRATIONS WERE INSPIRED BY THE RADICAL CONFLICT WHILE OSWALD APPARENTLY COMMITTED HIS ACTIONS AS A COMMUNIST. BUT EMOTIONAL ATTITUDES AFFECT THE MIND IN ALL AREAS; HATE ISN'T SELECTIVE. WHEN WE AS INDIVIDUALS PERMIT OURSELVES TO HATE ANOTHER PERSON, THEN WE ARE GUILTY OF CONTRIBUTING TO THE EMOTIONAL ATTITUDES THAT MAKE POSSIBLE DISASTERS SUCH AS PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S DEATH.

IN ADDITION TO THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECT THESE ATTITUDES HAVE ON THOSE WITH THOSE WITH WHOM WE COME IN CONTACT, THEY ALSO WILL EVENTUALLY DESTROY US.

DONNA SOOBY, GRAD.

8. Might Be Equal

WEDS.
NOV. 27
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

My dear Mrs Kennedy,

I wish so much that good might come out of this dreadful evil – as a memorial to your wonderful husband. Would the Senate & House pass the civil rights bill at once?

One hundred years ago, Lincoln died that all men might be free
One hundred years later J.F. K died that all men might be equal.

With deep sympathy
Mary W. Bentley
(Just one of the mourning crowd)

Thanksgiving Day, 1963

9. THANKSGIVING DAY, 1963

Dear Mrs. Kennedy:

You will probably never read this letter. Certainly my sorrow can in no way alleviate yours. But with the people of this nation, I mourn the death of a man among men; and however small this tribute, it is all I have to offer.

For on this day of Thanksgiving, I find myself remembering... In Guadalajara, Mexico, I wait impatiently for the bus under a mol ten, blazing sun. A street sweeper approaches hesitantly, and with a "perdóneme, señorita," says "Whom do you wish to be your president?" I am ashamed that I cannot answer, and at my uncertain response, he tells me

of one John Kennedy, the senator from Massachusetts who has just received the democratic presidential nomination. The scene is repeated many times that summer, and when I return to the United States, listen carefully to the words of that young senator. I remember...

that I am not quite old enough to vote. But I am young enough, that election eve, to trudge from house to house in sub-zero Minnesota weather to speak to others of John F. Kennedy. And I remember...

Two days later I awake with the question I dare not ask. To my unspoken plea, my roommate says, "He won." A telegram goes out that night: "Two democrats in Lutheran Republican college send congratulations to our President."

In the days and months that follow... the Berlin wall – the Cuban crisis – civil rights – the wheat deal. President and Mrs. Kennedy... in Hyannisport – at church – with their children. The nation has found its voice, and that voice rings out to the "new generation of Americans". Our national pride is renewed; our faith in God is strengthened. We lift our heads and proudly scorn the prophets of doom, the voices of the lost generation. John Kennedy is more than a president. He is the image of America itself. And then...

What was is suddenly no longer. I enter my classroom to say – what? to those anxious voices that ask, "Is it true?" They stand for prayer, but I have no voice to pray. The room is silent, the English lesson forgotten. And then, the final, irrevocable word comes through. The President is dead. Their eyes beg me to deny, but I have no voice. He is buried three days later, and with him is buried a part of every American.

To you in life, Mrs. Kennedy, go our prayers and our deepest sympathy. To your late husband in death goes our pledge – that we will carry the torch that he lit – and that the world will be lit in his name. For the watchman did not wake in vain.

With heartfelt sympathy –
Marcia Schwen

10. Keys and Pennies

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN

Dear Mrs. Kennedy:

My name is Diana Tyler. I am enclosing a paper in which many Negro people have expressed what the death of President Kennedy has meant to them. I am very sorry that such a thing had to happen, it's as if history were repeating itself, in a way. I guess we needed that shock, but did it have to happen, especially that way? I'm not very good at expressing myself but all I can say is I sympathize with you. You have lost your husband, we have lost a president which has done a great deal for us. There is a poem which expresses the thought I felt when I thought of you and your family: The poem is Lament by Edna St. Vincent Millay. The last line in the poem reads

Life must go on;
I forget just why

Sincerely yours,
Diana Tyler
14 yr. Old

11. Trondheim, Norway – Nov 22. 1963

JAN. 25, 1964

Dear Mrs. Kennedy,

My husband sent me this letter when he was in Trondheim Norway, on Nov. 22nd when he was on tour with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra.

He expressed in words what I felt in my heart & I feel I would like to share this with you.

With most heartfelt wishes for you & your family,

Respectfully,
Katherine Stamos
Torrance, California

Trondheim, Den Nov. 22 1963
Time 10:30 P.M.

My dearest wife-

This is one of the darkest moments of my life – tonight as we were awaiting Henry to come on-stage between the pieces during a concert – there was a great delay – then finally he and Jackie came on and started an aria – we played about 1 minute then he stopped and said “I can’t go on any more – President Kennedy has been assassinated.” – then next thing I knew I was crying, as if I lost my own brother or father – but more than our own personal lost – we have lost our leader, our hope for a better world within our own lifetime. They did the same thing to Christ, to Lincoln – and now Kennedy – may God help us in this hour of great darkness – our faith must be strong as Kennedy’s was – he took the chance – to try and reform the hidden ignorance, the bigotry of the past and now he has become a martyr. He has touched our own personal lives. I would not be here if it weren’t for Kennedy, trying to show the world that we are a cultured people. But some of us aren’t – as long as we have fanaticism to have produced such a dastardly deed.

You remember when we first came to Dallas, the day after he was elected – the place was in mourning – I always sensed that ignorance was somewhere nearby – it is quite ironic that this should be scene – the modern day “Calvary” – at least he died near his wife – and as Senator Mansfield said “He has gone to his reward” – may his example serve as an inspiration to each and every one of us – may we never forget what he fought for – equal- rights for all men, peaceful co-existence and like Roosevelt’s dream of a one world nation

I feel that these things must be said, and only to you my dearest wife because it is in moments such as these that only you understand – I never felt so lonely, so much in need of you, to have you nearby – than now – we are all stricken – we all wished we were home – the news as it comes over the radio has to be translated to us.

I pray, and we must all pray, that his nation shall triumph no matter how many crosses we have to bear – and this is truly a heavy-one indeed – because without faith we are lost – this country was founded on faith. And we must each try and carry on these ideals in our own lives – that’s the way men like Jack Kennedy hoped for the people of his country.

Pardon this letter of thinking out loud – I know how you must feel – keep up your spirit – I’ll be home soon – God bless you and everyone there

Your husband. Spiro

12. Oh Jacqueline – Recessional

Stand brave and true for freedom,
Our Love,
Shine light shine.

—PERMISSIONS—

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Born in Minnesota to two journalist parents, **RYAN TOWNSEND STRAND** grew up knowing that he would be a storyteller. At the age of five, he started piano lessons taking after his older sister and walking across the yard to the nextdoor neighbor's house once a week. That first experience learning a musical language sparked his passion for performance that has carried him through the last 30 years.

He was lucky enough to be introduced to vocal music through the Metropolitan Boys Choir (MBC) and Artistic Director Bea Hasselman, or Mrs. H, as they called her. Through his years with MBC, Ryan learned that music can connect you to other cultures, take you to other countries, and move you without ever leaving your seat. He is forever indebted to the inspiration and compassion that he internalized through that collective experience as a young singer.

High school was the first time where he felt like he had a deeper connection to music than many of his peers. Both of his choral directors, Matthew Culloton and Philip Brown, fostered a sense of artistic curiosity and commitment to musical excellence. During Ryan's senior year, he composed his first work for choir using Walt Whitman's "A Clear Midnight," which the concert choir performed under Ryan's direction. That first taste of artistic leadership would not be Ryan's last.

After graduation, Ryan fled the Minnesota winters for Southern California, where he attended California Lutheran University (CLU). Dr. Wyant Morton, conductor of choirs, continued his musical education and offered Ryan his first real-life experience when he was selected as a student apprentice for his professional vocal ensemble Areté. Singing alongside his voice teacher on contemporary works was incredibly motivating and affirming. Ryan was a soloist for a concert featuring the music of Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer David Lang, whose music he has come to know intimately in the years since. Ryan also met and performed with his high school choral hero, Eric Whitacre, in a concert showcasing Whitacre's music, as well as having Whitacre conduct select vocal quartets on a few separate works. Ryan's first experience with oratorio, or in his opinion, the highest form of musical story storytelling in Western music, was Handel's Messiah, where he was the tenor soloist for CLU's Christmas concerts. It was the first time where storyteller and vocalist became a new language, something he hadn't felt since starting piano lessons all those years prior.

Ryan's other influential connection point during college was with the Ojai Music Festival, where the music of our time and current artists pushing boundaries in music collide each June. He happened into an internship with the festival during the summer after his sophomore year where he was thrown into the world of stage crew and production. (The previous summer, he had worked as stage crew for the Interlochen Arts Camp in Michigan, so Ryan was ready for the amount of harp moves required.) Watching the magic of a four-day marathon of Classical new music performances unfold gave him an electric sense of purpose: they were creating experiences that brought people together through the shared love of music. In 2011, Ryan was named the first Steven Rothenberg Ojai Fellow, a recognition of both his commitment to and passion for the Festival as an intern. In 2015, he was hired as an associate producer under GRAMMY Award-winning producer Elaine Martone, creating an epic festival with that year's music director and percussionist Steven Schick. Producing the large, community-oriented performance of John Luther Adams' *Sila: the breath of the world* was transformative: hearing over 150 different young and professional musicians come together in Libbey Park to enhance nature with music is a powerful thing. Ryan's time as a producer has afforded him the experience and affirmation that his ability to create impactful performances is sound.

With a desire for a professional vocalist career, Ryan went on to Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music where he received a Master of Music degree in Voice & Opera. Bienen was where Ryan had the immense pleasure of meeting one of his great mentors, Donald Nally. Donald Nally's belief in presenting difficult questions to an audience through vocal music repertoire shaped Ryan's desire to not only be a storyteller, but one that is aware of the world around them. After proving his abilities in school, Ryan has sung with Donald Nally's professional contemporary vocal ensemble, The Crossing, in Philadelphia. A highlight of his tenure was touring to The Met Museum in New York performing David Lang's *the little match girl passion* and Gabriel Jackson's "Rigwreck" about the 2010 BP oil spill.

Following Northwestern, Ryan established himself in the Chicago music community as a passionate performer. Having worked with companies like Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Grant Park Festival Chorus, Music of the

Baroque, Haymarket Opera, and Constellation Men's Ensemble, he has great pride in the amount of creativity and music making that Chicagoland has to offer. Notable performances include mounting a fully staged and memorized "nearly unimpeachable," performance (*Chicago Reader*) of David Lang's *the little match girl passion* with Facility Theater; being a featured soloist on Bach's "Hunt Cantata" with mezzo-soprano Allyson McHardy under the baton of Nicholas Kramer; and producing the Midwest premiere of Rob Maggio's *the woman where we are living* in collaboration with Constellation Men's Ensemble and La Caccina, benefiting the Alzheimer's Association of Illinois.

Ryan has sung with the GRAMMY Award-winning contemporary vocal ensemble The Crossing in Philadelphia under the direction of Donald Nally. He performs regularly with Music of the Baroque, Stare at the Sun, Bella Voce, Chicago Symphony Chorus, and the Grant Park Festival Chorus. Ryan is a founding member and executive director of Constellation Men's Ensemble, celebrating over 10 years as Chicago's premier tenor/bass ensemble.

Ryan lives, sings, and tells stories in Chicago, Illinois, alongside his incredible husband, P.J., and their mustached calico cat, Charlie.



KARINA KONTOROVITCH was born in St. Petersburg, Russia. At the age of five, she started attending the Music School for Gifted Children, where she continued to study piano with Olga Manukyan until the family immigrated to the United States in 1991. Ms. Kontorovitch earned both Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in Piano Performance from Northwestern University, taking a special interest in chamber music and collaborative piano. Her teachers there included Sylvia Wang, Alan Chow, Laurence Davis, Richard Boldrey, and Elizabeth Buccheri.

Ms. Kontorovitch has taught at the Music Arts School in Highland Park and has been on the faculty of the Merit School of Music in Chicago from 2001-2017. She was on the Voice Faculty as a Coach/Accompanist for the National High School Music Institute at Northwestern University from 2005 until 2010. Since 2001, she's been serving as a collaborative pianist, vocal coach, and Russian diction coach at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music, where she collaborates with Voice and Opera Department students across all studios, preparing and accompanying recitals and other performances, co-teaching Russian Repertoire and Oratorio classes. Ms. Kontorovitch is a member of the Chicago Piano Vocal Score Ensemble and Tresillo, whose performances have taken her from Chattanooga to Buenos Aires. She's very active as a collaborative pianist throughout the Chicago area. She was on the coaching staff of the Castleton Music Festival in Virginia where she worked with the festival's founder, the late Maestro Lorin Maazel. Ms. Kontorovitch was most recently heard as a soloist with the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra under Maestro Stephen Blackwelder in a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, K. 488.



Hailed as "exceptional [with] a beautiful and powerful voice," by The Harlem Globe, **ADORE ALEXANDER** (born 1993) is a budding American countertenor known for his captivating performances, which incorporate contemporary literature and gems of the past. With a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Morehouse College and a Master of Music in Voice from Northwestern University, he has championed creating out-of-the-box recitals, such as his acclaimed work, *Shelter*, that challenges audiences on concepts of the Black psyche and post-traumatic slave syndrome. Alexander's community work as an artist focuses on telling new stories that give a platform to marginalized voices and he constantly seeks groundbreaking ways to collaborate with composers and artists to enhance the classical music narrative that showcases (the same) works written by (the same) white men from centuries ago. He believes that through performance, we can hold a mirror to the world and allow it to see itself, in all its shades and experiences.

alexandercountertenor.com

Born to two professional opera singers, **SKYLER BUTENSHON** (born 1989) found an early love for choral music, piano, and theater. While attending California Lutheran University, he wrote for the University Choir and sang alongside Ryan Townsend Strand for three years. Skyler collaborated with Ryan on his master's recital, which inspired *Letters to Jackie*, as well as the song cycle and album *Mending Split Seconds*. Skyler has toured with multiple west coast bands, including Blind Pilot and The Hackles. He currently works as a news producer for KMUN, a community radio station based in Astoria, Oregon.

Hailed for music that displays "inexhaustible imagination, wit, expressive range, and originality," composer **TOM CIPULLO** (born 1956) is the winner of a 2012 Guggenheim Fellowship, the 2013 Sylvia Goldstein Award from Copland House, and the 2013 Arts and Letters Award from the American Academy. He has received commissions from Music of Remembrance, SongFest, Joy in Singing, the Cecilia Chorus, the New York Festival of Song, the Mirror Visions Ensemble, Sequitur, Cantori New York, tenor Paul Sperry, mezzo-soprano Mary Ann Hart, the Five Borroughs Music Festival, pianist Jeanne Golan, soprano Martha Guth, soprano Hope Hudson, the Walt Whitman Project, and baritone Jesse Blumberg, among others. Cipullo has received multiple fellowships from Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and awards from the Liguria Study Center (Bogliasso, Italy), the Fundacion Valparaiso (Spain), the Oberpfälzer Kuenstlerhaus (Bavaria), and ASCAP. Other honors include the Minneapolis Pops New Orchestral Repertoire Award (2009) for *Sparkler*, the National Association of Teachers of Singing Art Song Award (2008) for the song-cycle *Of a Certain Age*, and the Phyllis Wattis Prize for song composition from the San Francisco Song Festival for *Drifts & Shadows* (2006).

tomcipullo.net

NICHOLAS CLINE (born 1985) makes music for voices, acoustic instruments, and by electroacoustic means. Deeply influenced by the natural world, his music draws on a broad range of subjects and experiences with the belief that music reveals, challenges, and shapes the listener's understanding of the world. Upcoming projects include collaborating with the The Crossing in a performance and recording of his work, *Watersheds*, for 24 voices, tenor saxophone, and live electronics. Cline's music has been performed by Spektral Quartet, International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble VONK, Bienen Contemporary/Early Vocal Ensemble, Northwestern Contemporary Music Ensemble, Jeff Siegfried, Jena Gardner, Square Peg Round Hole, Stare at the Sun, Constellation Men's Ensemble, and F-Plus. He has been an artist-in-residence with High Concept Labs and the Chicago Park District. Cline studied at Northwestern University, Indiana University, and Columbia College Chicago, and his principal teachers include Hans Thomalla, Chris Mercer, Jay Alan Yim, Aaron Travers, Don Freund, John Gibson, Jeffrey Hass, and Ilya Levinson. He lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina with his family and teaches composition and music theory at Appalachian State University.

nicholas-cline.com

LIBBY LARSEN (born 1950) is one of America's most performed living composers. She has written over 500 works, including orchestra, opera, vocal, and chamber music, as well as music for symphonic winds and band. An advocate for the music and musicians of our time, Larsen in 1973 co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composer's Forum. GRAMMY Award winner and former holder of the Papamarkou Chair at John W. Kluge Center of the

Library of Congress, she has also held residencies with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony. As artistic director of the John Duffy Institute for New Opera from 2014 until 2020, Larsen guided a faculty of practicing professional artists in the nurturing and production of new opera by American composers. Her 2017 biography, *Libby Larsen: Composing an American Life* by Denise Von Glahn is available from the University of Illinois Press.

libbylarsen.com

Called “a voice for this historic moment” by the Washington Post, GRAMMY Award–winning baritone **WILL LIVERMAN** (born 1988) was the recipient of the 2022 Beverly Sills Artist Award and the co-creator of *The Factotum*, which premiered at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 2023. This season, he returns to the Metropolitan Opera in the title role of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. Liverman previously appeared at the Met, opening its 2021–22 season in a “breakout performance” (The New York Times) as Charles in Blanchard’s *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, which won the 2023 GRAMMY Award for Best Opera Recording. Liverman’s current season includes productions with Opera Philadelphia in the world premiere of Orth’s *10 Days in a Madhouse* and The Met for *Roméo et Juliette*. He also joins the Lexington Philharmonic for the orchestrated world premiere of Okpebholo’s *Two Black Churches*, Houston Symphony for Orff’s *Carmina Burana*, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for Brahms’s *A German Requiem*, and the Washington Chorus’s *Elijah Reimagined*, plus Dayton Opera, Caramoor, and Cincinnati Song Initiative for recitals. He serves as artistic advisor for Renée Fleming’s SongStudio at Carnegie Hall. Cedille Records released Liverman’s *Dreams of a New Day: Songs by Black Composers* with pianist Paul Sanchez in 2021, and the album debuted at number one on Billboard’s Traditional Classical Albums chart and was nominated for a GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album.

Liverman is an alumnus of Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Ryan Opera Center and was a Glimmerglass Festival Young Artist. He holds a Bachelor’s degree from Wheaton College and a Master’s degree from The Juilliard School.

willliverman.com

ERIK PEARSON (born 1983) is a Minnesota native who has been active in musical theater, opera, concert music, and educational theater for the past 20 years. His public career as a composer is somewhat shorter, although he wrote his first piano work at the age of 14. Having worked closely with the late Minnesota composer Stephen Paulus as general manager for Paulus Publications, Pearson’s musical output is lush and thoughtful, with particular emphasis on the authenticity of text in music. His piece for tenor and piano, Bethesda, MD: Nov 23, 1963, won first place at Chicago’s inaugural SongSLAM in 2019, performed by Ryan Townsend Strand.

Avid vocal composer **MATTHEW RECIO** (born 1991) recently finished a post as Vanguard Emerging Opera Composer with Chicago Opera Theatre, during which he developed operas with librettists Royce Vavrek and Stephanie Fleischmann. This year, he collaborated with the LYNX project for their amplify series, creating a song cycle with living neurodiverse poets. Recio will also be featured on the DeCameron Opera Coalition’s holiday project series, representing the Chicago Fringe Opera for a video song project. He is a resident artist with the West Edge Opera Aperture Program and recently collaborated with Stare at the Sun on a cantata, The Hollow. Recio is a published artist under the Dale Warland Series and the Craig Hella Johnson Series under G. Schirmer/Hal Leonard. Recio is a winner of the Cincinnati Camerata Competition, two-time winner of the NOTUS Composition Competition, finalist in the Young New Yorker’s Choral Competition, and a finalist in the Morton Gould Awards and BMI Awards. He is a proud alumnus of the IMANI Festival, the Atlantic Music Festival, Valencia International Performing Arts Program, Norfolk Chamber Series, and Donald Nally’s GRAMMY Award–winning ensemble The Crossing. Recio earned a Bachelor’s degree from Ithaca College and his Doctorate in Composition from Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music.

matthewrecio.com

JEN SHYU (born 1978) is a groundbreaking, multilingual vocalist, composer, producer, multi-instrumentalist, dancer, 2019 Guggenheim Fellow, 2019 United States Artists Fellow, and 2016 Doris Duke Artist. Born in Peoria, Illinois, to Taiwanese and East Timorese immigrant parents, she is widely regarded for her virtuosic singing and riveting stage presence, carving out her own beyond-category space in the art world. Shyu has performed her own music in Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rubin Museum of Art, Ojai Music Festival, Ringling International Arts Festival, Asia Society, Roulette, Blue Note, Bimhuis, Salihara Theater, National Gugak Center, National Theater of Korea, and at festivals worldwide.

A Stanford University graduate in Opera with classical violin and ballet training, she speaks 10 languages and has studied traditional music and dance in Cuba, Taiwan, Brazil, China, South Korea, East Timor, and Indonesia, conducting extensive research, which culminated in her 2014 stage production *Solo Rites: Seven Breaths*, directed by renowned Indonesian filmmaker Garin Nugroho. Shyu has won commissions and support from NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, MAP Fund, US-Japan Creative Artists Fellowship from Japan-US Friendship Commission and National Endowment for the Arts, Jerome Foundation, Chamber Music America’s New Jazz Works, Exploring the Metropolis, New Music USA, Jazz Gallery, and Roulette, as well as fellowships from the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program, Civitella Ranieri Foundation, Asian Cultural Council, Hermitage Artist Retreat, Yaddo, MacDowell Colony, Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Korean Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Tourism.

jenshyu.com

Inspired by captivating narrative, speculative fiction, and making better humans through art, the music of **TIMOTHY C. TAKACH** (born 1978) has risen fast in the concert world. Applauded for his melodic lines and rich, intriguing harmonies, Takach has received commissions and premieres from GRAMMY Award–winning ensembles Roomful of Teeth and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the St. Olaf Band, Cantus, U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers’ Chorus, Lorelei Ensemble, VocalEssence, the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, the Rose Ensemble, and numerous other organizations. His compositions have been performed on A Prairie Home Companion, The Boston Pops holiday tour, nationwide on PBS, many All-State and festival programs, and at venues such as the Library of Congress, Kennedy Center, and Royal Opera House Muscat. He was composer-in-residence for the Texas Boys Choir from 2019 until 2021, The Singers–Minnesota Choral Artists from 2018 through 2023, and is currently a composer-in-residence alongside Jocelyn Hagen for True Concord: Voices and Orchestra, a post he has held since 2022. Takach has frequent work as a composer-in-residence, presenter, conductor, clinician, and lecturer for conventions, schools, and organizations across the country. He is a full-time composer and lives in Minneapolis with his wife and two sons.

timothyctakach.com

The music of **AUGUSTA READ THOMAS** (born 1964) “celebrates the sound of the instruments and reaffirms the vitality of orchestral music” (Philadelphia Inquirer). A composer featured on a GRAMMY Award–winning recording by Chanticleer and a Pulitzer Prize finalist, her impressive body of works “embodies unbridled passion and fierce poetry” (American Academy of Arts and Letters) and The New Yorker magazine called her “a true virtuosic composer.” Championed by Barenboim, Rostropovich, Boulez, Eschenbach, Salonen, Maazel, Ozawa, and Knussen, she was the longest-serving Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1997 until 2006, and her tenure culminated in the premiere of *Astral Canticle*, one of two finalists for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

During her residency, Thomas not only premiered nine commissioned orchestral works but also was central in establishing the thriving MusicNOW series, through which she commissioned and programmed the work of many living composers. For the 2017-18 season, Thomas was the composer-in-residence with the Eugene Symphony Orchestra and also MUSICALIVE Composer-in-Residence with the New Haven Symphony. Thomas won the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. A 2016 Chicagoan of the Year, Thomas is a professor at the University of Chicago.

augustareadthomas.com

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