

THE 45th ANNUAL
FESTIVAL OF NEW AMERICAN MUSIC
PRESENTS

MUSIC OF
SHAWN OKPEBHOLO

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 7:00 P.M.

Highlights from previous years across all genres include his co-starring as Reimers on NBC's CHICAGO FIRE; his debut with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra as Ragotski/Cacambo in CANDIDE (conducted by Marin Alsop); Monty in SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER for The Rev (formerly FLMTFI / Merry-Go-Round Playhouse); Thomas in the pre-Broadway (Broadway in Chicago) production of AMAZING GRACE; Jim Conley, Newt Lee, and Riley with Writers Theatre in Jason Robert Brown's PARADE; Jamie in Jason Robert Brown's THE LAST 5 YEARS at the Jedlicka Performing Arts Center; the Celebrant in Leonard Bernstein's MASS, again under the baton of Marin Alsop; and the role of Andre for the National Players tour of AIN'T MISBEHAVIN' with Olney Theatre Center.

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania but proudly raised in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Curtis is a graduate of The Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Institute.

John Cozza is in demand throughout California as teacher, coach/accompanist, chamber musician, adjudicator and clinician. He has been the Staff Accompanist at Sacramento State University since 2004, and took over as Music Director and Pianist/Organist at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Carmichael in January of 2018.

A graduate of the University of Southern California, Northwestern University and the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, Austria, Dr. Cozza was named Director of Accompanying at Baylor University (Waco, TX) in 1994 to design and implement the Masters of Music degree program in Piano Accompanying. Graduates of the program he administrated from 1994-2001 hold teaching and accompanying positions regionally, nationally and internationally. He taught Accompanying and Secondary Piano in the Conservatory of Music at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California from 2004-2018.

Collaborating with singers and instrumentalists throughout the United States, Dr. Cozza's international engagements have included performances as soloist, accompanist and chamber musician in such European cities as Vienna, Bologna, Milan, Cologne, and Budapest.

Dr. Cozza holds a DM degree in Piano Performance, Vocal Accompanying and Chamber Music from Northwestern University. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at USC, where he was named Valedictorian of the School of Music. His principal teachers have been Daniel Pollack in Los Angeles, Dr. David Kaiserman in Chicago, and Professors Hans Graf (solo piano performance) and Georg Ebert (chamber music) in Vienna. He originally attended Vienna's prestigious Hochschule für Musik as a Rotary Foundation Scholar in 1986-87, then returned for further study from 1988-1991 when he received the coveted Diplom in both Piano Performance and Chamber Music.

Dr. Cozza is the current President of the Sacramento Saturday Club, the oldest musical organization in Sacramento, and one of the oldest west of the Rockies. As stated in its Constitution of 1893, the aims of the organization are: "the musical improvement of its members and the stimulation of musical interests in Sacramento."

Wade in the Water (2013) Shawn Okpebholo (b. 1981)
Deep River (2013)
O Freedom (2013)
Were You There (2013)
Two Black Churches (2020)

Deep River (1917) H. T. Burleigh (1866–1949)
Lovely Dark and Lonely One (1935)
O Freedom (2015) Roland Carter (b. 1942)

Strange Fruit (1939) Abel Meerapol (1903–1986)
Come Sunday (1942) Duke Ellington (1899–1974)

Curtis Bannister, Tenor
John Cozza, Piano

TONIGHT'S ARTISTS

Shawn E. Okpebholo is a critically acclaimed and award-winning composer whose music has been described as "devastatingly beautiful" and "fresh and new and fearless" (*The Washington Post*), "affecting" (*The New York Times*), "searing" (*The Chicago Tribune*), "staggering" (*The New Yorker*), "lyrical, complex, singular" (*The Guardian*) and "powerful" (*BBC Music Magazine*). Okpebholo's work as a composer and his music have been featured on PBS Newshour, and radio broadcasts all across the country, including NPR's *All Things Considered*, NPR's Morning Edition SiriusXM's "Living American" series on Symphony Hall Channel, and Chicago's WFMT. His artistry has resulted in many prizes and honors, including The American Academy of Arts and Letters Walter Hinrichsen Award in Music.

Okpebholo maintains a dynamic career as a composer, including performances on five continents, over forty states, almost every major U.S. city, at some of the nation's most prestigious performance spaces, including Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, and the National Cathedral. His music has been featured on Lyric Opera of Chicago recital series, Washington National Opera Inauguration Day Concert; the Ear Taxi Festival; Festival of New American Music; and the Ravinia Music Festival, among others. Solo artists include vocalists J'Nai Bridges, Will Liverman, Michael Michael Mayes, Ryan McKinney, Robert Sims, and Tamera Wilson; pianists Paul Sánchez, Mark Markham, Craig Terry, and Robert Ainsley; euphonium virtuoso Steven Mead, flutists Jennie Oh Brown and Caen-Thomason-Redus, among others.

Okpebholo regularly receives commissions from noted soloists, universities, and organizations, including UrbanArias (co-commissioned by Minnesota Opera, Colorado Opera, Dallas Opera, and Opera); Cincinnati Opera, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Fifth House Ensemble, United States Airforce Strings, International Tuba and Euphonium Association, The Meir Rimon Commissioning Program of the International Horn Society, Astral Artists, Oakland Symphony, Lincoln Trio, among others. His compositions have been featured on six commercially released albums, including his first album solely devoted to his music, "Steal Away," a collection of re-imagined Negro spirituals

Okpebholo earned his masters and doctoral degrees in composition from the College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) at the University of Cincinnati, where he also studied music theory. He completed a bachelor's degree in composition and music history from Asbury College. He had additional studies in film scoring from New York University through the Buddy Baker Film Scoring Program. Currently, he is Professor of Music Composition and Theory at Wheaton College-Conservatory of Music (IL) and Composer-in-Residence of the renowned Fifth House Ensemble. He lives in Wheaton, IL, a suburb of Chicago, with his wife, violist Dorthy, and his daughters, Eva and Corinne.

The 2021 Actors Equity Foundation Roger Sturtevant Award recipient and a 2021 Drama League Award nominee, **Curtis Bannister** is lauded by *TimeOut Magazine* as "radiating with slowly simmering energy," "a tenor of impressive stamina" by *The New York Times*, and a "quiet revelation" by *The LA Times* as he continues to establish himself as one of the most dynamic and multi-genre performing artists of his generation for his performances in film, theatre, and opera.

Bannister's 2021/22 season included: his celebrated portrayal of Coalhouse Walker Jr. in RAGTIME with Music Theatre Works; a debut with the Cincinnati Symphony and Pops Orchestra for their 2021 Greenacres Celebration Concert; a return to Lyric Opera of Chicago for the workshops of two new works, THE FACTOTUM and TRIPTYCH; an opera world premiere with Hearing In Color and WFMT (PBS Chicago) as Carlos in Steve Wallace's UNDYING LOVE; and his anticipated New York City operatic debut as Florestan in FIDELIO with Heartbeat Opera and the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Live Arts, for which he received rave reviews from audiences and the press. This production of Fidelio also toured the west coast with performances at The Broad Stage (LA), Scottsdale Performing Arts Center (AZ), and the Mondavi Center (Davis, CA). In Spring 2022 Bannister stars as Juba Freeman in the world premiere of QUAMINO'S MAP with Chicago Opera Theater following his successful performances with the company as Baglioni in Catan's LA HIJA DE RAPPACCINI. In 2021, Bannister also became the new face of the national rebranding campaign of Pearl Milling Company (previously known as Aunt Jemima).

The 2020/21 schedule saw Curtis joining the Peabody Award-winning Apple TV+ series DICKINSON as Marquis, his debut with Chicago Opera Theatre as the Hotel Manager in THE TRANSFORMATION OF JANE DOE, and performances in the visual album BREATHING FREE produced by Heartbeat Opera. Later in the season, Curtis performed with theater and film star Heather Headley for the Goodman Theatre, debuted at the Tribeca Film Festival in the feature film THE CONDUCTOR, and originated the role of Myron Davis in a workshop performance of the new grand opera, THE DOWRY, with Cincinnati Opera.

Bannister's 2019/20 live performance schedule included his debut with The Philadelphia Orchestra, as Ragotski in CANDIDE (conducted by Yannick Nezet-Seguín and featuring Bradley Cooper and Carey Mulligan), his debut at the Ravinia Festival with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as a Street Singer (Celebrant cover) in Bernstein's MASS, and a return to the role of Sid Sorokin for his debut with Theatre at the Center in THE PAJAMA GAME. Curtis received rave reviews for his portrayal of Theseus in THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS with Skylight Music Theatre in January 2020, and was noted in the media for his April 2020 Facebook Live performance of theater and blues songs for the United Performing Arts Foundation during the 2020 live-performance hiatus due to COVID-19.