

**Dr. Everett McCorvey—
Founder & Music Director**

Everett McCorvey, is a native of Montgomery, Alabama. He received his degrees from the University of Alabama, including a Doctorate of Musical Arts. As a tenor soloist, Dr. McCorvey has performed in many venues, including the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Aspen Music Festival in Colorado, Radio City Music Hall in New York and in England, Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan and the Czech and Slovak Republics. During the summers, Dr. McCorvey is on the artist faculty of the American Institute of Musical Study (AIMS) in Graz, Austria. Dr. McCorvey currently holds the rank of Professor of Voice and Director of Opera at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, KY.



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Alfonse Anderson, Tenor

Dr. Alfonse Anderson, Vocal Area Coordinator and Associate Professor of Voice at University of Nevada Las Vegas received his bachelor and master's degrees in music from Texas Southern University, and DMA in voice and pedagogy from the University of Arizona.

He has taught voice for over 15 years and in that time his students have won regional, national and international vocal competitions with such notable organizations as the Bel Canto Competition, MET Opera, NATS, Leontyne Price, Palm Spring Vocal Competition to name a few. Many of his students have performed in Young Artist Programs such as the internationally famous Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, Chautauqua Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Aspen Music Festival, Des Moines Opera, Opera North and Portland Opera.

Dr. Anderson has performed in the United States with such notable organizations as the Houston Grand Opera, Arizona Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Minnesota Opera, Oakland Opera, Virginia Opera, Opera South, Opera Columbus, Opera North and Chicago Opera Theater.

Dr. Anderson has performed in concerts with the National Symphony Orchestra, Chautauqua Symphony, Warsaw Symphony and Krakow Symphony. He also performs frequently in recitals and concerts in many major cities such as Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Chicago and New York City to name a few. Dr. Anderson has also performed throughout Europe, South America and Poland in concerts and operatic performances.

Dr. Anderson performed the role of "the Leader" in the premier recording of the opera Bandanna by Daron Hagen. In Las Vegas he is regularly heard singing with Opera Las Vegas and The Tenors - 3. Dr. Anderson is a regular member of the internationally famous "American Spiritual Ensemble". This recorded ensemble is made up of opera singers from throughout the United States and Canada. They perform concerts regularly throughout United States and Europe. Dr. Anderson is frequently engaged as an adjudicator for regional and national competitions. He also performs recitals, masterclasses and lectures on the "Contributions of African-Americans to the World of Music." [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Sonya Gabrielle Baker, Soprano

Soprano, Sonya Gabrielle Baker, noted for her performances of American music, has been heard in concert both nationally and internationally, including recent appearances in Canterbury Cathedral, England, Carnegie Hall, NY and her city of residence, Murray, KY. Her debut recording, SHE SAYS, featuring art songs of American Women composers was released in October 2004. Dr. Baker made her Carnegie Hall debut with renowned conductor Michael Tilson Thomas and she appeared as soloist on the Yale Alumni Chorus tour to Moscow singing at the Kremlin. Highlights of Dr. Baker's operatic roles include Elisabetta in Verdi's DON CARLO, Donna Anna in Mozart's DON GIOVANNI, Monisha in Joplin's TREEMONISHA, and the title role in the U.S. premiere of Mascagni's PINOTTA. Dr. Baker is currently Associate Professor of Voice at Murray State University and Kentucky State Governor for the National Association of Teachers of Singing. Along with a Doctor of Music from Florida State

University, Baker holds degrees from Indiana and Yale universities. Her lecture recital on Marian Anderson's historic 1939 Easter Concert has been presented at several universities, high schools, and conferences. She has received numerous academic and vocal awards and is a frequent guest artist and teacher, having taught at Governor's school programs in both Kentucky and Virginia. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Thomas R. Beard, Jr., Baritone

Thomas R. Beard, Jr. (Lyric–dramatic Baritone) from Fayetteville, North Carolina, now resides in Washington, DC. Thomas recently completed 2 years as a resident artist with the Placido Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program of the Washington National Opera. Thomas along with 8 other young artist were chosen from 6 nations personally by Placido Domingo. Thomas was the first, and thus far the only, African-American male to be a full member. Thomas received his Bachelor's of Science Degree from Winston-Salem State University where he began his formal vocal training with D'Walla Simmons-Burke. Thomas has performed as the bass/baritone in such oratorios as Handel's Messiah, Verdi Requiem, Faure' requiem, the Ordering of Moses (Detts), Magnificat (Pergolesi), and the seven last words of Christ (Dubois). Thomas made his Operatic Debut as "Bonzo" in the Municipal Opera company of Baltimore's Madame Butterfly (1999). Since then, he has appeared with various companies as Marcello in La boheme, Papageno in The Magic Flute, Escamillo in Carmen, the title role in Gianni Schicchi, Conte di Luna in concert excerpts of Il Trovatore, and Crown, Porgy, and Jake in excerpts from Porgy & Bess. A member of The Washington Opera, he has performed with the Company over 90 times, including its recent Tour of Japan. Thomas most recently made his Pittsburgh Opera Theatre debut in their recent World Premier of the Jazzopera, "Just Above My Head" and debuted with the International Opera of Rome as Colline (La boheme) and Il Commendatore (Don Giovanni). In November of 2002 Thomas made his John F. Kennedy Center debut as Corporal Morrel in Carmen Jones starring Vanessa Williams and conducted by Placido Domingo. He also recently performed his debut of Giorgio Germont in the Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz program's performance of La Traviata directed by Marta Domingo. Thomas more recently performed the title role of "Rigoletto" and just completed the 2006 Australian/New Zealand tour of Porgy & Bess singing the title Role "Porgy". While at the Washington National Opera, Thomas has covered/understudied the roles of Gerard & Mathieu in Giordano's Andrea Chenier, and Count di Luna in Il Trovatore. In January, 2005 he covered the role of Senator Raitcliffe in the World premier of Democracy by Scott Wheeler and understudied the role of Scarpia in Puccini's Tosca. As a member of the Domingo-Cafritz program, Thomas has performed for several Senators at the senate, Secretary of State, Governors and the like. More importantly, He has performed for the First Lady Laura Bush as a guest at the White House. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Angela Brown, Soprano

"One of America's most promising Verdi sopranos (Opera News)," Angela M. Brown brandishes pure vocal power and finesse and has won the acclaim of critics and audiences. The roles of Aida, Amelia, Tosca, Elisabetta, Leonora, Ariadne, and the like, are the perfect conduits for her musical abilities, described by one PBS radio critic as "her powerful voice and what seems an inexhaustible palette of varied colors."

Miss Brown sang her Metropolitan Opera debut on October 29, 2004, in the title role of

Aida and The New York Times exclaimed: "At last an Aida." Anne Midgette went on to call the performance "a major event" and a CBS News segment crowned her "the future of opera." Ms. Brown was immediately featured on the front page of The New York Times in a personal interview, complete with photos. Following her triumph, Angela was also featured in Oprah Magazine, Essence, Ebony, Reader's Digest, and Psychology Today.

Since that time, Miss Brown has continued to live up to her overwhelming critical acclaim. Her most recent Aida with Florentine Opera left this impression with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: "Brown can sing at that super-grand Verdian scale and still shape phrases and color notes with detailed expressive subtlety. She sings Verdi the way other good sopranos can sing Mozart. Hardly anyone can manage that, and that is why Angela Brown is the Aida of the moment in the whole opera world."

2006-2007 performances include Aida for Florida Grand Opera to open the new Dolores Ziff Ballet Opera House, Bess (Porgy and Bess) for Opera Pacific and Opera Company of Philadelphia, and her Paris Opera debut as Amelia (Un Ballo in Maschera). Look for her return to the Metropolitan Opera as Aida in the fall of 2007 and as Amelia (Un Ballo in Maschera) in 2008.

This past season she sang Amelia in Un Ballo in Maschera and Cilla in Margaret Garner both for Opera Company of Philadelphia, the title role in Aida for Opera Pacific and Florentine Opera, Verdi Requiem for the Festival of Saint Denis, France, concerts with the Indianapolis Symphony and Brevard Festival Orchestra, and recitals throughout the United States.

In 2004-2005, Miss Brown sang the role of Aida for Opera Company of Philadelphia and followed that with the world premiere of Margaret Garner, a new opera by Richard Danielpour and Toni Morrison, in the role of Cilla for Michigan Opera Theatre and Cincinnati Opera. She also appeared as guest soloist in a concert of opera arias for Auckland Philharmonia (New Zealand) and Dayton Opera. A recording, titled Mosaic, of African-American spirituals featuring Ms. Brown with guitar and piano accompaniment was released in October 2004 from Albany Records.

The 2003-2004 season encompassed four highly successful and critically acclaimed role debuts as Ariadne, Elisabetta (Don Carlo) and Lenora (Il Trovatore) for Opera Company of Philadelphia and Cassandra in Taneyev's Agamemnon for her Carnegie Hall debut. Her Ariadne received this review from Opera Now: "In one of those dramatic twists that are the stuff of opera, the soprano covering the title role in ARIADNE AUF NAXOS at the Metropolitan Opera got her chance to sing it -- at the Opera Company of Philadelphia. The young American soprano Angela Brown took over one performance...She (Ms. Brown) has a powerhouse of an instrument, shimmering with colour and imaginatively used, and she knows how to take centre-stage."

Her Elisabetta received this praise from The New York Times: "Angela Brown, a soprano, brought dignity and shimmering pianos, and hit a bull's-eye with her final aria," Opera News: "Angela Brown revealed herself as a soprano to watch. Brown displayed good command of Verdi style, imaginative phrasing and a warm, expressive voice," and Opera Now: "Angela Brown's beautiful lyric soprano voice was ideal for

Elisabetta. She floated pianissimos that seemed to hang in space, shimmering, and she had plenty of power for her last big scene."

Her performance in the American premiere of Tanayev's Agamemnon was honored, again, by The New York Times reporting that the role of Cassandra was: "performed by Angela Brown with an opulent soprano tone and a fine tragic sense."

A 1997 National Metropolitan Opera Council Auditions Winner, Ms. Brown's previous solo appearances include: Teatro La Fenice, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Cincinnati Opera, Indianapolis Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Tulsa Philharmonic, Long Island Philharmonic, Auckland Philharmonia, Indianapolis Symphony, Cincinnati Pops, Brevard Festival Orchestra, Roanoke Symphony, El Paso Symphony, Knoxville Symphony, Hendersonville Symphony, Chautauqua Institution, the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia and the Kennedy Center's 25th Anniversary Celebration. Ms. Brown has performed in recital throughout the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Africa.

Ms. Brown received her Bachelor of Music degree in voice from Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, where she studied with Ginger Beazley. She also attended the School of Music at Indiana University as a student in the studio of Virginia Zeani.

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Janinah Burnett

Janinah Burnett encompasses a versatility which allows her to cross between classical, jazz and pop styles. Her performances in the World Premier of the sister group to Three Mo' Tenors entitled Three Mo' Divas was rated a "must see show" by the Art's Alive entertainment news of San Diego. A recent graduate of the Eastman School of Music and Spelman College, Janinah's success as Mimí in Baz Luhrman's production of Puccini's La Bohème in Los Angeles at the Ahmanson Theater won her the prestigious 2005 Ovation award. She was with Luhrman since the inception of the show in San Francisco and throughout the Broadway run. She can be heard on the Original Cast recording as well as seen on the 2004 Tony awards. Since Janinah's Broadway debut, she has made solo performances with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, as Pamina in W.A. Mozart's Die Zauberflöte with the Opera Company of Brooklyn and international performances in Austria, Sweden, Japan, Italy, Denmark, and Germany in the Gershwin's Porgy and Bess singing Clara and Bess. Last fall, Janinah sang Mimí in La Bohème with Manitoba Opera in Winnipeg, Canada and in the Montreal Opera annual Gala. This year, Janinah sang Micaela in the Peter Brook adaptation of Bizet's Carmen with the Skylight Opera Theater which she later reprised at the Todi Music Festival during the summer. She also sang Lauretta in Puccini's Gianni Schicchi with Connecticut Opera, Mimí in La Bohème with Baltimore Opera, Violetta in Columbus Opera's production of La Traviata and Bess in Michigan Opera Theater's production of Porgy and Bess. In 2007, Janinah looks forward to singing Norina in Don Pasquale with Connecticut Opera and Violetta in a concert version of La Traviata with the Quad City Symphony. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Jeryl Cunningham, Soprano

Jeryl Cunningham, a native New Yorker, has performed in Europe, Japan, and the United States. She made her debut, while still an undergraduate student, with the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra in a concert version of Gershwin's Porgy and Bess, and

has since then gone on to sing the roles of Cleopatra (Giulio Cesare) at the Ernen Musikdorf Festival in Switzerland; Zerlina (Don Giovanni) with the Mannes Opera in New York; Clara (Porgy and Bess) in Germany, the Netherlands, and Japan; and most recently, the Mother (Amahl and the Night Visitors), the Flower Woman (Andre Previn's A Street Car Named Desire), the Countess (Le Nozze di Figaro), La Fortuna (L'Incoronazione di Poppea), and most recently, the Queen on the Night (The Magic Flute) with the University of Kentucky Opera Theater. An artist of great sensitivity, Jeryl Cunningham has appeared in recital and as a concert soloist in venues that include the United Nations and New York's Lincoln Center. She has also recorded Schubert's Mass in G major as soloist with the Boy's Choir of Harlem. In addition to the classical repertoire, Jeryl is an outstanding interpreter of traditional music from the rich African-American heritage. She is a regular soloist with the American Spiritual Ensemble and has toured with them through out Europe and the United States. She is also an alumna of the Girls Choir of Harlem. Furthermore, her innovative recital programming frequently includes works by African-American composers. Jeryl Cunningham holds a Master of Music from the Mannes College of Music in New York, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Kentucky under the supervision of Dr. Everett McCorvey. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Calesta A. Day, Soprano

Calesta A. Day, Soprano, made her operatic debut as Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with Miami University Opera. She has also appeared as a Slave Chorister in the premier of Margaret Garner with Cincinnati Opera, Countess Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* with Miami University and Bowling Green State University Opera. Calesta performed and premiered the role of Alice in *The Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* with Sinclair Community College Theatre. She was Third Spirit in *Cendrillon* with Bowling Green State University Opera, guest soloist in *Eubie* with Theater Under the Stars, *The Angel in The Greatest Gift* with Doug Toles Productions.

A Dayton area performer for years, Calesta has appeared with such groups as Bobby Jones Gospel, James Cleveland and the Gospel Music Workshop of America, and with the late Ronald Winans. She also tours in August to Spain with the American Spiritual Ensemble, directed by Dr. Everett McCorvey. Calesta is currently serving as Music director of the children's choir at Wesley United Methodist Church, church pianist at Rising Star Baptist Church, and part-time voice faculty at Sinclair Community College. She was the vocal director for the Dayton Playhouse's production of *Five Guys Named Moe* and Theater Under the Stars' production of *Eubie*. Calesta received the Bachelors degree from Bowling Green State University in Vocal Performance, the Masters degree in Education with a Music Concentration from University of Dayton, and the Masters degree in Vocal performance from Miami University. Calesta is currently studying with Dr. Everett McCorvey as a first year doctoral student in vocal performance at the University of Kentucky. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Keith Dean, Bass Baritone

Bass Baritone/Keith Deans is from Hardinsburg, Kentucky and is currently pursuing a degree at the University of Kentucky. His operatic roles include Blich in *Susanna*, Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* by Mozart, Germont in *La Traviata* by Verdi, Falke in *Die*

Fledermaus by Strauss and Pa Moss in The Tender Land by Copland. He recently made his operatic debut with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis in their production of Treemonisha. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Roderick George

Roderick George is an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Montevallo in Montevallo, AL. A native of Mobile, AL, he earned the D.M. in voice performance from Florida State University, a M.M. in opera and music theater from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and baccalaureate degrees in music and English from Stillman College. Dr. George received additional training at the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. He was a regional finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Auditions and the NATS Artist Awards, and also a national finalist in the Orpheus Competition. Recent opera performances included the role of Rodolfo in La Bohème with Union Avenue Opera in St. Louis, and Alfredo in La Traviata with Amarillo Opera. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Earl Hazell, Jr., Bass-Baritone

Native New Yorker and Renaissance Man Earl Hazell is a bass-baritone singer, actor, composer/arranger and author of the forthcoming book of poetry "They Is Our Women Now," a celebration of the iconic women performers of the Gershwins' PORGY AND BESS, and the political thriller screenplay Pandora Jones. A former student of jazz musician/arranger legends Jimmy Heath and Donald Byrd; the late great Hal deWindt, founder of the American Theatre of Harlem; and voice teachers Benjamin Matthews, Wayne Sanders and Drs. Robert White & Everett McCorvey, Earl has performed with many of the great artists of our time: from Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln to James Levine and the New York Philharmonic; from Jessye Norman to Elton John. As a character bass-baritone, along with Colline of LA BOHEME, Sparafucile of RIGOLETTO, Joe of Jerome Kern's SHOWBOAT, Booker T. Washington of RAGTIME and several others, Earl continues to perform the roles of Jake, Jim, Robbins, Lawyer Frazier and the Undertaker of the Gershwins' PORGY AND BESS as he has throughout the continental United States, Hawaii, Canada, Western Europe and the Pacific Rim- including the Royal Albert Hall of London; the Teatro dell' Opera of Rome; and the Lyric Theatre of Sydney. He has been a proud member of the American Spiritual Ensemble, with notable performances in the Norton Centre of Danville, Kentucky and the Escorial of Spain under his mentor Dr. Everett McCorvey since 1998. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Lisa Hornung, Contralto

Saskatchewan born contralto Lisa Hornung has been acclaimed for performances in repertoire ranging from Baroque to contemporary composers. Her voice has been called "rich and powerful" and her stage presence has "inspired audiences and musicians alike". Recent engagements for Ms. Hornung include: Beethoven's Mass in C major, Mozart's Vesperae solennes de Confessore, Pergolesi's Stabat Mater, Mendelssohn's Elijah, Vaughn William's Magnificat, Handel's Messiah, the Durufle Requiem and Ruth Watson-Henderson's From Darkness to Light. Most often heard in Handel's Messiah, Ms. Hornung's orchestral performances include Verdi's Requiem, Bach's Magnificat and Christmas Oratorio, Vivaldi's Gloria, Mahler's Symphony No. 2 and Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen and Mozart's Coronation Mass and Requiem. In addition to her oratorio and concert work, Ms. Hornung enjoys an active recital career. Lisa enjoys time spent as a teacher, adjudicator and clinician. She lives in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, with her husband and ten-year-old twins. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Claritha Buggs Jacobs, Mezzo Soprano

Mezzo Soprano/Claritha Buggs, a native of Detroit, MI, made her professional operatic debut in 1983 with the Michigan Opera Theatre as Seibel in Gounod's Faust. She has performed with Light Opera of Michigan, Dayton Opera, Detroit Symphony, Santa Barbara Symphony, Kalamazoo Symphony, Terre Haute Symphony, Dearborn Symphony and the Lexington Philharmonic. Ms. Buggs received her degrees in voice performance from the University of Michigan. Among her teachers are Elizabeth Minion, teacher of internationally acclaimed opera singer Jessye Norman, and coaches George Shirley, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Ely Ambling, and Eleanor Steer. Ms. Buggs is currently a free-lance artist residing in Tallahassee, Florida. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Andreas Kirtley, Tenor

Andreas Kirtley tenor, is a native of Versailles Kentucky. He received a Bachelor's of Music from Morehead State University in piano performance, and recently completed a Master's of Music degree in vocal performance at the University of Kentucky. Some recent performances include the role of Valletto, in L'incoronazione di Poppea, with The New Trinity Baroque Ensemble and UK Opera Theatre, as well as the tenor soloist in the UK Chorale's performances of J.S. Bach's Magnificat, and Carl Orff's Carmina Burana. This is Andreas' first semester at the University of North Texas; he is pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Vocal Performance. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Hope Koehler, Soprano

Dr. Hope Koehler has appeared with many opera companies and orchestras, such as Nashville Opera, Tennessee Opera Theatre, Blair Opera Theatre, MTSU Opera Theatre, University Opera Theatre in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Northland Opera Theatre Experience, Lyric Opera of the North, Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra, Duluth-Superior Symphony Orchestra, Lake Superior Chamber Orchestra, Lexington Symphony Orchestra, and Itasca Symphony Orchestra. With these companies she has appeared in such productions as Carmen, Il Trovatore, Lucia di Lammermoor, Rigoletto, The Impresario, The Old Maid and the Thief, Amahl and the Night Visitors, Gianni Schicchi and many others. At the Northland Opera Theatre in Duluth, Minnesota, she has appeared in the title roles of Tosca, Carmen, Fidelio, and Madama Butterfly. In addition, she has appeared in La Bohème(Musetta), Der Freischütz(Agathe), The Tales of Hoffmann(Giulietta), and others. Dr. Koehler's other stage credits include operetta and musical theatre. She has appeared in such productions as The Mikado, The Sound of Music, The Pajama Game, Oklahoma, Fiddler on the Roof, and West Side Story. Dr. Koehler has performed as soloist in oratorio and other choral orchestral works, such as Handel's Messiah, Haydn's Lord Nelson Mass, Mendelssohn's Elijah, Verdi's Requiem, Mozart's Vesperae solennes di confessore, Rossini's Stabat Mater and many others. Dr. Koehler is a regular performer and featured soloist with the American Spiritual Ensemble, a group that performs all over the world, and whose mission is to keep the American Negro Spiritual alive and vibrant. She has also been on the faculty of the prestigious Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts for six years and now serves as chair of the vocal music department. In addition, in July and August of this year she was a member of the voice faculty at the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. Dr. Koehler received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Vocal Performance and Music Education at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, and her Master of Music degree in Vocal

Performance at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Her Doctor of Musical Arts degree was completed at the University of Kentucky in Lexington where she studied with soprano Gail Robinson. Currently, she teaches voice and opera at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Albert Rudolph Lee, Tenor

Albert Rudolph Lee, tenor, (B.M. University of Connecticut, M.M. The Juilliard School) has appeared with the Opera Theater of Saint Louis, Palm Beach Opera, Berkshire Opera Company, Kentucky Opera, Connecticut Concert Opera, Saint Luke's Chamber Orchestra, the Collegiate Chorale of New York City, the Pro Arts Symphony, the Missouri Symphony, the New Haven Chorale, Heritage Chorale, Caramoor International Music Festival, and the Aspen Music Festival. Mr. Lee has performed the title role in Britten's *Albert Herring*, Ernesto in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, Count Almaviva in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, Alfredo in Verdi's *La Traviata*, Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and was a soloist at the University of Connecticut in a performance of the Mozart Requiem given as a tribute to the victims of the 9/11 tragedy. He has also worked to preserve and expand the performance of Negro Spirituals with domestic and international performances as a soloist in the American Spiritual Ensemble. Mr. Lee has also collaborated with the late Victor Borge on an adaptation of Bizet's *Carmen*. A national finalist in Palm Beach Opera's Vocal Competition, Encouragement Award recipient in the Meistersinger Competition in Graz, Austria and Encouragement Award recipient at the Marian Anderson Prize for Emerging Classical Artists, Mr. Lee's upcoming engagements include Beppe in *I Pagliacci*, Lindoro in *L'Italiana in Algeri* and Goro in *Madama Butterfly* this season as a Resident Artist with Palm Beach Opera. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Tedrin Blair Lindsay, Pianist

Tedrin Blair Lindsey, pianist and musicologist, was raised in Rome, Italy and has been a professional accompanist since the age of ten. He performs well over one hundred recitals annually, boasting a huge repertoire of vocal and instrumental chamber works, with specialties in 20th century French and American music. Mr. Lindsay is presently on the opera faculty at the University of Kentucky, where he works as vocal coach and musical director. His UK productions have included Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land*, Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*, Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Andre Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*, and seven incarnations of UK's annual Broadway revue *It's a Grand Night for Singing*. Additionally, he played the harpsichord continuo for UK's Mozart productions, *Don Giovanni* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*. He also teaches the popular course "Introduction to Opera" for the Lexington Opera Society, and for several years has hosted the Opera Quiz intermission feature for the Metropolitan Opera Council Auditions at both the district and regional levels. While in Kentucky, Mr. Lindsay has collaborated several times with Actors' Guild of Lexington—as award-winning musical director for Sondheim's *Assassins* and William Finn's *Falsettos*, and as composer of an elaborate score for *Angels in America: Perestroika* by Tony Kushner. He also performs throughout Europe and North America several times a year as pianist with the American Spiritual Ensemble under the direction of Dr. Everett McCorvey. Mr. Lindsay has also worked with such New York companies as Bel Canto Opera, Golden Fleece Opera, Westchester Opera, Rockwell Productions, and the off-Broadway Lamb's Theatre Company. In the early 1990s, he traveled as musical

director of the first two national tours of Randy Courts and Mark St. Germain's *The Gifts of the Magi*, and another national tour of Roger Miller's *Big River*. Mr. Lindsay is a Ph.D. candidate in Musicology at UK, completing a dissertation on the topic of mid-20th century American opera. He also occasionally appears as an actor, with credits including the 1978 Bernardo Bertolucci film *Luna* starring Jill Clayburgh and Matthew Barry. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Ricky Little, Bass

Dr. Ricky Little is a native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He attended Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama where he earned the Bachelor of Arts degree in Music. As a University Fellow at The Ohio State University, Dr. Little earned the Master of Arts Degree in Vocal Pedagogy and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Vocal Performance. During this time he also completed studies in opera performance at the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria.

Dr. Little has been engaged in hundreds of creative productions in North America, Europe, Asia and South America. He has given more than one hundred international performances on four continents, which include eighteen countries and over twenty-five major cities. To date he has participated in fourteen major professional tours, encompassing over twenty international music festivals. He has performed in some of the most prestigious music halls in the world, and before royalty and heads of states, including former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

His work has been reviewed in national and international newspapers, and has been aired over the ABC, TBN, KET and BET television networks. Performances given by Dr. Little on the international stage have been broadcast over radio and television in Italy, Spain, East Germany, Great Britain, Brazil and other countries in South America. He can be seen in the film "*Impresario*" and can be heard on four CD recordings.

Currently Dr. Little holds the position of Associate Professor of Voice at Morehead State University in Morehead, Kentucky, and is assistant conductor of The American Spiritual Ensemble. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Bradley Williard, bass-baritone,

is a native of North Carolina where he completed his B.M. at the North Carolina School of the Arts. He then went on to obtain his Masters from the Manhattan School of Music. He has performed with Chautauqua Opera, Sarasota Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Kentucky Opera, Pensacola Opera and Piedmont Opera Theatre. Some of his roles include Blitch in *Susannah*, Tom in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Barone in *La Traviata*, Rev. Hale in *The Crucible*, Sacristano in *Tosca*, Dr. Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Wig Maker in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, the title role in *Don Pasquale*, and Rambaldo in *La Rondine*. Mr. Williard maintains an international career as a soloist and ensemble member of the American Spiritual Ensemble. He has performed at Spain's Festival Internacional de Santander, which was nationally broadcast, Teatro Principal de Mahon in Menorca and the Castell de Bellver in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. He has had the pleasure of working under the baton of Maestro Eduardo Mueller in Graz, Austria. Mr. Williard also enjoys working as a concert soloist and has been featured with the Virginia Tech Bach Concert Series and Amherst College Concert Series. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Kenneth Overton, Baritone

Baritone Kenneth Overton has consistently received accolades for his rich gleaming voice and his many layered, powerful interpretations. He recently toured the British Isles as Porgy in Living Arts' Porgy and Bess, and will perform this role for the first time in North America with Opera Memphis in 2007. He also makes his debut this season with Stadttheater Klagenfurt as Jake in Porgy and Bess. He recently sang his first Escamillo in Carmen with the Missouri Symphony Society, and he has been heard recently as Leporello in Don Giovanni with Opera Memphis, Ping in Turandot with Sacramento Opera, Bello in La Fanciulla del West with Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, as the Bass soloist Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra, and as the Baritone soloist in Vaughn Williams' 5 Mystical Songs with the Oratorio Society of New Jersey. Last season Mr. Overton returned to Connecticut Opera for Taddeo in L'Italiana in Algeri, and appeared as Sharpless in Madama Butterfly and Schaunard in La Boheme with Metro Lyric Opera (NJ). He also appeared as soloist in the Schubert Mass in Ab with the Summit Chorale Festival (NJ) and last August he traveled to Spain where he toured with the American Spiritual Ensemble. Kenneth has also been heard as Leporello in Don Giovanni at Houston Ebony Opera Guild, Ping in Turandot at Opera Delaware, Schaunard in La Boheme at Opera Memphis, and Sharpless in Madama Butterfly with the Chattanooga Symphony & Opera, was in Baz Luhrman's Broadway Boheme, and City Center Encores' production and recording of New Moon (Romberg), Masetto in Don Giovanni, Papageno in Die Zauberflöte with Connecticut Opera, Papageno with Chattanooga Symphony & Opera, Ping in Turandot with both Nashville Opera and Opera Memphis, and Schaunard in La Boheme with Connecticut Opera. Kenneth's intelligence and versatility have allowed him to excel in several modern works including Corps of Discovery by Michael Ching with Opera Festival of New Jersey ; Six Characters by Hugo Weisgall, and with New York's Nexus Arts, The Gilded Cage by Kioulaphides. With the Westfield Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Overton was a featured soloist in Fascinatin' Rhythm, a concert of George Gershwin songs. He made his Carnegie Hall debut as baritone soloist in Come Follow Me by Jackson Berkey with Mid-America Productions. He was recently the winner of the Liederkrantz Competition and a national winner of the Leontyne Price Vocal Competition. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Andrea Jones-Sojola, Soprano

Andrea Jones-Sojola, is a soprano originally from Louisville, KY. She is currently touring with the critically acclaimed trio 3 Mo Divas in cities such as Buffalo, Washington DC and Edmonton, Canada. She has been seen recently on the stages of Dayton Opera in the roles of Frasquita in Carmen and Papagena in Die Zauberflöte. Ms. Jones-Sojola performed in Muhammad Ali: Outside the Ring for Kentucky Opera. She sang the role of Lonnie (Ali's wife) and had the honor of singing it for the "Champ" himself.

She has also performed all over Europe, Africa and the Middle East. She performs in music festivals across Spain as a featured soloist in concerts with the American Spiritual Ensemble. In Poland, she sang the role of Clara in Porgy and Bess under the baton of Maestro Mariusz Smolij. In Italy, she sang Zerlina in Don Giovanni under the baton of Maestro Mark Gibson. Ms. Jones-Sojola also sang the role of Despina in Cosí fan tutte in Cairo, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Other roles include Fanny in La

Cambiale di Matrimonio, Ninetta in La Finta Semplice, Ms. Honey in Three's Company and Adele in Die Fledermaus, Lauretta in Gianni Schicchi and Sister Rose in Dead Man Walking.

Ms. Jones-Sojola has participated in several music festivals such as the Young Artist Program with Cincinnati Opera, Aspen Opera Theater, Banff 20th Century Opera and Song Program, Opera Theater of Lucca, Italy and Chautauqua Institute of Music. Most recently she was an Artist-in-Residence with Dayton Opera. She received her Artist Diploma in Opera from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, her MM in voice from the University of Kentucky and her BA in voice from Lincoln University.

Competitions include the District Winner of The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, First Place in the National Opera Association Voice Competition, First Place in The Pro Arts Society of Philadelphia, Finalist in The MacAllister Awards Competition, Mathais Winner in The MacAllister Awards, Finalist in the Palm Beach Atlantic Voice Competition, Finalist in the National Federation of Music Clubs Voice Competition, Semi-Finalist in the Palm Beach Opera Competition and Semi-finalist in the Oratorio Society of New York Competition.

Ms. Jones-Sojola can be heard as Laurie on the Albany recording of The Tender Land, recorded in the Czech Republic with the Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic Orchestra. Her signature piece, "Lord, I Have Seen" can be heard on the American Spiritual Ensemble CD OI' Time Religion. She has recently performed with Morehead University's Symphonic Band, Bach Choir of Pittsburgh as well as the Riverside Symphonia in New Jersey and The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra. Future engagements include Handel's Messiah with Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and a CD recording of the 3 Mo Divas.

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Peggy Stamps, Dancer/Stage Director

Peggy Stamps is a native of Detroit, Michigan. Peggy began studying dance and drama at an early age and has had the opportunity to study under many world renowned choreographers and acting coaches including Sara Yarborough and Keith Lee (former soloists with The Alvin Ailey Dance Company), Robin Wilson (founding member of Urban Bush Women), Barbara Sullivan (Atlanta Dance Theatre), and Mike Lemmon (casting director, The Sixth Sense). Peggy has used her training while landing roles in "Ain't Misbehavin'", "A Chorus Line", and as Linda Loman in "Death of a Salesman". Peggy is also an accomplished product spokesperson and has appeared on cable networks in the US and Canada on over 200 occasions. Under the encouragement of her mentors, Peggy began focusing on choreography and stage direction. Over the past 15 years, Peggy has choreographed and/or directed over 100 stage productions and concert works. Peggy, however, has always maintained her love for the performance of modern dance to the spiritual (the performance style danced by her first mentor). This propelled her to join the American Spiritual Ensemble in its second year. Peggy has since this time served as a solo dancer, stage director, and assistant tour manager for the group. Peggy is a freelance choreographer/director and is also an instructor of stage movement for the University of Kentucky Opera Performance Program. Peggy is a graduate of Purdue University. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Kevin Thompson, Bass

"The voice booms, roars, rumbles through his 6'5" frame and bellows forth when he sings even when he speaks a Basso Profundo" Washington Post. Mr. Thompson was born in Washington, D.C. and grew up in Clinton, Maryland. He is an 1997 Alumnus of the Suitland High School Center of the Performing Arts in Prince George's County and is a 2002 graduate of The Juilliard School. Mr. Thompson performed leading operatic roles in Copland's "Tender Land", Eccles's "Semele", Joplin's "Treemonisha", Massenet's "Werther", Mozart's "Don Giovanni" and "Die Zauberflote", Puccini's "La Boheme" and "Tosca", Verdi's "Rigoletto", and Weill's "Street Scene". He has been the bass soloist in such orchestral works as: Dubois's "Seven Last Words of Christ", Haydn's "The Creation" (Die Schopfung), "Lord Nelson Mass", Handel's "Messiah", "Mozart Requiem", Stravinsky's "Les Noces" sung in Russian and "Verdi's Réquiem". Mr. Thompson has performed at The Kennedy Center, The Barns of Wolftrap, Carnegie Hall's Weills Recital Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Pentagon, Library of Congress, and with the United States Naval Band. He has won numerous awards such as scholarships to The Juilliard, Aspen Music Festival and the AIM'S in Graz. Awarded at the National NAACP ACT-SO Competition 2 time Gold Medalist, Rosa Ponselle Competition Awardee, 1st Place winner of the Paul Robeson Competition in association with The Washington Opera, National Symphony Competition, International Don Giovanni Competition in Verona, Italy, and the International Meistersinger Competition in Austria. He was commissioned by artist Janet Cardiff last February to sing "Ol' Man River" for an audio wall project at the Smithsonian Institute, Hirschorn Gallery exhibit on National Mall in D.C., which opened in August 2005. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

John Wesley Wright, Tenor

Tenor John Wesley Wright is known for his artistic and soulful interpretations of music from baroque to Broadway. In addition to singing a nationally televised Christmas Eve concert at the Royal Palace for the Belgian Royal Family, he has performed in opera houses, concert halls, and festivals throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan. With a host of opera and oratorio roles, art songs, spirituals, and cabaret music in his repertoire, Wright's current season includes performances of Handel's Messiah with the Dayton Philharmonic and Pennsylvania Sinfonia Orchestras; Britten's Serenade for Tenor, Horn & Strings at James Madison University and the University of Georgia; engagements at the Metropolitan Choral Festival of Detroit; and tours with the internationally acclaimed American Spiritual Ensemble. Mr. Wright is highlighted in the PBS documentary film, The Spirituals: Featuring The American Spiritual Ensemble, released nationally in February '07. Special guest artist for the 2006 Mississippi Music Teachers Association, Wright is gold medalist and top prizewinner of the Savannah Music Festival American Traditions Vocal Competition 2000. He has also claimed top prizes from the National Federation of Music Clubs, Metropolitan Opera National Council, Bel Canto Regional Artists, Ohio's Vocal Resource Network Art Song Competition, and the International Schubert Competition in Vienna, Austria. John Wright is a native of Rome, Georgia, and holds degrees from Maryville College and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. He is an active vocal consultant, clinician, and leader of workshops on "Singing in the African American Tradition" in schools, churches, and colleges. John served eight years as Artist-in-Residence at the University of Dayton and now resides in Salisbury, MD where he is Instructor of Voice at Salisbury University. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

Amira Hocker Young, Soprano

Soprano/Amira Hocker is a B.M. graduate in vocal performance from the University of Kentucky. Ms. Hocker has performed in U.S. and throughout Europe including Austria, Italy, Germany and Spain. Ms. Hocker has been performing with the American Spiritual Ensemble since its inception. Ms. Hocker is a regional National Association of Teachers of Singing contest winner for 3 consecutive years in the adult beginner, intermediate and post advanced categories. Ms. Hocker performed in the Summer of 1999 in the chorus for La Boheme and Faust with the Cincinnati Opera. Ms. Hocker was recently named a finalist in the Savannah On-Stage competition to be held in March. She resides in Sierra Vista, Arizona. [RETURN TO TOP](#)

The American Spiritual Ensemble is represented by the [Alkahest Artists & Attractions, Inc.](#)