

THE ETUDE

RICKY IAN GORDON

TALES OF OPPRESSION & THE POWER OF THOSE WHO PREVAIL



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PLAYLISTS



RICKY IAN GORDON



Compelled by experiences in his own life, Ricky Ian Gordon has built his career on bringing the stories of historically vulnerable and disenfranchised communities into focus.

Prior to his 2018 commencement address at the University of Michigan's School of Music, Theatre and Dance, Ricky Ian Gordon confided in his therapist the malaise of being asked to impart his wisdom upon future generations of artists: **"What do I have to impart? Who am I?"** he wondered.

In searching for his purpose, both personally and artistically, the composer has created a body of work that speaks to his awareness of the humanity and struggles of those around the world who have persevered across time. His lyrical, engaging music acts as a vehicle for subject matter including ill-fated love in times of both war and peace, mental illness, migration in response to poverty, enduring relationships among individuals in the LGBTQIA+ community, and the struggle of disenfranchised and immigrant communities to find footing in urban America.

Gordon is no stranger to struggle. His late partner, Jeffrey Michael Grossi, was diagnosed with AIDS in 1991, marking the beginning of a difficult journey for both men as Grossi progressed through stages of the illness.

Grossi passed away in 1996. His death served as the impetus for a number of Gordon's works, including his opera *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*; during the last years of Grossi's life, Gordon set the teachings from Sogyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* to music as a way of helping him prepare for his life's end. From the time of Grossi's passing onward, Gordon has found inspiration in telling stories about those whom our society at large has ignored; tales in which the characters do not always find traditionally happy endings, yet continue to hope and strive for something greater than what they have known before, and, in doing so, prevailing against the odds that have been stacked against them. In sharing these stories with the world, Gordon is able to cultivate the common ground on which we all stand: the shared desire to reach new heights in this life and beyond through the discovery of our own self-worth.



“A KNOCKOUT!

RICKY IAN GORDON's lush yet intricate score soars into the timeless atmosphere of operatic writing. BARTLETT SHER's staging is a marvel. All six leads are terrific, and the ensemble performs dozens of roles, each perfectly etched. Many plays sewn so tightly unravel completely as they stretch toward their crisis. Not LYNN NOTTAGE's libretto, which maintains both its integrity and its tension to the end.



A JOY TO HEAR!”

-Jesse Green, *The New York Times*

“A GLORIOUS NEW OPERA,

filled with emotional grandeur.”

-Frank Rizzo, *VARIETY*

“INSPIRED!

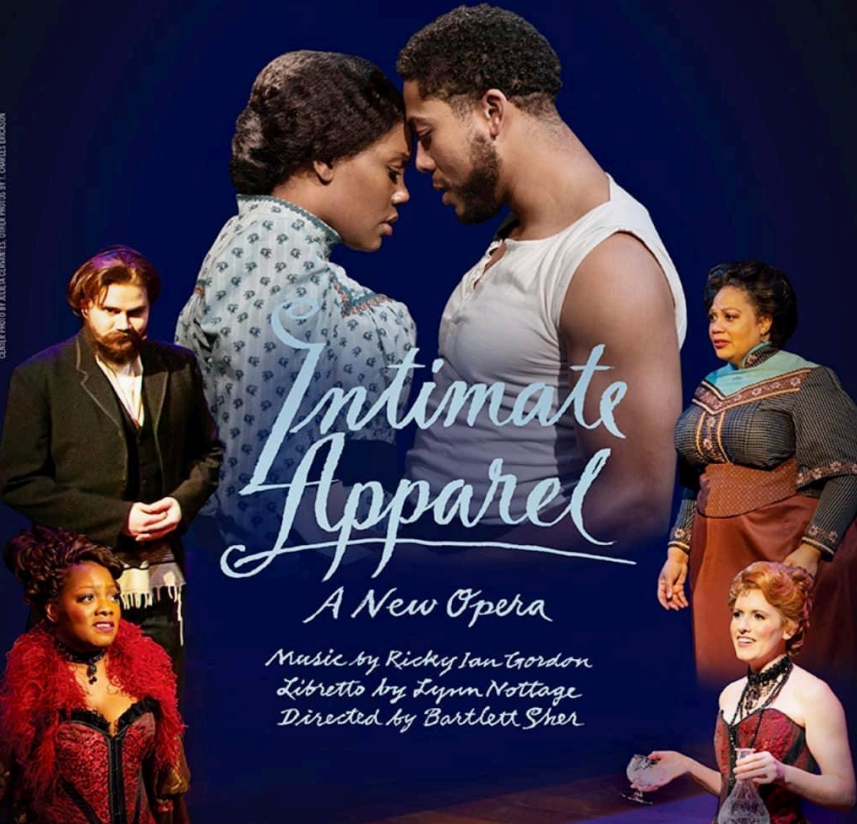
There's inescapable excitement in being so close to WORLD-CLASS VOICES.”

-Helen Shaw, *New York*



RESPLENDENT! It stirs the soul.”

-Juan Michael Porter II, *Theatre Guide*



Intimate Apparel

A New Opera

Music by Ricky Ian Gordon
Libretto by Lynn Nottage
Directed by Bartlett Sher



COSTUME PHOTOS BY FALLEN CORNWELL; OTHER PHOTOS BY T. CORWELL BRONSON

INTIMATE APPAREL

Ricky Ian Gordon's music sets a trotting, melancholy, urbane pace, redolent of early-twentieth-century New York; the melodies, shared between two pianos, sound as if they were inspired by the sight of gleaming, rain-soaked pavement.

-Vinson Cunningham, *The New Yorker*

Nottage and Gordon have achieved a fine creative chemistry here. Nottage's libretto, in verse that fluctuates between blank and rhyming, dovetails beautifully with Gordon's melodic sense, and Gordon weaves an evocative musical tapestry rich with appropriate period forms like rags, cakewalks, and marches.

-Eric Myers, *Opera News*

Libretto by: Lynn Nottage

With a libretto crafted by Lynn Nottage from her play of the same name, *Intimate Apparel* marks the first collaboration between Nottage and Gordon, fusing Nottage's heartfelt text with Gordon's lyrical musical textures. *Intimate Apparel* was several weeks into previews at the Newhouse Theater at Lincoln Center in March 2020 when its run was postponed due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. In winter of 2022, the production returned to the Newhouse Theater, where it was met with universally positive reception during a sold-out seven-week run. The story focuses on Esther, an African American seamstress living in New York City at the beginning of the 20th century. Over the course of the opera, Esther corresponds with a suitor laboring on the Panama Canal as she simultaneously becomes close to an Orthodox Jewish man who sells fabrics to her, all the while carrying a secret she fears she cannot afford to reveal. Although Esther experiences both love and loss over the course of *Intimate Apparel*, it is the promise of renewal with which the audience is left as the lights go dim.

Duration: Opera in 2 Acts - 150 minutes

Voices: Soprano (African American), Soprano (African American), Mezzo-soprano (Caucasian), Mezzo-soprano (African American), Tenor (Caucasian), Baritone (African American); Chorus: SATB (div.)

Instrumentation: 2Pno.

Premiere: March 2020, the Newhouse Theater of Lincoln Center Theater, New York, New York

Commission: Commissioned by The Metropolitan Opera/Lincoln Center Theater/Musical Theater Commissioning Program



World Premiere
 National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene
 and
 New York City Opera
 present
RICKY IAN GORDON Composer **MICHAEL KORIE** Librettist
THE GARDEN OF THE FINZI-CONTINIS
 Based on the novel by
GIORGIO BASSANI



THE GARDEN OF THE FINZI-CONTINIS

Gordon brings in elements from other styles that provide audiences with a familiarity that draws the listener into the music, rather than away from it. Gordon has a lot of implements in his composer's toolbox, and he's not afraid to mix and match styles that engage the audience.

-Chris Ruel, *OperaWire*

Gordon and Korie's opera honors the fictional family that Bassani created and allows them once again, as operatic voices, to haunt and inhabit a garden in Ferrara that never actually existed but continues to resonate in memory and history.

-Larry Wolff, *Hudson Review*

Libretto by: Michael Korie

With a text by Michael Korie and based on Giorgio Bassani's acclaimed 1962 novel of the same name, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* takes place in Ferrara, Italy on the cusp of World War Two. It tells the story of Giorgio, a working-class Italian-Jewish youth, and his relationship with a wealthy Italian-Jewish family, the Finzi-Continis, who, even as Italy forms an alliance with Germany and begins enforcing anti-Semitic laws, cling to the belief that they will be invulnerable to the impending devastation. Through the storyteller's recollections, members of the Jewish community of Ferrara and across Italy who perished in the Holocaust are immortalized, the certitude of their existence woven into the fabric of recorded history through written word.

Duration: Opera in 2 Acts - 150 minutes

Voices: 4 Sopranos, 1 Mezzo-soprano, 4 Tenors, 3 Baritones, 1 Bass-baritone; Chorus: 3 Trebles and 3 Bases

Instrumentation: 1(dbl. Picc.) 1(dbl. E.H.) 1 1 - 1 1 1(=B.Tbn.) 0; 1Perc. Pno.(dbl. Cel.) Str. (Vln.1 Vln.2 Vln.3 Vla. Vcl. Cb.

Premiere: January 2022, the Edmond J. Safra Hall in the Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, New York

Commission: Commissioned by National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene and New York City Opera

Piano/Vocal Score: Available for purchase at www.presser.com/411-41164



Ricky Ian Gordon

ellen west

A Chamber Opera in One Act
Libretto & Poem by Frank Bidart



 PRESSER

Ricky Ian Gordon's riveting one-act opera "Ellen West," recently given its world premiere by Opera Saratoga at the Spa Little Theater, depicts the savage struggle of a young woman whose eating disorder is a war to the death between her soul and her body. Through an unusually powerful fusion of music and poetry, the opera soars beyond the clinical details into the realm of existential dread, yet never loses sight of the suffering human being at its center.

-Heidi Waleson, *The Wall Street Journal*

Libretto by: Frank Bidart

Ellen West is a chamber opera-theatre work that delves into the true story of a woman struggling with disordered eating during the early 20th century, and the attempts of people around her to save her. Through the evocative poetry of Pulitzer Prize winner Frank Bidart and the beautiful music of Ricky Ian Gordon, *Ellen West* reveals the emotional roller-coaster of a woman fighting her own body and mind, battling starvation and obsessive control. Eventually she returns to the home she shared with her husband, where he and her doctors intervene in an exploration of the emotional, psychological, and physical challenges of her struggle with her perceptions of her body, her relationship with food, and her feeling of the world closing in around her. At the end of the opera, *Ellen West* is able to rise above her fettered circumstances by finding peace in death, finally freeing herself from the restraints that had gripped her in life.

Duration: Opera in 1 Act - 75 minutes

Voices: 1 Soprano, 1 Baritone

Instrumentation: Cb., C Bell, Pno., 2Vln. Vla. Vlc.

Premiere: June 2019, Opera Saratoga, Saratoga Springs, New York

Commission: Commissioned by Beth Morrison Projects: Beth Morrison, President and Creative Producer; Opera Saratoga: Lawrence Edelson, Artistic and General Director; The Ted & Mary Jo Shen Charitable Gift Fund, and David and Kiki Gindler. The development of *Ellen West* was funded, in part, by an OPERA America Repertoire Development grant.

Piano/Vocal Score: Available for purchase at www.presser.com/411-41161

Perusal Score and Rental Information: Available by request or online at www.presser.com/116-42010



Ricky Ian Gordon

27

An Opera in 5 Acts

Piano-vocal score

LIBRETTO BY ROYCE VAVREK



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"27" is a triumph for Gordon and Vavrek and a tour-de-force for all of the performers.

-Bruce-Michael Gelbert, *Q On Stage*

. . . .a playful, quick-witted libretto that pushed Mr. Gordon beyond his trademark melodies into a brighter, friskier style.

-Heidi Waleson, *The Wall Street Journal*

. . . .a taut, witty and affecting new piece of lyric theatre.

-James Sohre, *Opera Today*

Libretto by: Royce Vavrek

27 follows the lives of Gertrude Stein and her partner Alice B. Toklas as they host legendary salons at 27 rue de Fleurus in Paris, entertaining such illustrious guests as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Man Ray, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. The opera attempts to bring Ms. Stein to life through her writing, highlighting her lack of inhibition and unabashed self-expression even in the face of negative critical opinion. In creating physical representations of her and Alice, the piece also explores the ways in which the women relate to one another and the rest of the world, using the World Wars as brackets to track the evolution of their relationship as they grapple with the changes that only war, and the passing of time, can bring.

Duration: Opera in 5 Acts - 95 minutes

Voices: 1 Mezzo-soprano, 4 supporting singers (Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, Bass-baritone, singing a variety of roles); Optional Chorus

Full Instrumentation: 2(2 dbl. Picc.) 2(2nd dbl. E.H.) 2 2(2nd dbl. Cbsn.) A.Sax. - 2 2(2nd dbl. B.Tbn.) 0; Timp. 2Perc. Hp. Pno. Str.

Reduced Instrumentation: 1(dbl. Picc.) 1 1 1 - 1 1 1 0; Timp. 2Perc. Hp. Pno. Str.

Premiere: June 2014, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, St. Louis, Missouri

Commission: Commissioned by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

Piano/Vocal Score: Available for purchase at www.presser.com/411-41142

Perusal Score and Rental Information: Versions available on Rental:

Full Score | Optional Choral Parts | Reduced Instrumentation

Available by request or online at www.presser.com/116-41995



Ricky Ian Gordon
morning star

LIBRETTO BY WILLIAM M. HOFFMAN
based on the play by Sylvia Regan
Piano-vocal score



MORNING STAR

Gordon's score is keenly attentive to the text. . . .His vocal writing is fluid and natural, and there is a bright, fresh sound to all the music.

-Eric C. Simpson, *New York Classical Review*

The music sits comfortably on Hoffman's sharply observed libretto, slyly peppered with Yiddishisms, Sondheimesque in its witty use of language, yet entirely Hoffman's own in its ability to evoke the rhythms of working-class life and death.

-John von Rhein, *Chicago Tribune*

A DEPICTION OF IMMIGRANT STRUGGLES

Libretto by: William M. Hoffman

Based on Sylvia Regan's play and on parallels with the composer's own family, *Morning Star* is a deeply touching character piece about life among Jewish immigrants in New York City's Lower East Side, where the family must learn how to adapt to the country's ever-changing landscape. Hope blossoms and is dashed as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, World War I, and the Great Depression lead to death, divorce, and despair. Through it all, William M. Hoffman's colorful libretto and Ricky Ian Gordon's engaging score maintain charming threads of love and optimism, comedy amid tragedy, and luscious sonorities featuring a large cast of singers – in English, Yiddish, Italian, and Haitian French.

Duration: Opera in 2 Acts - 150 minutes

Voices: 4 Sopranos, 3 Mezzo-sopranos, 3 Tenors, 2 Baritones, 1 Bass-baritone, 1 Boy (13 yrs. old, 1 spoken role); Optional Chorus

Instrumentation: 2(2 dbl. Picc.) 1(dbl. E.H.) 3(3=B.Cl., dbl. Cl.) - 2 2 2(B.Tbn.) 0; Timp. 2Perc. Pno/Cel. Str.

Premiere: June 2015, Cincinnati Opera; First Workshop, 2002, Lyric Opera Of Chicago Opera Studio, Chicago, Illinois; Second Workshop, 2012/2015 Opera Fusion, Cincinnati Opera and Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commission: Commissioned by Cincinnati Opera

Piano/Vocal Score: Available for purchase at www.presser.com/411-41145

Perusal Score and Rental Information: Full Score | Optional Choral Parts | Also available with reduced orchestration

Available by request or online at www.presser.com/116-41487



Ricky Ian Gordon The House Without a Christmas Tree

Piano-vocal score
LIBRETTO BY ROYCE VAVREK
A new opera based on the beloved holiday classic by Gail Rock



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THE HOUSE WITHOUT A CHRISTMAS TREE

...[a] soul-warming recipe of mittens, snowball fights, caroling, secret Santa gift exchanges, friends, family, and love. . .just the thing, really, to usher in cheer. . . [Vavrek's] libretto is simple and straightforward. . .the unguarded style soars in Gordon's arias. . .

-Sydney Boyd, *Houstonia Magazine*

Gordon's melodic, tonal score. . .fall[s] easily on the ears, often bringing to mind the late operas of Richard Strauss in its naturalistic setting of Vavrek's dialogue. . .he pleasing score, congenial vocal demands and modest scale of "The House Without a Christmas Tree" give it a good shot at achieving staying power, attractive to professional opera companies of all sizes and to conservatories and universities.

-Eric Skelly, *The Houston Chronicle*

Libretto by: Royce Vavrek

This heartwarming, family-friendly story, adapted from the enchanting 1972 TV-movie-turned-novel, follows a precocious daughter who struggles to understand her father's resentment about the holidays and longs for a beautiful Christmas tree like other families have, to "make her house look happy." The central story of personal loss and eventual healing struck a chord with both Gordon and librettist Vavrek, as each has suffered the loss of family members and, in Gordon's case, a partner. The final theme of rebirth is one of catharsis and joy, and the resulting opera was especially welcome in a city that had just experienced the devastation of Hurricane Harvey.

Duration: Opera in 1 Act - 80 minutes

Voices: 3 Sopranos, 2 Mezzo-sopranos, 1 Tenor, 1 Baritone; Chorus: SAT (div.)

Instrumentation: 1(dbl. Picc.) 1(dbl. E.H.) 2(2 dbl. B.Cl.) 1(dbl. Cbsn.) - 2 1 1 0; 1Perc. Pno. Hp. Str. (3.1.1.1.1)

Premiere: December 2017, Houston Grand Opera, Houston, Texas

Commission: Commissioned by Houston Grand Opera

Piano/Vocal Score: Available for purchase at www.presser.com/411-41158

Perusal Score and Rental Information: Available by request or online at www.presser.com/116-41490



Ricky Ian Gordon

the tibetan book of the dead
the great liberation through hearing

LIBRETTO BY JEAN-CLAUDE VAN ITALLIE

based on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*
(or *How Not to Do it Again*)

Piano-vocal score



THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD The Great Liberation Through Hearing



A succinct one-act piece. . .Gordon has written tuneful things that range through blues and gentle rock, cowboy rhythms and pop. The final chord-unresolved-provides a glimpse of eternity-one of the memorable things in this score.

-Daniel Webster, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Gordon could write glorious music to the telephone directory if he wanted to. . .the music soars, and we're reminded of just how magnificent Gordon's music can be. A major piece of new music.

-Cary Mazer, *Philadelphia City Paper*

A MEDITATION ON DEATH AND DYING

Libretto by: Jean-Claude Van Itallie

Based on the ancient Buddhist text of the same name and written for the composer's partner Jeffrey Michael Grossi in 1996 as he was dying of AIDS, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* intends to lead us through the stages we experience after death and our transition into the next life; during the last years of Grossi's life, Gordon read to him from *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* as a way of aiding him in his journey. The opera is at once a ritual, an oratorio in 17 set numbers, a requiem, a warning, and a theatrically-staged wake. A meditation on loss and a reflection on death as a vital part of life, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* offers valuable and unique lessons that abide with the listener long after hearing.

Duration: Opera in 1 Act - 95 minutes

Voices: 1 Soprano, 2 Mezzo-sopranos, 2 Tenors, 1 Baritone, 1 Bass

Instrumentation: Fl.(dbl. Picc.) Cl.(dbl.B.Cl.) Hn. Tpt.; 3Perc. Pno. Hp. Vln. Vcl. Cb.

Premiere: May 1996, Houston Grand Opera, Houston, Texas

Commission: Commissioned by Houston Grand Opera and The American Music Theater Festival 1995

Piano/Vocal Score: Available for purchase at www.presser.com/411-41140

Perusal Score and Rental Information: Available by request or online at www.presser.com/116-41491



The GRAPES of WRATH

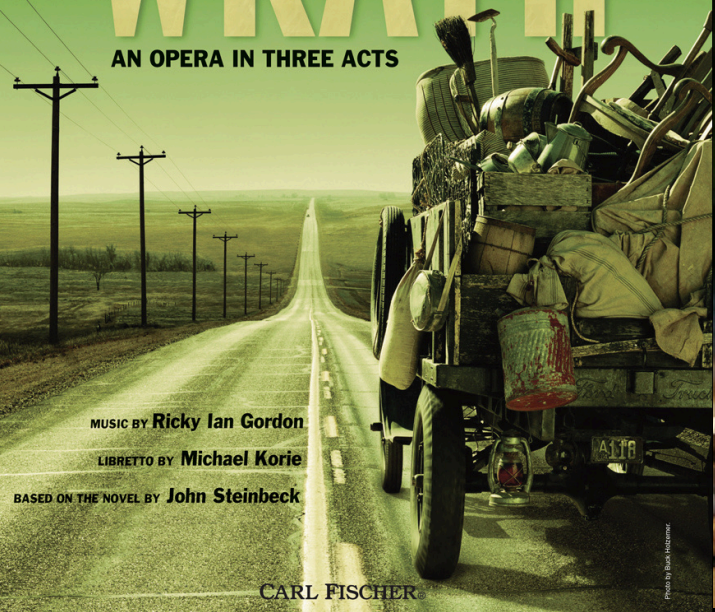
AN OPERA IN THREE ACTS

MUSIC BY **Ricky Ian Gordon**

LIBRETTO BY **Michael Korie**

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY **John Steinbeck**

CARL FISCHER



THE GRAPES OF WRATH

Gordon, who first made his name in the theatre and as a composer of Broadway-style songs, fills his score with beautifully turned genre pieces, often harking back to American popular music of the twenties and thirties: Gershwin-esque song-and-dance numbers, a few sweetly soaring love songs in the manner of Jerome Kern, banjo-twanging ballads, saxed-up jazz choruses, even a barbershop quartet. You couldn't ask for a more comfortably appointed evening of vintage musical Americana. Yet, with a slyness worthy of Weill, Gordon wields his hummable tunes to critical effect.

—Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*

Libretto by: Michael Korie

John Steinbeck's classic tale of the Joad family's odyssey from drought-stricken Oklahoma to the illusory "green pastures" of southern California is one of the great stories of survival. Premiered by the Minnesota Opera in 2007 and performed since then by the Utah Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Detroit Opera, numerous music schools, and in concert at Carnegie Hall with Jane Fonda narrating, *The Grapes of Wrath* is an American epic now available in four configurations to match the size of any performing ensemble. Masterfully adapted by librettist Michael Korie from Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1939 novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* was named "the great American opera" by Musical America.

Durations: Opera in 3 Acts - 190 minutes (Original Version)
Opera in 2 Acts - 170 minutes (Reduced Version)

Voices: 13 principal singing roles - 1 Soprano, 2 Mezzo-sopranos, 3 Tenors, 4 Baritones, 1 Bass-baritone, 1 Boy Soprano, 1 Girl Soprano; 5 featured singers (doubling various roles): Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, Bass; Chorus: SATB (div.)

Full-Length Instrumentation: 2(2nd dbl. Picc.) 2(2nd db. E.H.) 2(2nd dbl. Eb Cl., B.Cl.) 2(2nd dbl. Cbsn.) A.Sax. T.Sax - 4 3 3(B.Tbn.) 1; Timp. Perc. Synth. Hp. Harmonica. Gtr. Str.

Abridged Versions Instrumentation: 2(2nd dbl. Picc.) 2(2nd db. E.H.) 2(1st dbl. EbCl.; 2nd dbl. B.Cl.) 2(2nd dbl. Cbsn.) A.Sax.(dbl. S.Sax, Bar.Sax.) - 2 2 3(B.Tbn.) 0; Timp. 2Perc. Hp. Pno.(dbl. Cel.) Guit.(dbl. Banjo) Str.

Premiere: February 2007, Minnesota Opera, Ordway Theater, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commission: Original three-act opera commissioned by Minnesota Opera and Utah Opera, two-act opera commissioned by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

Piano/Vocal Score: Available for purchase at www.presser.com/VS5

Perusal Score and Rental Information: Versions available on Rental:

| Opera in Three Acts | Abridged Versions: 2015 (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis), 2018 (Michigan Opera Theatre), 2020 (Derived from 2018 Version)

Available by request or online at www.presser.com/vs71

Rappahannock County

Music by
RICKY IAN GORDON

Lyrics and Concept by
MARK CAMPBELL



RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY

Rappahannock County is a work of great economy, but immense emotional breadth – and depth.

-Wes Blomster, *Opera Today*

It is to the credit of composer Ricky Ian Gordon and librettist Mark Campbell that their "Rappahannock County" succeeds so remarkably both musically and emotionally: it is not unlike Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in that, in a relatively brief time, it gets at the heart of an aspect of the collective American experience that has shaped all that has come after and, at its core, is both unique to America and unmistakably universal.

-Joseph Newsome, *Voix des Arts*

Libretto by: Mark Campbell

A theatrical song cycle grouped into five parts, *Rappahannock County* captures key emotional, sociological, and historical moments in the Civil War, focusing on more than two dozen fictional people who experience the consequences of the conflict, their stories told through both solo and ensemble numbers. Much of the text was inspired by actual events and drawn from diaries, letters, and other accounts. The narrative follows the lines of history, from secession by Southern states in 1861 to their defeat by the Union Army in 1865. Although the story is geographically centered in Virginia, its themes—including the struggle to create new beginnings from the ashes of a previous way of life—are universal to the Civil War.

Duration: Song Cycle in 1 Act – 85 minutes

Voices: 5 principal singers (doubling various roles): 1 Soprano (African American), 1 Mezzo-soprano (Caucasian), 1 Tenor (Caucasian), 1 Baritone (African American), 1 Baritone (Caucasian)

Instrumentation: 1(dbl. Picc.) 1(dbl. E.H.) 2(2nd dbl. B.Cl.) 1 - 1 1(dbl. Flgln.) 1 0; Timp. Perc. Pno.(dbl. Cel.) Str.

Premiere: April 2011, with members of The Virginia Symphony Orchestra, Rob Fisher, conductor; Harrison Opera House, Norfolk, Virginia

Commission: Co-commissioned by the Virginia Arts Festival, Virginia Opera, the Modlin Center for the Arts at the University of Richmond, and Texas Performing Arts at the University of Texas at Austin, Texas

Perusal Score and Rental Information: Available by request or online at www.presser.com/116-41489



Ricky Ian Gordon

Orpheus and Euridice

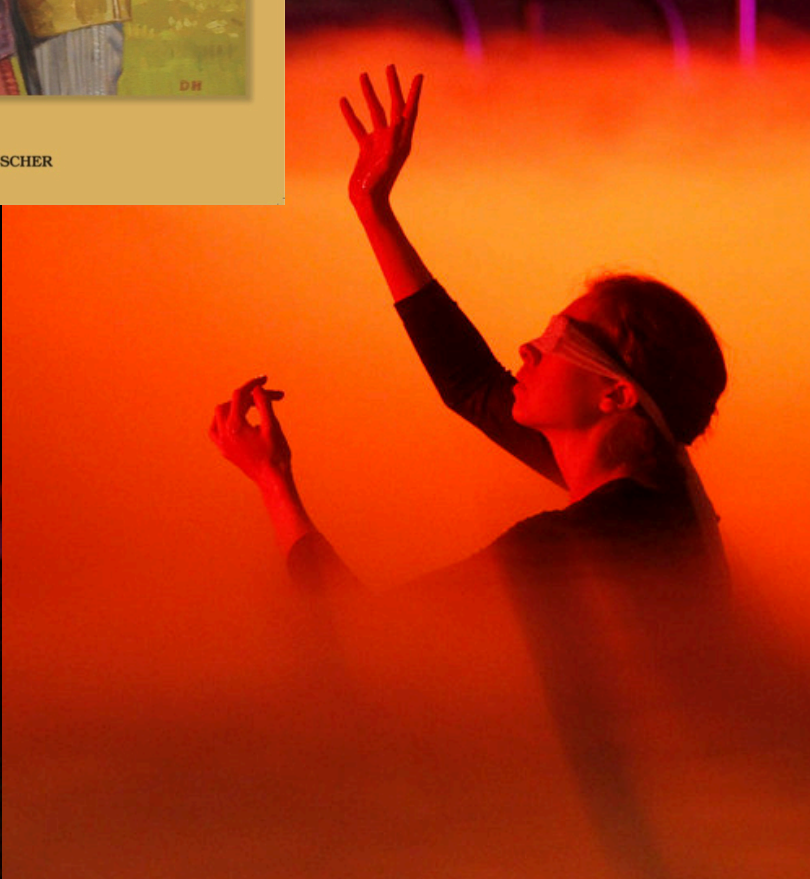
A Song Cycle in Two Acts
for Soprano, Clarinet in B \flat and Piano



CARL FISCHER



**OBIE AWARD
WINNER**



ORPHEUS AND EURIDICE

Gordon claims to have written the libretto in one hour, but there's nothing facile about it. Graceful, soulful, inspired and personal, it sets the Orpheus story in a modern context.

-Rick Hamlin, *Opera News*

Both Gordon's text and music are couched in an accessible idiom of disarming lyrical directness, a cleverly disguised faux naïveté that always resolves dissonant situations with grace and a sure sense of dramatic effect - the mark of a born theater composer.

-Peter G. Davis, *New York Magazine*

Libretto by: Ricky Ian Gordon

This re-telling of the ancient Greek myth casts a solo soprano as the narrator and, briefly, also Euridice, while inserting a clarinetist into the role of Orpheus, the player's dynamic instrumental line outlining the voice of this iconic character. Written in honor of his partner Jeffrey Michael Grossi, who died of AIDS in 1996, Gordon's libretto uses imagery from the AIDS epidemic in altering the plot of the classic story: here, Euridice dies not from snakebite, but from a mysterious disease, while Orpheus is forced to look on helplessly, his lute failing to offer solace. After traveling through the Underworld and playing music for infernal deities in order to appease them, he is granted a second chance at life with Euridice. As in the original tale, he leads her out of the Underworld, eventually turning around to gaze upon her only to watch her vanish. Orpheus is then forced to return to Earth alone, where he is physically shattered by his grief. His spirit is then released from his body, giving birth to new sounds soon dispersed throughout the world.

Duration: Song Cycle in 1 Act - 60 minutes

Voices: 1 Soprano

Instrumentation: Cl. Pno. 2Vln. Vla. Vlc. Cb.

Premiere: October 2001, Todd Palmer, clarinet, Elizabeth Farnum, soprano, Scott Dunn, piano; Cooper Union, New York, New York

Commission: Commissioned by Lincoln Center Theater in partnership with clarinetist Todd Palmer

Piano/Vocal Score: Available at www.carlfischer.com/VS3

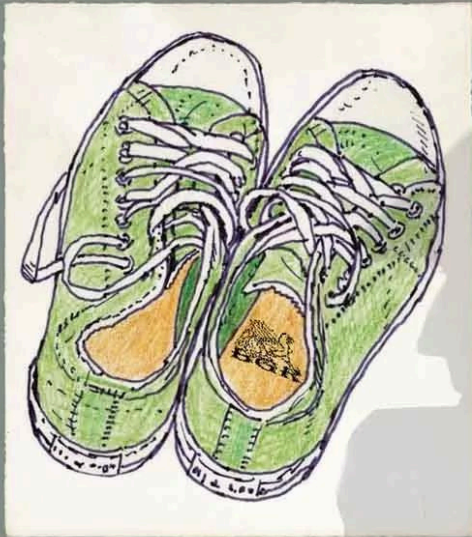
Perusal Score and Rental Information: Available by request or online at www.carlfischer.com/VS27



Ricky Ian Gordon

green sneakers

for Baritone, Empty Chair, String Quartet, and Piano
Full score



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GREEN SNEAKERS

"Green Sneakers" is a significant contribution to the culture sprung from the AIDS crisis. In its forthright honesty and passion it could be compared to the film "Longtime Companion" (1990), which brought home the emergency with a similar immediacy and eloquence. It heals while it hurts.

-Stephen Holden, *The New York Times*

With the repetition of "Sleep Dear," the final words of "Green Sneakers," one heard in Vail a distant echo of the "Ewig" that concludes Mahler's monumental "Abschied." For this is a song of today's earth, a farewell lamentation that transcends death.

-Wes Blomster, *Opera Today*

Libretto by: Ricky Ian Gordon

Green Sneakers, written for baritone, empty chair, string quartet, and piano, is a work in which all parts of the ensemble—as well as the prop that is the chair—are used to narrate the story. Created from a cycle of poems by Gordon in memory of his late partner Jeffrey Michael Grossi, the work is a tribute to the life Gordon and Grossi shared together, as described in the details of happenings that took place leading up to Grossi's death, including Grossi's collapse at the opening night of Gordon's first opera, which had its premiere at Houston Grand Opera in 1996. The poems also chronicle Gordon's journey through grief after Grossi's passing and his reflections on specific memories of Grossi, as well as Grossi's possessions—such as the green sneakers sitting in his closet—untouched and unchanged. Through these texts, we see the ways in which Grossi's spirit is ultimately kept alive through Gordon's ruminations, realizations, and resulting personal growth.

Duration: Song Cycle in 1 Act - 60 minutes

Voices: 1 Baritone

Instrumentation: Pno. 2Vln. Vla. Vlc.

Premiere: July 2008; Vilar Performing Arts Center, Jesse Blumberg, baritone; Miami String Quartet; dir. Ricky Ian Gordon; Beaver Creek, Colorado

Commission: Commissioned for the 2008 Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival

Piano/Vocal Score: Available at www.presser.com/411-41120

Full Score: www.presser.com/411-41121

Perusal Score and Rental Information: Available by request or online at www.presser.com/116-41486

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IF THE MUSIC OF
RICKY IAN GORDON HAD TO BE
DEFINED BY A SINGLE QUALITY,
IT WOULD BE THE
BURSTING EFFERVESCENCE
IN FUSING SONGS THAT
BLITHELY **BLUR THE LINES**
BETWEEN ART SONG AND THE
HIGH-END BROADWAY MUSIC
OF LEONARD BERNSTEIN
AND STEPHEN SONDHEIM...
**IT'S CAVIAR FOR A WORLD
GORGING ON PIZZA.**

”

—Stephen Holden, *The New York Times*—

LYNN NOTTAGE



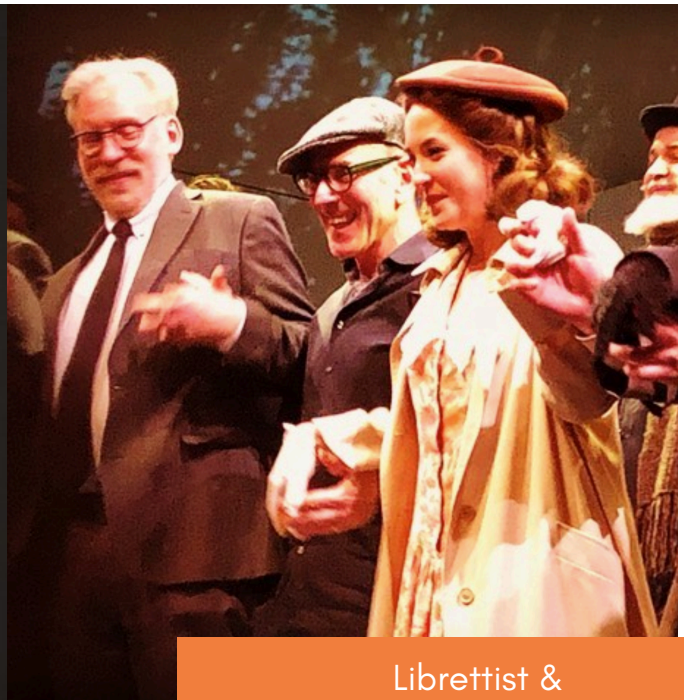
Librettist &
Pulitzer Prize Winner

One of the country's most celebrated and influential playwrights, Lynn Nottage continues to shape the conversation around issues of social justice through her work.

Lynn Nottage is a playwright and a screenwriter, and the first woman in history to win two Pulitzer Prizes for Drama. Her recent work includes the libretto for *Intimate Apparel* the Opera [LCT], the book for *MJ* The Musical [Broadway] and *Clyde's* [Broadway, 2st]. In 2025, Nottage collaborated with her daughter, Ruby Aiyo Gerber, to pen the libretto for Ricky Ian Gordon's newest opera *This House*, premiered by the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Other work includes *The Watering Hole* (Signature), *Floyd's* (Guthrie) the book for the musical *The Secret Life of Bees* (Atlantic Theater), *Sweat* (Pulitzer Prize, Obie Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Award), which moved to Broadway after a sold out run at The Public Theater, *Mlima's Tale* (Lortel Award Nomination, Outer Critics Circle Nomination), *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* (Drama Desk Nomination, Lilly Award), *Ruined* (Pulitzer Prize, Obie Award, Lortel Award), *Intimate Apparel* (American Theatre Critics and New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards for Best Play), *Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine* (Lortel Award Nomination, Drama Desk Nomination, Obie Award), *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, *Las Meninas*, *Mud*, *River*, *Stone*, *Por'knockers*, and *POOF*.

She has also developed *This is Reading*, a performance installation at the Franklin Street, Reading Railroad Station in Reading, PA. She was a writer and producer on the first season of Netflix series *She's Gotta Have It*, directed by Spike Lee. Nottage has developed original projects for networks including HBO, Sidney Kimmel Entertainment, Showtime, *This is That*, and Harpo Productions, and has written and produced programs for Netflix. She is the co-founder of the production company Market Road Films. Nottage is currently an associate professor of playwriting at Columbia University's School of the Arts.

MICHAEL KORIE



Librettist &
Mark Blitzstein Award Winner

A studious and meticulous craftsman, esteemed librettist Michael Korie explores the lives of historical figures through his pieces as a means of documenting sociocultural progress.

Michael Korie received The Marc Blitzstein Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters for his opera librettos and musical theater lyrics. Collaborating with composer Ricky Ian Gordon, his adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath* premiered at Minnesota Opera, Utah Opera, and Pittsburgh Opera, and in concert at Los Angeles Disney Hall and Carnegie Hall. A new version premiered at Opera Theater of St. Louis in 2017. *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* premiered in 2022 at New York City Opera and National Yiddish Folksbiene-Theatre.

Librettos to operas composed by Stewart Wallace include *Harvey Milk*, *Where's Dick?*, *Kabbalah*, and *Hopper's Wife*, produced at San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and BAM Next Festival. *Harvey Milk* returned to acclaim in 2022 at Opera Theater of Saint Louis.

For theater, his musical with Tom Kitt and James Lapine, *Flying Over Sunset*, premiered at Lincoln Center Theater with a Tony-nominated score.

Lyrics with composer Scott Frankel include the Broadway productions of *War Paint* and *Grey Gardens*, and off-Broadway's *Far From Heaven* and *Happiness*. Their scores have been nominated for Tony and Drama Desk Awards, received The Outer Critics Circle Award, and been produced on Broadway, Playwrights Horizons, Lincoln Center Theater, throughout the USA, and in London.

Awards include the Edward Kleban Prize, Jonathan Larson Award, and ASCAP Richard Rodgers Award. Songs with Frankel were featured at Lincoln Center's American Songbook series and at Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage. He serves on the American Theatre Wing Advisory Committee, and co-chairs the Dramatists Guild Opera Committee for which he produced the film *Credit the Librettist*. Korie chairs the musical theater division of the Dramatists Guild Fellows Program for emerging musical theater creators. He teaches musical theater and opera writing at Yale University and Columbia University, and leads seminars for opera composers and theater playwrights at American Opera Project (AOP) and American Lyric Theater.

ROYCE VAVREK



Librettist &
Pulitzer Prize Winner

One of the most sought-after librettists of our time, Royce Vavrek draws upon subject matter old and new to create compelling and relevant works.

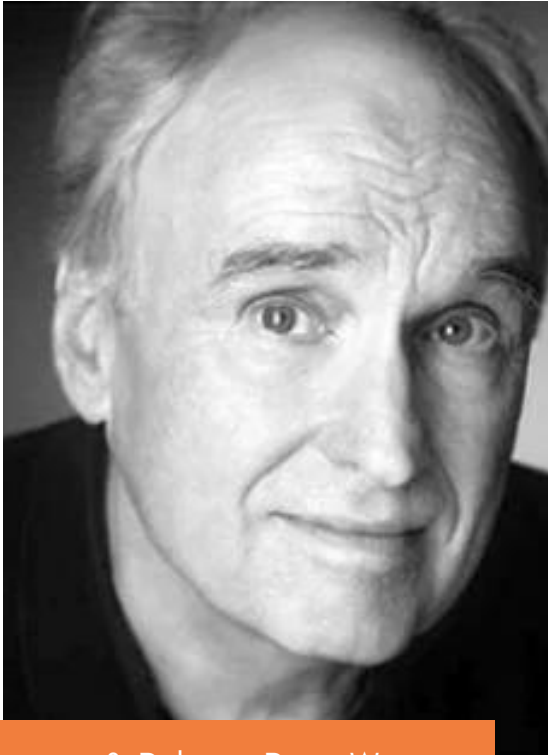
Royce Vavrek was born in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada. He studied piano, composition, and sang with a choir while growing up, but was also drawn to theatre writing at a young age, creating 17 plays by the time he completed high school. Vavrek obtained his BFA in Filmmaking and Creative Writing from Concordia University before pursuing an MFA in Musical Theater Writing at New York University. He then enrolled in the American Lyric Theater's Composer Librettist Development Program.

Vavrek is known for his work with organizations including Beth Morrison Projects, The Kitchen, Alarm Will Sound, Opera America, and American Lyric Theater, among others. He has crafted texts for 15 operas (with four more in the works), six oratorios, two dance scenarios, and one musical. Additionally, he has five film credits to his name. Vavrek has, in his own words, made a point of aligning himself "with composers whose musical languages are informed by more popular musical ideas."

The librettist's subject matter is wide-ranging; he has written about historical figures including Gertrude Stein, John F. Kennedy, Isabelle Eberhardt, and Sir Walter Raleigh, and depicted challenges faced by fictional characters affected by physical and emotional separation, changing law, and war.

Vavrek is currently the director of The Coterie, an opera-theater company that he co-founded with Lauren Worsham.

FRANK BIDART



Librettist & Pulitzer Prize Winner

Frank Bidart grew up in California and received his Bachelor's degree from the University of California-Riverside, where, upon being introduced to the works of writers such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, he began studying poetry. Bidart went on to Harvard University for his Master's, studying with and later befriending professors Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop, both of whom influenced him personally and professionally.

Best known for his volumes of poetry, Bidart spent the early part of his career on writing in a confessional style, creating dramatic monologues presenting real-life figures, such as Ellen West, Benvenuto Cellini, and Herbert White, with some dramatization. Bidart later focused on more personal subject matter, such as the challenges of navigating adolescence as a queer person in mid 20th-century America. His work is also noted for its unique typography and its unusual use of punctuation and capitalization.

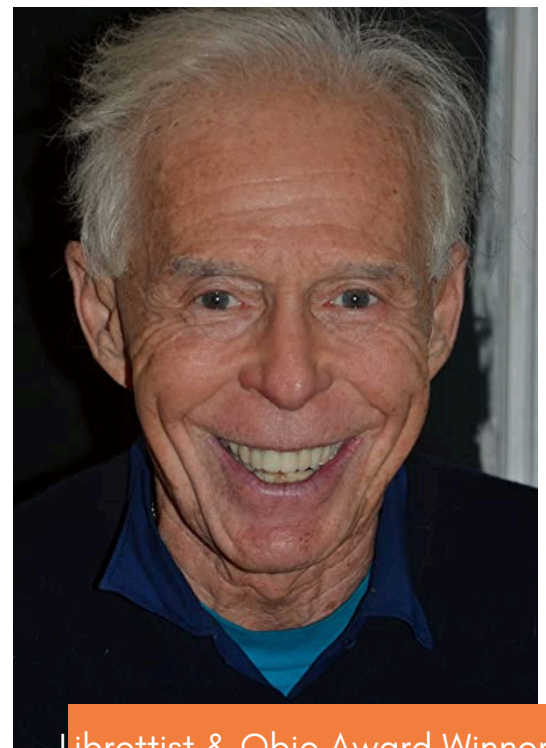
Bidart is a Professor Emeritus at Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, where he taught for over 45 years.

JEAN-CLAUDE VAN ITALLIE

Jean Claude van Itallie was born in Brussels, Belgium. He and his family were forced to flee the country during World War II, when he was just four years old. His family resettled on Long Island, New York, where he spent much of his childhood. He obtained his Bachelor's degree from Harvard College, and, upon graduation, moved to New York City to study acting and film editing at New York University.

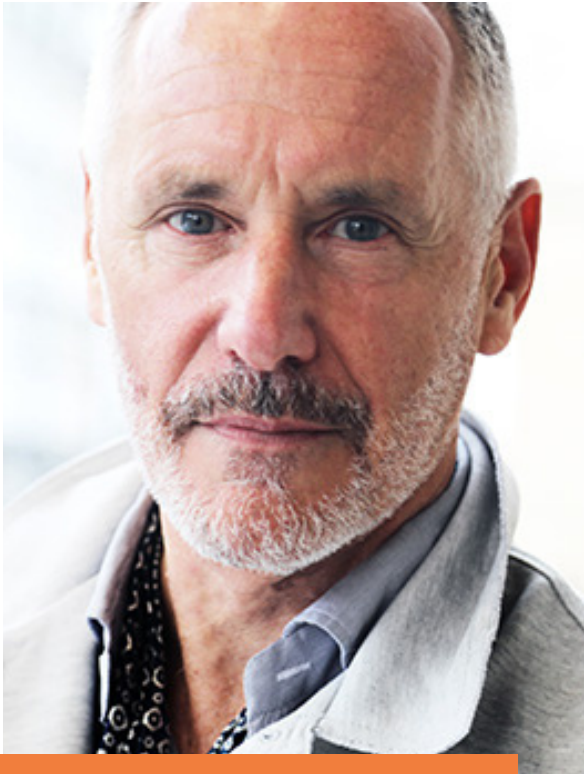
Upon completing his studies, van Itallie began writing scripts for the CBS television program *Look Up and Live*. He was the playwright of the Open Theater ensemble and wrote a number of works that ran at the LaMaMa Experimental Theater Club, among other venues. In all, van Itallie wrote over thirty plays.

He turned towards acting and became a practicing Buddhist later in life, studying with renowned Tibetan Buddhist teacher Chogyam Trungpa. Trungpa eventually moved to van Itallie's farm in Massachusetts, which led to the farm being renamed Shantigar. Van Itallie eventually converted Shantigar into a non-profit foundation center, where he himself taught workshops focusing on movement and meditation to harness creativity until his death in 2021.



Librettist & Obie Award Winner

MARK CAMPBELL



Librettist & Pulitzer Prize Winner

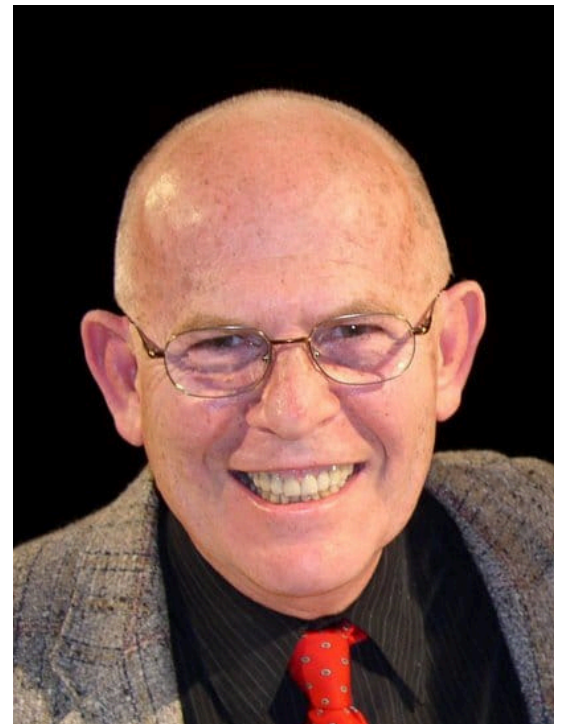
The Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award winning operas of librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell are among the most successful in the contemporary canon. Mark has written 40 opera librettos, lyrics for 7 musicals and text for 6 song cycles and 4 oratorios. His works include: *Silent Night*, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, *Sanctuary Road*, *The Shining*, *Elizabeth Cree*, *As One*, *Stonewall*, *The Nefarious*, *Immoral but Highly Profitable Enterprise of Mr. Burke & Mr. Hare*, *Dinner at Eight*, *Today It Rains*, *Some Light Emerges*, *Rappahannock County*, *A Sweet Silence in Cremona*, *The Secret River*, *Later the Same Evening*, *Volpone*, *Bastianello/Lucrezia*, and *Songs from an Unmade Bed*.

In 2020, Mark created and funded the first award for opera librettists in the history of the art form: the annual Campbell Opera Librettist Prize; and in 2022, he co-created the True Voice Award to help with the training of transgender singers. Premieres in 2022 include: *Unruly Sun* for Orchestre Classique de Montréal, *Edward Tulane* for Minnesota Opera, *A Year to the Day* for The Violin Channel, *A Thousand Acres* for Des Moines Metro Opera, and *Irena* for Teatr Muzyczny w Poznaniu. www.markcampbellwords.com

WILLIAM M. HOFFMAN

The son of Eastern European immigrants, William M. Hoffman was born and raised in New York City. He attended the City College of New York, where he studied English and Latin. Shortly after graduation, he began working for the publishing company Hill and Wang, through which he championed the works of prominent gay and lesbian playwrights. He subsequently began writing his own plays which were produced in off-Broadway theaters, such as LaMaMa Experimental Theatre Club, and by groups such as the Playhouse of the Ridiculous Ensemble, which focused on performing works of the experimental "Ridiculous" genre. Hoffman also wrote several teleplays for the CBS network.

Much of Hoffman's work centers around the lives of historical figures including Gillis de Rais, Edward Hyde, Marie Antoinette, and Stephen Foster, in addition to issues including the AIDS epidemic. He was an associate professor of theatre at Lehmann College at the City University of New York for decades until his death in 2017.



Librettist & Tony Award Winner

“

OUT OF THE VARIOUS THREADS OF MY LIFE, TOPICS I HAVE IRREPRESSIBLY BEEN DRAWN TO, AND IN HONOR AND TRIBUTE TO ALL THE ARTISTS THAT HAVE EXCITED AND INFLUENCED ME, I HAVE TRIED TO CREATE A BODY OF WORK THAT MIGHT BE **MEANINGFUL AND BEAUTIFUL**, THAT MIGHT STAND THE TEST OF TIME, AND THAT I COULD BE PROUD OF. **THE NEED TO CONNECT, TO BE HEARD, TO BE UNDERSTOOD**, WAS ALWAYS THE ENGINE. WHETHER I HAVE SUCCEEDED OR FAILED, I DON'T KNOW, BUT IT HAS ALWAYS SEEMED WORTH THE EFFORT.


”

—Ricky Ian Gordon, 2024—

OTHER VOCAL WORKS


Ricky Ian Gordon
without music

Five Songs for Mezzo-soprano and Piano
Words by Marie Howe




PRESSER

Ricky Ian Gordon
Too Few the Mornings Be
Music by Ricky Ian Gordon
Words by Emily Dickinson
Eleven Songs for Soprano and Piano



CARL FISCHER

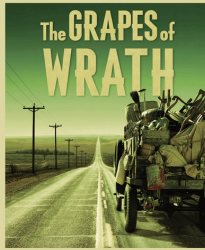
Ricky Ian Gordon Songs of Our Time
14 Songs Set to Poems by Contemporary Poets
For Medium High Voice and Piano
With a Foreword by Audra McDonald



CARL FISCHER

The GRAPES of WRATH

SOLO ARIA COLLECTION
16 Aria Excerpts from the Opera *The Grapes of Wrath*
Music by Ricky Ian Gordon
LIBRETTO by Michael Korie



CARL FISCHER


Ricky Ian Gordon
huit chansons de fleurs

Eight Songs for High Voice and Piano



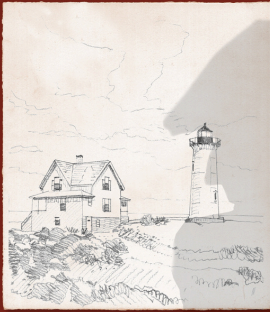
PRESSER

Ricky Ian Gordon
night flight to san francisco
Harper's Monologue from *Angels in America*
for Soprano and Piano
Words by Tony Kushner



PRESSER


Ricky Ian Gordon
Late Afternoon
Six Songs for Mezzo Soprano
Poems by Jane Kenyon, Jean Valentine and Marie Howe



CARL FISCHER

Ricky Ian Gordon
and flowers pick themselves


5 Songs for High Voice and Orchestra
on poems by e.e. cummings
Piano-vocal score



PRESSER

Ricky Ian Gordon
autumn valentine

A Suite of Songs and Duets for Soprano and Baritone
Piano-vocal
POEMS BY DOROTHY PARKER




PRESSER

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Ricky Ian Gordon / SATB with Klavier

Prayer
RICKY IAN GORDON

SATB Voices with Keyboard

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Gordon / SA with Klavier or Harp

Dios te salve
from the Opera *The Grapes of Wrath*

Words by
MICHAEL KORIE
Music by
RICKY IAN GORDON

SA Voices with Keyboard or Harp

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CARL FISCHER

Ricky Ian Gordon
antarctica

Harper's Act III Monologue from *Angels in America*
for Soprano and Piano
Words by Tony Kushner



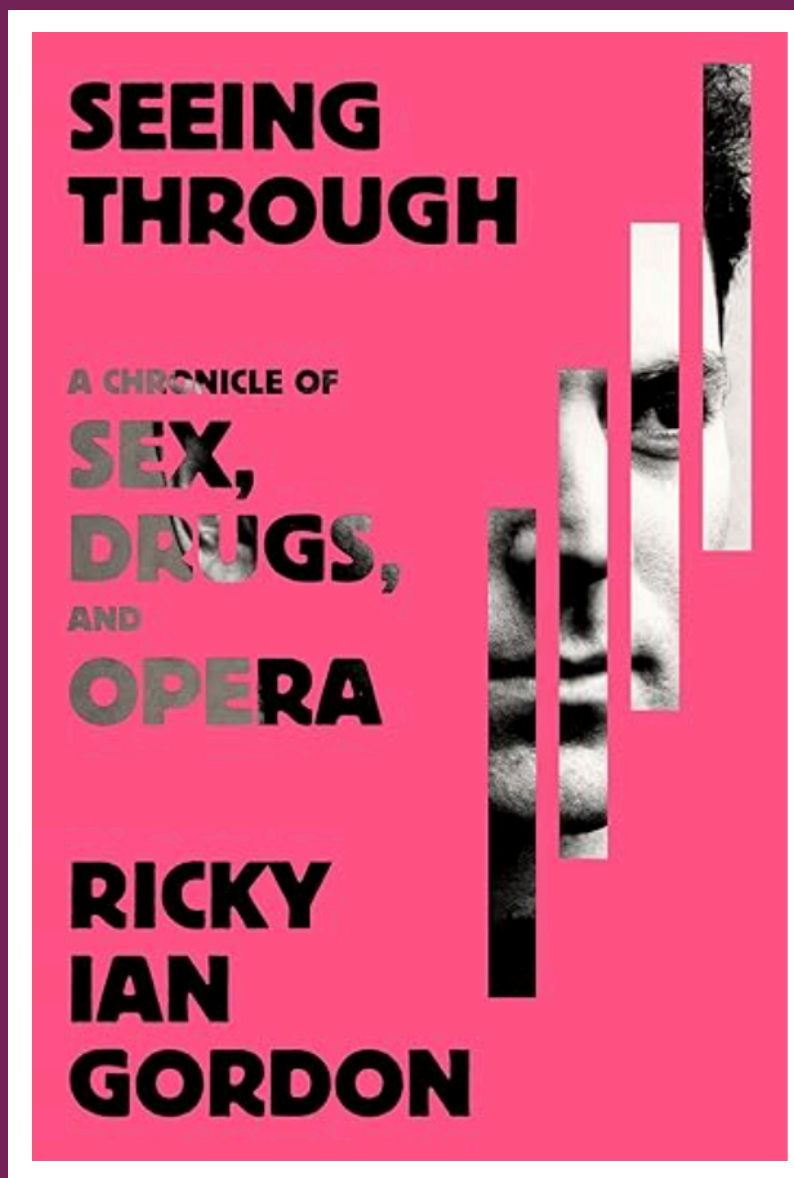
PRESSER

"WITH CANDOR ABOUNDING, RICKY IAN GORDON SINGS THE ENGROSSING SONG OF HIMSELF. WHAT A LOT HE HAS SURVIVED! WHAT A LOT HE HAS SURMOUNTED! I COULD READ HIM FOREVER."

—Benjamin Taylor, author of *Chasing Bright Medusas: A Life of Willa Cather*

"Gordon's book isn't just a memoir; it's a guide. It offers insights and encouragement to anyone involved in creative work, showing that the struggles behind the scenes are often as significant as the final product, whether that product is a human (Gordon) or made for the opera stage... A powerful book full of intricate details about his life, with stories that will break your heart and lift your spirits."

— Chris Ruel, *OperaWire*



"This is a big book, both literally and figuratively, full of big emotions and bigger tragedies, shameful secrets and bodily obsessions as well as the thrill of creativity, the sadness of ordinary life, and all the other moments in-between. By his conclusion, he wonders if sharing his life with the world is worth it. Might it be useful to someone? It is this generosity of spirit that is perhaps this book's greatest virtue."

—June Sawyers, *Booklist*

Published by **Farrar, Strauss and Giroux**

"Composers of opera are compelling storytellers. Ricky Ian Gordon is a master of the art—not only in his songs and operas, but also in this riveting, candid autobiography...It's this directness and honesty that makes his writing so appealing, and it's his sensitivity to human frailties that makes his observations so acute."

—Bob Goldfarb, *Jewish Book Council*

"I have never read a more candid and engrossing memoir than *Seeing Through*. Told in vivid detail, Ricky's story is poignant, entertaining, and ultimately inspirational."

—William C. Carter, author of *Marcel Proust: A Life*

"Honest and complex...The memoir's reflections on music, Gordon's creative process, and anecdotes from the artistic arena are especially captivating."

—Carol J. Binkowski, *Library Journal*

**"I ALSO ADORED THE MESSY,
EVERYTHING-ON-THE-TABLE
"SEX, DRUGS, AND OPERA"
MEMOIR *SEEING THROUGH*, BY
RICKY IAN GORDON, A RARE AND
PROBING LOOK AT THE LIFE OF
A WORKING COMPOSER."**

—Alexandra Jacobs, *The New York Times*

"A superb memoir that reveals the pleasures—but far more, the pains—of the creative life."

—*Kirkus Reviews (Starred Review,
Best Books of the Year 2024)*

"The most effective, unforgettable memoirs are distinguished not by tales of glamor, excess, and familiar names, no matter how eloquently they are told, but by accounts of decency, empathy, and familiar emotions. On page 181 of *Seeing Through*, Ricky Ian Gordon shares, 'I have never known where I fit in.' The reader sees through the pages of this book that this remarkable artist fits in wherever hearts are open to healing."

—Joseph Newsome, *Voix Des Arts*

"The immensely talented Ricky Ian Gordon has written a memoir that is at times hilarious, harrowing, and most importantly insightful into the mind and process of a serious composer of classical and contemporary musical theater."

—James Lapine, author of *Putting It Together: How Stephen Sondheim and I Created "Sunday in the Park with George"*

"...an autobiography that is at once heartbreaking and heartwarming, distressing and inspiring, bone-chilling and at times humorous, Ricky Ian Gordon tells the story of his life as a composer, with all of its immense difficulties and stellar successes...An intimate journey into the roller-coaster life of an outstanding contemporary artist."

—Thomas Bohlert, *The East Hampton Star*



"Out of the various threads of my life, topics I have irrepressibly been drawn to, and in honor and tribute to all the artists that have excited and influenced me, I have tried to create a body of work that might be meaningful and beautiful, that might stand the test of time, and that I could be proud of. The need to connect, to be heard, to be understood, was always the engine. Whether I have succeeded or failed, I don't know, but it has always seemed worth the effort."

-Ricky Ian Gordon



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