

CSUSB Opera Theatre Presents

The AIDS Quilt Songbook

April 11, 2025, 7:00 pm • Palm Desert Campus

Featuring the
CSUSB Opera Theatre Ensemble
And special guests Kevin Blickfeldt and Jawan Jenkins, baritones

Stacey Fraser, Director
Guillermo Aviles-Rodriguez, Guest Director
Alastair Edmonstone, Music Director
Terrill Corletto, Choreographer
Cat Erickson, Costume Design
Paul Holland, Lighting Design
Allie Morones, Stage Manager
Cash Tijerina and Cary Tyler, Technical Directors

CSUSB Opera Theatre Ensemble
Nicholas Flores, baritone
Eduardo Garcia, baritone
David Henry, baritone
Maddox Martinez, baritone
Angelica Ochoa-Garcia, alto
Gabriel Orozco, tenor
Nathan Parsons, baritone
Cassandra Perez, soprano
Christian Quevedo, tenor

**Viewer discretion is advised, as this theatrical presentation contains mature situations/themes.*

Program Note



I first learned about the *AIDS Quilt Songbook* as a young artist at the Tanglewood Music Center in 1994. A baritone, a fellow young artist also chosen to participate in the 8-week Phyllis Curtain Seminar for Singers, excitedly told me that he was counting down the days for his new score to arrive. He planned to sing a selection of the songs on one of our afternoon recitals and would be accompanied by the great teaching artist, pianist, and coach, Dr. Alan Smith. At the time, I didn't understand the significance of the songs or the collection. AIDS was a concern for all of us in the early-mid 90s, but it was still portrayed in the media as a disease primarily affecting gay men. We were, of course, all encouraged to practice safe sex, no matter what our sexual preferences were, there was indeed a fear, for all of us, especially those of us living in big cities like Toronto (in my case), San Francisco, Chicago, and New York, to name just a few. But a whole collection of songs talking about AIDS? That seemed a bit outrageous to me as a young person; there was still significant shame and confusion surrounding the cause of the disease and who was affected by it.

It turns out that my own cousin was greatly affected by it, although he never contracted the virus himself, he sadly lost many friends including his closest friend, Olympic figure skater Rob McCall, to AIDS-related brain cancer. This has stuck with me over the decades, and I remember feeling so greatly relieved when drugs finally became available that would allow a person to survive. Not all survived, so many died, and many continue to be affected by the virus.

The original *AIDS Quilt Songbook* was commissioned by HIV-infected baritone William Parker, who wanted to raise money and bring awareness to the disease. He felt that the classical community was not doing enough, and this prompted him to take on the enormous task of engaging prominent composers and poets to write music and text that would directly address the horrors of the disease. The collection was intended to be a companion project to the AIDS Memorial Quilt organized by the NAMES Project Foundation. Just as a new square continued to be added to the quilt itself, Parker hoped that new songs would continue to be added to the songbook.

There were 18 songs commissioned by Parker, songs written by famous contemporary classical composers including William Bolcom, Ned Rorem, Chris DeBlasio, Lee Hoiby, Ricky Ian Gordon, and John Musto. 17 of the original 18 songs were performed in Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center in 1992 and the entire collection was later published by Boosey and Hawkes. A subsequent recording was released in 1993. Parker died later the same year of AIDS-related complications at the age of 49.

Tonight we present newly composed additions to the songbook, several of which premiered on the 25th Anniversary Concert at National Sawdust in Brooklyn, NY on December 3rd, 2017 that was curated by pianist/composers Gordon Beeferman and Thomas Bagwell. We have also retained a few songs from the original songbook including *Fury*, *Heartbeats*, *80's Miracle Diet*, *AIDS Anxiety* and *Walt Whitman in 1989* as well as four of the original poems.

It has been my great pleasure to have been directly in contact with several of the composers whose works we feature tonight, including Gordon Beeferman, Herschel Garfein, Eric Reda, Michael Djupstrom, Sam Davis, Richard Pearson Thomas and Rachel Peters. I am overwhelmed by their generosity in sharing these songs with us as well as their incredible support for our original staging. We are also delighted to feature the world premiere of one of the newest *AIDS Quilt Songbook* additions, *Lemons* by UCR graduate student Rory Fewer.

We hope these songs will touch you as much as they have touched us in our weeks of preparation for this performance. We are honored and humbled to present this glorious songbook to you.

Stacey Fraser

Program

<i>Fury</i> (1993).....	text by Susan Snively music by Donald Wheelock
<i>In Bed Together</i> (2013).....	text by Kenny Fries music by Michael Djupstrom
<i>You Bring Out the Doctor in Me</i> (2013).....	text by Rafael Campo music by Andrea Clearfield
<i>You and Your Big Mouth</i> (2017).....	text by Mark Campbell music by Kevin Puts
<i>For Richard</i> (1989).....	poem by Eve Ensler <i>Poets for Life</i>
<i>Heartbeats</i> (1992)	text by Melvin Dixon music by John Musto
<i>The 80's Miracle Diet</i> (1993).....	text by Melvin Dixon music by David Krakauer
<i>The Second Law</i> (1992)	poem by Stephen Sandy from <i>Thanksgiving Over Water</i>
<i>Atripa</i> (2017).....	text and music by Eric Reda arranged by Thomas Bagwell
<i>Ode to and NYC Condom</i> (2014).....	text by Charlotte Jackson music by Gordon Beeferman
<i>*No Giggly Time</i> (2012)	text and music by Herschel Garfein

Author's Note

In many countries, heterosexual intercourse is the main mode of HIV transmission and HIV/AIDS infections have reached epidemic levels among prostitutes and other sex workers. Epidemiologists refer to the clients of sex workers as a "bridge" population: one that transmits the disease from a high-risk group to the general population. Therefore, preventing HIV infections among those involved in the sex trade has become a cornerstone of many countries' AIDS policies.

Despite their greatly elevated risk of incurring the infection, sex workers are often poorly informed about the disease and reluctant to visit health facilities, due to the illegal and stigmatized nature of their work. Still, numerous studies have shown that they are one of the groups most likely to respond to effective prevention campaigns.

In response, a number of grass-roots organization formed by sex workers themselves have sprung up around the world to lead outreach, prevention and care programs targeted specifically at their peers. These organizations send current and former sex workers (often HIV positive themselves) into towns and urban centers to distribute condoms, discuss safe-sex practices and promote testing among active sex workers. Organizations such as Aboya in Senegal, SWOP in Kenya, Naripokkho in Bangladesh, Sonagachi and Avahan in India have had striking successes in reducing the rates of new infections among sex workers through the use of peer education.

No Giggly Time imagines one such moment of peer education.

Unfortunately, under a United States policy instituted in 2003, no program run by sex workers for their peers was eligible for U.S. government support. U.S. policy was to deny overseas aid to any HIV/AIDS programs that did not "explicitly oppose" prostitution.

In 2005, the National AIDS Council of Brazil declined \$40 million in aid from the U.S. government, because of a stipulation that no funds could be spent on treating or educating prostitutes.

Under the Obama administration, in 2011, the anti-sex worker policy was reversed by a Federal appeals court.

Significant progress was made when US global policy changed to strongly support safe-sex education and the distribution of condoms around the world. However, in 2017, the Trump administration's expansion of the anti-abortion "global gag rule" has been a severe setback, de-funding all overseas medical and social institutions that even mention abortion as an option for women. The impact on HIV/AIDS prevention will be devastating, among sex workers and all global populations.

More than ever, brave women like the protagonist of *No Giggly Time* will need to step forward and be a force for enlightenment and change.

For more information, visit:

www.avert.org www.unaids.org www.gatesfoundation.org www.genderhealth.org/

15-minute intermission

AIDS Anxiety (1993)text and music by
Richard Pearson Thomas

Lemons (2025)text and music by Rory Fewer
*world premiere

Across the Sea (1991)text and music by Kevin Oldham
from the musical *Titanic*

What lips my lips have kissed (1920)text by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Why I'm Here (2017)text and music by
Michael R. Jackson

Her Final Show (2012)text by Rafael Campo
music by Drew Hemenger

A Dream of Nightingales (1992)by David Bergman

Piccolo Mondo (2017)text by Rachel Peters
music by Sam Davis

The Enticing Lane (1992)text by Christopher Hewitt

Walt Whitman in 1989 (1990)text by Perry Brass
music by Chris DeBlasio

Tearing St. Vincent's Down (2014)text and music by Rachel J. Peters

Ordinary (2013)text by Herschel Garfein
music by Fred Hersch

Guest Artist Bios

Kevin Blickfeldt

On the concert stage, Kevin has given recitals in Buenos Aires and Salto, Argentina, and made his recital debut with the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival in 2017. Kevin portrayed Fiorello in Pacific Opera Project's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and collaborated on the original cast recording of *Windy City*, released on the Operetta Archives Foundation label. Kevin made his debut with the Los Angeles Opera in 2013 under the baton of Music Director James Conlon in performances of *Prodigal Son*. Additional credits include El General in Xavier Rodríguez's *La Curandera*, and Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* at the Oper im Park Festival in Austria. Kevin is a founding member of VOX, an operatic quartet who first premiered on TV's *America's Got Talent*. Since the show first aired, "opera's boy band" has garnered over 4 million YouTube views and has presented performances across the United States and Canada. Dr. Blickfeldt is a graduate of The University of Utah, Florida State University, and the USC Thornton School of Music. In 2011, he was the recipient of the Citadelle Award from the Alltech Voice Competition in Lexington, Kentucky. He is Director of Vocal Studies at El Camino College.

Jawan Jenkins

Baritone and native of New York City. Jawan received his training early as a member of The Boys Choir of Harlem. Premiered roles include Asku in *Stomping Grounds* with The Glimmerglass Festival, Mr. Delgado in Jake Heggie's *It's A Wonderful Life*, and Ricky Ian Gordon's *A Coffin in Egypt*, both with Houston Grand Opera. Roles with the Butler Opera Center include; Ford in *Falstaff*, Tarquinius in *The Rape of Lucretia*, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Maquis de la Force in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Charlie in *Three Decembers* and, Vater in *Hänsel und Gretel*. With Houston Grand Opera, Opera to Go, he premiered three roles by Mary Carol Warwick. As a 2018 and 2019 Young Artist with The Glimmerglass Festival, he was seen in *West Side Story*, *Silent Night*, *Show Boat*, *Porgy & Bess*, *Blue*, and *The Ghost of Versailles*. Jawan has had recent debuts with Vegas City Opera as Marcello in *La BoDead*, as Action in *West Side Story* with Opera San José, Asku in *Stomping Grounds* at Seattle Opera for a workshop performance, and a guest soloist with Albany Symphony Orchestra and Georgia Symphony Orchestra. He has also appeared in *Champion* at Lyric Opera Chicago.

Jawan obtained his Bachelor's from Prairie View A&M University, Master's in Opera Performance and Doctorate of Musical Arts in Voice Performance and Vocal Pedagogy from The University of Texas at Austin. He currently serves as Assistant Professor of Voice at University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

THE CSUSB OPERA THEATRE is an auditioned ensemble that stages a major opera production on campus every year. The innovative, modern, and zany adaptations of both standard operatic repertoire and new operatic works that have been produced by the CSUSB Opera Theatre have led to sold-out performances, as well as rave reviews across the Inland Empire community. Past productions include Offenbach's *Monsieur Choufleuri*, Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, Mozart's *Impresario* and *Così fan*

Tutte, *Maria de Buenos Aires* by Astor Piazzolla, *Monkey See Monkey Do*, *Tango*, Concert Suite from *Frida*, *La Curandera* by Robert Xavier Rodriguez and their acclaimed Quentin Tarantino-inspired production of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. CSUSB Opera Theatre produced the first abridged university production of Philip Glass' *Einstein on the Beach* featuring an all-Hispanic cast. Recent productions include a film adaptation of Missy Mazzoli's *Song from the Uproar*, an original staging of John Adams' *I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky* and *Book of Longing* by Leonard Cohen and Philip Glass. Collaborators of the CSUSB Opera Theatre have included dancer/choreographer Faith Jensen-Ismay of the critically acclaimed San Diego-based dance company Mojalet Dance Collective, Brightwork newmusic, GRAMMY-winning pianist Nadia Shpachenko, the lotusflower new music project, Southern California-based conductors John Mario, Anthony Parnter and Kosta Popovich, Emmy-winning designer Jacqueline Saint-Anne as well as several CSUSB faculty and alumni. The CSUSB Opera Theatre is a proud seven-time recipient of the City of San Bernardino Fine Arts Commission grant and the National Endowment for the Arts.



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Broadway Cares Equity Fights AIDS

For song texts and additional notes, please scan on the QR code >





AIDS Quilt Songbook, Ricky Ian Gordon and Ned Rorem



Four Baritones from the original AIDS Quilt Songbook at Lincoln Center, 1992; William Sharp, Kurt Ollman, Sanford Sylvan, William Parker



Philip Caggiano, original producer of 1992 AIDS Quilt Songbook at Lincoln Center pictured here with Stacey Fraser, New York City, April 2025



Alvin Ailey Exhibit, The Whitney Museum of American Art

