

WORKING IN CONCERT's SEPTEMBER 2024 double bill



The Chicago Literary Hall of Fame presents SPOON RIVER HOUSE FESTIVAL

September 13-15, 20-22

A unique musical performance of Masters'
iconic work in his Hyde Park Home
with major support by the Illinois Arts Council Creative Catalyst

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Reimagining Cabaret: Journey through the Genres



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Wednesday, September 18, 7 pm
Logan Center for the Arts Theater
University of Chicago 915 E 60th St

Logan Center Box office:
bit.ly/Reimagine-cabaret
Tickets from \$20 to \$55

PRODUCER's NOTES for the SPOON RIVER HOUSE FESTIVAL — **Claudia Hommel**

Welcome to the home of our good friends Ruth Fuerst and Jim Block. I've been privileged to organize several SongShop concerts next to their grand piano and fireplace. When I learned that theirs was once home to renowned author Edgar Lee Masters, I raised the idea of putting together a salon concert on the theme of his *Spoon River Anthology*. Since the first seed was planted, our concerts and cabaret shows evolved into an organization called Working In Concert. Because we embrace classical song, popular music, story-telling, all that can be shared in an intimate setting like this one, the theme grew to include staged readings and classical song. Coincidences often inspire art so we are here today, celebrating friendship, truth-telling, song and your good company.

SPOON RIVER CHARACTERS (September 13 & 20)

DIRECTOR's NOTES — **Iris Lieberman**

I've always been intrigued by the stories in Spoon River Anthology. Their universality resonates as vividly today as it did in 1915 when it was first published. Rather than think of them as epitaphs, I feel they are alive with life's joy and struggles. A road map for humanity, then and now. I started to develop a staged version of Spoon River Anthology in 2019. I collaborated with John S Green who had performed and written original songs for a production in the 1970s. I love his songs and we were able to incorporate some of them into the script along with traditional music. I chose "stories that fit together" to engage the audience, draw them into Spoon River and let them experience all the good and bad in small town life.

SPOON RIVER CLASSICAL (September 14 and 21)

DIRECTOR's NOTES — **Carl Ratner**

Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* is one of the most striking and significant works of American literature. It has that combination of a straightforward, easily accessible surface with miles of depth and subtlety beneath that characterizes many of the world's greatest artworks. I think immediately of the music of Mozart, the paintings of Vermeer, the ballet *Giselle*. But more than those, it is quintessentially a product of its place and time. It is as American as apple pie—not just any apple pie—but Aunt Ella's apple pie with that secret poignant ingredient she will go to her grave without ever revealing. Complementing this seminal work in its spectrum of simplicity and complexity is the cycle of ten songs created by recently deceased Chicago composer Lita Grier. In some

cases the songs seem so iconic and comprehensible that the listener would never suspect how fiendishly difficult they are. They feature huge ranges, polytonality, and minute rhythmic variations that challenge any singer. I am so honored to stand next to my extraordinary singing colleagues on this program, under the brilliant musical leadership of Dana Brown.

To provide some context of the literary work, I added a narration presented by Paul Geiger. To represent with just a few pieces the range and depth of the insistently American art song. I believe that these additional eight songs taken together accomplish in an entirely different way a similar feat to the slender volume of poems: presenting a big picture of a culture through little multi-colored slivers of glass.

SPOON RIVER CABARET (September 15 and 22)

DIRECTOR's NOTES — **Jonathan Lewis**

As a lifelong musical theater performer, I have always appreciated that every song in a musical is a character piece. Edgar Lee Masters' Spoon River Anthology is a collection of free-verse poems that also serve as character pieces about the residents of a small rural town. So, pairing musical theater songs with Spoon River characters seemed like a perfect match. I first read his masterpiece in college and was struck by the conciseness of Masters' language, the expediency with which he crafted an entire life experience for each one of his 240-plus characters. Rereading the Anthology recently, I looked at every single character and looked for a song that would highlight and accent the poem by bringing that character to musical life.

The songs I have chosen for this program may be less well-known to most people, but they are wonderful works from such great Broadway songwriters as Bock & Harnick, Kander & Ebb, Lerner & Loewe, Harold Arlen, Victor Herbert, Jerome Kern, Andrew Lippa, Frank Loesser, Johnny Mercer, Roger Miller, and Kurt Weill. In total, we have 21 songs creating portraits for 24 of Masters' characters. I wanted to balance male and female characters, uptempo and ballads, as well as offer a range of emotional tones from light-hearted to serious. I avoided songs that have become "standards," because many are closely associated with a particular famous singer, and risk taking us out of the world of Spoon River. In collaboration with our musical director and my fellow seven singers, we have created our own original musical about life in the small town of Spoon River.

Spoon River CHARACTERS playlist

IRIS LIEBERMAN, Curator and Director

JOHN S. GREEN, Music Director

PERFORMERS: Gerald H. Bailey, Mary Bonnett, Sharon Carlson, John S. Green, Gary Houston,
Adjora Stevens, Joanie Winter

STAGE MANAGER, Jonathan Lewis

Illinois Song — All (song by Charles H. Chamberlain & Archibald Johnson)

Hare Drummer — Sharon Carlson

Mrs. Williams — Mary Bonnett

Dora Williams — Joanie Winter

Walter Simmons — Gerald H. Bailey

Trainer, the Druggist — Adjora Stevens

Benjamin Pantier — Gary Houston

Mrs. Benjamin Pantier — Mary Bonnett

Song: Drunk as I Could Be — John S. Green & Sharon Carlson (arranged by Charles Aidman &
Naomi Caryl Hirshhorn)

Emily Sparks — Joanie Winter

Reuben Pantier — Gary Houston

Song: Where is My Boy? — Joanie Winter (by Robert Lowry)

Fiddler Jones — John S. Green

Song: Fiddler's Song — John S. Green (by John S. Green)

Speaker — Gerald H. Bailey

Hamilton Greene — Gary Houston

Elsa Wertman — Mary Bonnett

Lucius Atherton — John S. Green

Song: Morose — John S. Green (by John S. Green)

Emily and William — Joanie Winter & Gerald H. Bailey

Song: The Water is Wide — Joanie Winter & Gerald H. Bailey (traditional Scottish folk song)

Harry Willmans — Gary Houston

Roscoe Purkapile — Gerald H. Bailey

Mrs. Purkapile — Sharon Carlson

Shack Dye — Adjora Stevens

Song: Freedom — Adjora Stevens (by John S. Green)

Hannah Armstrong — Sharon Carlson

Song: There's a River — John S. Green (by John S. Green)

Mrs. Charles Bliss — Mary Bonnett

Village Atheist — Adjora Stevens

Lois Spears — Joanie Winter

Daisy Fraiser — Mary Bonnett

Aner Clute — Sharon Carlson

Minerva Jones — Joanie Winter

Dr. Meyers — Gerald H. Bailey

Mrs. Meyers — Sharon Carlson

Willie Metcalf — John S. Green

Petit, the Poet — Adjora Stevens

Final Speech — All

Song: There's a River (reprise) — ALL

Spoon River CLASSICAL playlist

CARL RATNER Curator and Director
DANA BROWN, Pianist and Music Director
MICHELLE AREYZAGA, soprano
MARISSA HOWARD, soprano
SETH AARON JOHNSON, tenor
CARL RATNER, baritone
PAUL GEIGER, narrator as Edgar Lee Masters
Script by Carl Ratner and Kerri Burkhardt

Part I: Spoon River Characters singing Americana Art Songs

1. Amelia Garrick (Marissa Howard)
“My Sister’s New Red Hat” — Words and music by Ricky Ian Gordon
2. Mary McNeely (Marissa Howard)
“Apple Orchard” — Music by Lori Laitman, lyrics by Dana Gioia
3. William from “William and Emily” (Seth Aaron Johnson)
“What Shall We Remember” — Words and music by Ricky Ian Gordon
4. Joseph Dixon (Seth Aaron Johnson)
“A Green Lowland of Pianos”
Music by Samuel Barber — Set to a poem by Jerzy Harsymowicz, translated by Czeslaw Milosz
5. Faith Matheny (Michelle Areyzaga)
“I Never Saw a Moor” — Words and music by Richard Pearson Thomas
6. Louise Smith (Michelle Areyzaga)
“It Doesn’t Matter” — Words and music by Richard Pearson Thomas
7. Homer Clapp (Carl Ratner)
“In the Alley” — Words and music by Charles Ives
8. Edmund Pike (Carl Ratner)
“Long Time Ago” — Music by Aaron Copland (traditional American lyrics)

Part II: Songs from Spoon River by LITA GRIER

1. The Hill, Part I (Seth Aaron Johnson)
2. Sarah Brown (Michelle Areyzaga)
3. Zenas Witt (Carl Ratner)
4. Lucinda Matlock (Marissa Howard)
5. Anne Rutledge (Quartet)
6. Petit the Poet (Seth Aaron Johnson)
7. Margaret Fuller Slack (Michelle Areyzaga)
8. Fiddler Jones (Carl Ratner)
9. Rita Matlock Gruenberg (Marissa Howard)
10. The Hill, Part II (Quartet)

Spoon River CABARET playlist

JONATHAN LEWIS, curator, scriptwriter and director

HOWIE PFEIFER, pianist, arranger, music director

SINGERS: Ruth Fuerst, Claudia Hommel, Daniel Johnson, Jonathan Lewis, Jace McCloy, Barbara Smith, David Stephens, Joanie Winter

- 1 Daniel Johnson, Ruth Fuerst, David Stephens, Joanie Winter as Ensemble - "The Folks Who Live on the Hill" (Jerome Kern / Oscar Hammerstein II)
- 2 Daniel Johnson as Russell Kincaid - "Another Autumn" (Frederick Loewe / Alan Jay Lerner)
- 3 Barbara Smith as Dorcas Gustine - "I Don't Care" (Harry O. Sutton / Jean Lenox)
- 4 Claudia Hommel as Aner Clute - "Lazy Afternoon" (Jerome Moross / John LaTouche)
- 5 Jace McCloy as Ezra Bartlett - "The Picture of Happiness" (Jerry Bock / Sheldon Harnick)
- 6 Claudia Hommel, Barbara Smith, Joanie Winter as Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Purkapile, Mrs. Meyers - "You Oughta Be Here with Me" (Roger Miller)
- 7 David Stephens as William Goode - "Any Place I Hang My Hat Is Home" (Harold Arlen / Johnny Mercer)
- 8 Joanie Winter as Jennie M'Grew - "Ill Wind" (Harold Arlen / Ted Koehler)
- 9 Ruth Fuerst as Ida Frickey - "I'll Show Him" (Albert Hague / Arnold B. Horwitt)
- 10 Jonathan Lewis as Imanuel Ehrenhardt - "The World is Coming to a Start" (Gary Geld / Peter Udell)
- 11 Ruth Fuerst as Nancy Knapp, David Stephens as Silas Dement - "Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight" (Theo A. Metz / Joe Hayden)
- 12 Claudia Hommel as Flossie Cabanis - "I Want to Be An Actor Lady" (Harry Von Tilzer / Vincent Bryan)
- 13 Jace McCloy as Jeremy Carlisle - "Walking Among My Yesterdays" (John Kander / Fred Ebb)
- 14 Daniel Johnson as Henry C. Calhoun - "I Want What I Want When I Want It" (Victor Herbert / Henry Blossom)
- 15 Ruth Fuerst as Lydia Humphrey - "The Music of Home" (Frank Loesser)
- 16 Daniel Johnson, Jonathan Lewis, Jace McCloy as Mayor A.D. Blood, Enoch Dunlap, John Church - "Politics and Poker" (Jerry Bock / Sheldon Harnick)
- 17 Joanie Winter as Mrs. Charles Bliss - "It's Delightful to Be Married" (Vincent Scotto / Henri Christine & Anna Held)
- 18 Jonathan Lewis as Jonathan Houghton - "The Only Home I Know" (Gary Geld / Peter Udell)
- 19 Barbara Smith as Lucinda Matlock - "Green Up Time" (Kurt Weill / Alan Jay Lerner)
- 20 David Stephens as Elijah Browning - "Lost in the Stars" (Kurt Weill / Maxwell Anderson)
- 21 Claudia Hommel, Jonathan Lewis, Jace McCloy, Barbara Smith as Ensemble - "How It Ends" (Andrew Lippa)

SPOON RIVER HOUSE FESTIVAL PERFORMERS

Soprano **Michelle Areyzaga** headlines our vocal quartet. She is internationally acclaimed, both for the beauty of her voice and the sincerity and insightfulness of her singing. Among the musical organizations with which she has performed are the Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Isreal Philharmonic, New York City Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, and the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra. Michelle toured *Bernstein on Broadway* for six years together with Leonard Bernstein's daughter, Jamie. Ms. Areyzaga was named Musical Ambassador of the Ravinia Festival's Bernstein at 100 Centennial Celebration.

Gerald H Bailey has been involved in over 200 productions as actor, director, musical director, and composer at several professional Midwest Theatres. He has acted with Jane Powell in *Brigadoon*, Leonard Nimoy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and Steve McNaughton in *Pump Boys and Dinettes*. Mr. Bailey is thrilled to be a part of the amazing cast in the home where Spoon River Anthology was written. He is a proud member of Actors' Equity.

Mary Bonnett is the Producing Artistic Director for Her Story Theater. She is an award winning director and performer. Her most recent production of *MIA Where Have All The Young Girls Gone?* both written and directed by Mary, was received with glowing reviews from critics and audiences alike. Her acting includes work for SAG-AFTRA Radio Players, Ubiquitous Theater and Writer's Bloc Festival. Mary's a proud member of SAG-AFTRA and Dramatist Guild.

American pianist **Dana Brown** is highly regarded for his collaborative and solo performances. He and soprano Michelle Areyzaga recently received rave reviews for their CD *Were I With Thee*. A Spotify artist, his other CDs include *Haydn Songs* with tenor Stephen C. Edwards and *Human to Human* with Fourth Coast Ensemble. He is an Associate Professor of Opera and Vocal Coaching at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University. danabrownmusic.com

Sharon Carlson recently retired as Professor of Musical Theater Voice at Columbia College Chicago. She has played major roles in Musical Theater productions nationally for 40 years, as well as serving as Talent Director for Disney's *Out Of The Box*. Writer and performer for *Hot Flashes* and *A.D.D. and Thriving*; with her husband Richard and composer Patricia Morehead she is co-librettist and book writer

of the opera, *Black Hawk Speaks*. Keep singing!

Ruth Fuerst, psychotherapist by day, Ruth joined SongShop in 2012 to dispense wisdom by night. She created with Carol Weston and Arlene Armstrong, *Life is...* and *Thank You for the Music* at Davenport's and senior centers. She has appeared for Rotary International Cabarets and Songshop at the Jazz Showcase, *Cyrano's*, etc. Music directed by Bob Moreen, her first solo show was *Wake Up and Dream*, followed by *The Carousel of Time*, a 50th anniversary love song. She brought *You Gotta Be Kidding*, an unabashedly progressively partisan show, to Davenport's in 2017.

Paul Geiger, narrator for Spoon River Classical. Trained as a bass-baritone, he has performed throughout the United States. He toured the U.K. with Chamber Opera Chicago's *Persuasion* as Admiral Croft. Bellissima Opera audiences remember him as Germont in *La Traviata* and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, for which he also supplied moving narration. Most recently, he appeared in the premiere of *Outside the Ring* as both the German and New York sports announcers. Paul also serves as Working in Concert's master carpenter.

John S. Green is a Chicago-based writer, actor, and musician. His play *The Liquid Moon* won Chicago's Jeff and After Dark awards for Best New Work and was nominated for a Pulitzer. His plays *Doubting Thomas*, *Twilight Serenade* (Dramatic Publishing), *The (W)hole Thing*, *Hamburger Twins*, *Mr. Happy*, *Choke Chain*, and others have been produced in theaters across America and in France. As a poet and lyricist, his collection *Ordinary Light* was published by Xlibris Publishing. As a fiction writer, his story "The Me Zone" won the Guild Literary Complex Leon Forrest Prose Award and was published by *Chicago Quarterly Review*. He won a Jeff Award for best actor playing George in *Of Mice and Men*. John is still acting, singing and playing his guitar. In his spare time he tries to get a good night's sleep.

Claudia Hommel. Born in Paris, raised in Detroit, and seasoned in New York, Claudia moved to Chicago to "do the work." She specializes in international classical and theatre songs and chanson. Projects include Vocal Canvas concerts for museums and arts centers; the crossover *Jazz Fauré Project*; master classes in song interpretation; and French-based school

programs. Member of the actors' unions and on faculty at the DePaul School of Music Community Music Division. Under the Maison Clobert label, she has recorded five CDs and the *Vocal Canvas* film. She is proud to have founded the Chicago Cabaret Professionals, SongShop, and the Chicago Paris Cabaret Connexion with so many like-minded performers. She serves as Executive Director of Working in Concert. cabaret-paree.com

Gary Houston has been an actor, director and arts journalist in Chicago since the early 1970s when he began performing at the Kingston Mines Theatre Company and was an editor and reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times. He demonstrated an interest in literary figures portraying William Blake, Ring Lardner and H.L. Mencken for Writers Theatre, Leroy "Buddy" McHugh for Goodman Theatre and Nelson Algren for Live Bait Theatre. Recently he appeared in Goodman's production of *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*.

A Colorado native, soprano **Marissa Howard** has been heralded for her "silvery coloratura voice" and comedic interpretation. She received her master's at the University of Memphis where she made her professional debut with Opera Memphis as Cousin in *Madama Butterfly*. This past year she joined Mousaverse Opera in their productions of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*, was a featured artist with Cecilia Opera in the crossover cabaret concert series, was a recording artist with GIA Productions, MIOpera's production of *The Pirates of Penzance*, and most recently Evanston Chamber Opera's production of *Chalet*.

Daniel Johnson trained professionally at ACT in San Francisco, and worked as an actor on the West Coast and on tour before a two-decade stint based in NYC. His musical roles include Franklin in *1776*, Mooney in *Anything Goes*, and Charles in *Pippin*. He toured nationally with John Davidson in *The Music Man* and appeared off-Broadway as the comic lead in the 1988 revival of Porter's *Leave It to Me*. Dan is known locally for his cabaret act, *Wilde & Woolley*. Dan recently appeared in *Let's Misbehave*, a Cole Porter Celebration at Rhapsody Theater for Chicago Cabaret Professionals' Musical Mondays. Hailed as "a producer's dream hire", tenor **Seth Johnson** hails from small-town Illinois,

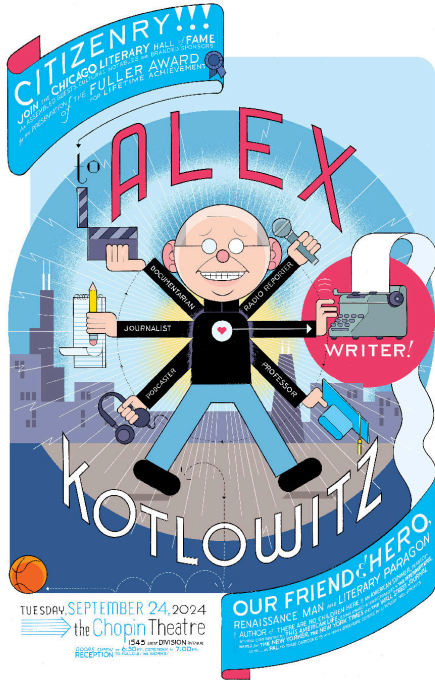
After completing his bachelor's degree at Bradley University, he moved to Ohio to work with Toledo Opera, Detroit Opera, Ohio Light Opera, Great Lakes Light Opera, South Bend Lyric Opera, Toledo Symphony Orchestra, and (most recently) Dearborn Symphony. Johnson's many roles include Vanderdendur in *Candide*, Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, L'amante in *Amelia al ballo*, Archibald Grosvenor in *Patience*, Gabriel von Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, Camille in *The Merry Widow*, tenor soloist in *Carmina Burana*, and Odysseus in the world premiere of *Our American Odyssey* at South Bend Lyric Opera.

Jonathan Lewis has spent most of his life working in the arts. He began at age 7 playing a milk bottle in a 2nd grade Healthy Foods play. He made his musical theater debut at age 10, became a professional folk dancer at age 13, and got his first orchestra job as a flutist at age 15. Working professionally for more than 30 years, he appeared in 110 productions, mostly musicals but a few operas and ballets as well. His theatrical career's ignominious low-points included surviving a 400-lb. bar falling on his head in the middle of a dance number; and playing Barney the Beaver in a TV commercial for chainsaws. He has worked as actor, singer, dancer, print model, musician, stage manager, dance captain, director, choreographer, and film critic. He is the author of two books, most recently his novel *Celestial Navigation*.

Iris Lieberman is a Chicago based actress, director and writer. Her work has been seen on stage, film, television and commercials. She is a Joseph Jefferson Award winner and four-time nominee. She recently appeared in *Sunday in the Park with George* for Porchlight Music Theatre at the Studebaker Theatre. She co-wrote and collaborated on *Grace*, a short film which has been accepted at 5 Festivals and won an award for best editing.

Jace McCloy is a baritone singer-songwriter from Lansing, Michigan. Since graduating with a BS in Music from Central Michigan University he has performed all around Michigan, as well as Chicago, New York, Indiana, and Italy. Theatrical highlights include Reverend Shaw in *Footloose*, Judge Turpin in *Sweeney Todd*, Cogsworth in *Beauty and the Beast*, Herr Schultz in *Cabaret*, and Don Pedro in *Beatrice & Benedict*. Jace released his debut pop album, *Development* in 2023 on Apple Music, Spotify, and more. Jace has made a name f

The Chicago Literary Hall of Fame's mission is to honor and preserve Chicago's great literary heritage.



Our next event of September 24 is sold out, but livestream registration is open to honor Alex Kotlowitz's lifetime achievement at the Fuller Award Ceremony.

Learn more about the Literary Hall of Fame, its past inductees (including Edgar Lee Masters, of course) and its many educational programs, exhibits, and Chicago Literary Map and Tours.

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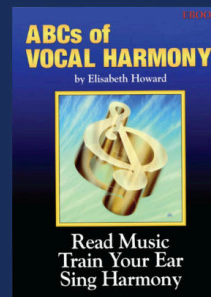
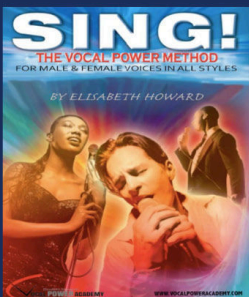
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Singer, Pianist, Vocal Coach, Composer

SPOON RIVER PERFORMERS, continued

or himself in cabaret, debuting in *Passing the Torch* in 2022 and appearing in *Red Hour* and *100 Years of Disney* in 2023. Jace won the Denise Tomasello scholarship at the 2023 Chicago Cabaret Professionals Emerging Artists showcase. His first solo show, *Acceptance*, debuted in July 2024 to great success. Jace has the immense pleasure of appearing in Spoon River, a show that reminds him of home.

Howie Pfeifer has worked extensively as pianist, composer, arranger and musical director for 30 years in the fields of television commercials, feature films, variety shows, T.V. series and record albums in Los Angeles and Chicago, with Patti LaBelle, Mel Torme, Take 6, Johnny Frigo, Aretha Franklin, Johnny Cash, Karen Carpenter, The Lennon Sisters, The Chipmunks, Jim Brickman, B.B. King, Marie Osmond, and Buster Poindexter.

In Los Angeles, Howie worked on over 1000 commercials (as pianist/composer/music director) for major national clients. He arranged, produced music and performed as the singing voice of Alvin for more than 150 songs for *The Chipmunks* TV series in the 80s.

Howard has regularly played keyboards in the orchestra pit for Broadway musicals in Chicago such as *Hamilton*, *Beautiful*, *West Side Story*, *Billy Elliot*, and *Dirty Dancing*. He is sought after as a pianist/music director for Chicago Cabaret Professionals, SongShop Live, and the Cabaret Connexion events and workshops. howard@pfeifermusic.com

Carl Ratner, baritone and curator, has performed the title roles of *Falstaff* and *Gianni Schicchi* and leading roles in *The Magic Flute*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *The Crucible*, among others. Well known for recitals and concert work, he has sung in 14 languages in 10 states and 6 European countries. He began his career assisting stage directors at the world's major opera houses: Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera, Munich Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and San Francisco Opera. He received a Fulbright grant to sing, direct, and teach at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory in Russia. He served as Artistic Director of Chicago Opera Theater and Chamber Opera Chicago, and is Professor Emeritus of Opera and Voice at Western Michigan University. He

serves as Associate Artistic Director of Bellissima Opera, and has performed or directed its productions of *On Call: Covid-19*, *Future Perfect*, *Outside the Ring*, and *Speed Dating Tonight!* He is now president of its umbrella organization Working In Concert.

Barbara Smith's repertoire includes jazz, blues, folk music and cabaret. She has performed at Davenport's, Underground Wonder Bar, Rosa's Lounge, Chief O'Neill's and the Cliff Dwellers Club, and was the winner of the 2018 Skokie Idol Contest. She participated in the Singers Jazz Workshops in 2014 and 2015 in Paris; participated in the first Chicago Paris Cabaret Connexion in 2017, and has been an active volunteer organizer of the Cabaret Connexion and Working In Concert ever since. She is one third of the popular Swingin' Sisters.

Adjora Faith Stevens has performed all over the Chicagoland area mostly in musicals. She also performed in several national commercials and industrials. She toured internationally with *Ain't Misbehavin'* in 1979 and then did 3 Midwest productions of the show 10 years later. Her hiatus from the stage began a 25-year teaching career with elementary students. A retired CPS teacher now, she teaches Line Dance & Chair Exercise to adults.

David Stephens After 35 years of entertaining as a magician and circus clown in the Metro NYC area, David moved to Chicagoland 5 years ago and, under the influence of his spouse Dan Johnson, is transitioning to the art of singing. A frequent participant in Songshop, his musical influences lean towards jazz, pop and R&B with a touch of Broadway. He has performed at showcases and open mics around Chicagoland. In 2016 he debuted in CCP's *Strut Your Stuff* showcase and premiered his first solo show *The Times of My Life* at Davenport's.

Joanie Winter has 50+ years as a professional performer which includes almost every aspect of the entertainment industry. Among the many leading roles she performed across the county, a highlight was covering the role Eva in the Hal Prince national tour of *Evita*. Joanie has been a member of Chicago Cabaret Professionals since 2005, singing at many of Chicago's venues. Currently: Perennial Theatre Chicago, SAG-AFTRA Radio Players, and readings with Chicago Writers' Bloc. Joanie is thrilled to participate in this once in a lifetime event, *The Spoon River House Festival*, both as an actor and singer.

***Reimagining Cabaret:
Journey through the genres
September 18, 2024***

at the Logan Center for the Arts

MUSIC DIRECTOR/PIANIST Theodis Rodgers, Jr.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER Lynn Colbert-Jones

EMCEE/VOCALIST Margaret Murphy Webb

BASSIST Ron Hall

DRUMMER Malcom Banks

VIDEOGRAPHY by Jahi Entertainment

THE PERFORMERS:

Evelyn Danner	Madeline Morgan
Patrick Davis	Margaret Murphy Webb
Meiya Fitzhugh	Sonia Oyola
Sean Harris	Patricia Tyson
Rae-Myra Hilliard	Gabriel Valentino
Randolph Johnson	Dion Walton
Lynne Jordan	Darcelle Williams
Holly McGuire	Eugene Williams

THE PROGRAM

From swing to soul, from Broadway to the opera house, from jazz to blues, we're taking a Southside trip through the wide world of cabaret. Our multi-genre selections will be drawn from these titles!

- *A Song for You*
- *Ah, mes amis*
- *Ain't Misbehavin'*
- *Again*
- *Change We Can Believe In*
- *Easy*
- *Everything I've Got*
- *Feelin' Good*
- *Getting Some Fun out of Life*
- *Human Nature*
- *I Told You So*
- *Killing Me Softly*
- *People Make the World Go 'Round*
- *Polka Dot and Moonbeams*
- *Quimbara*
- *Return to Paradise*
- *Since I Fell for You*
- *Sodade*
- *Them There Eyes*
- *Tis Sunset in the Garden*
- *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted*
- *When I'm Gone*
- *Why Try to Change Me Now*
- *You'd Be So Nice to Come Home to*

BLACK VOICES IN CABARET (BVIC):

DIRECTOR'S NOTES — Lynn Colbert-Jones

As the director and producer of *Reimagining Cabaret: Journey Through the Genres*, I am honored to present an evening that not only celebrates the timeless art of cabaret but also reclaims its place in the heart of the Black community. Through the voices of our 15 singers, we will journey across musical genres, showing how this kind of gathering has always been a space of freedom, expression, and connection. Our goal is to reignite the love for this versatile and intimate art form and re-engage this generation of music lovers. I invite you to experience the vibrancy and diversity of cabaret like never before.

A BRIEF HISTORY of BVIC

The founding director of BVIC, David Stephens, was spurred to action upon reading an article on "Why Is Color Mostly Absent from Cabaret Stages?" He himself had followed his spouse into cabaret, but was confused and disturbed to be often the only person of color, in the audience or onstage. He and other Black performers who had met through SongShop and the Cabaret Connexion turned to Claudia Hommel and the umbrella nonprofit organization, Working In Concert, to establish a home for this new initiative. David wrote "our mission should be to showcase Black performers, educate new audiences about the history of Chicago cabaret as seen through Black eyes, and uplift the repertoire beyond the standard American Songbook. With Black Voices in Cabaret, we hope to explore a wide variety of performing styles and to highlight both new and established performers. We also plan to engage both audiences and communities who have not been exposed to the art of cabaret with shows, seminars, and other events."

Cabaret shines best when it is as variegated as the world we live in. Welcome to Black Voices in Cabaret.

Find us at blackvoicesinvoices.org.

Join us at our next show, Saturday, December 7, at the Epiphany Center for the Arts.

BLACK VOICES IN CABARET

Director/Producer **Lynn Colbert-Jones**, is an award-winning lyricist, songwriter, producer, and impresario with over three decades of experience in the music industry. A Chicago native, Lynn is celebrated for her elegant songwriting, collaborations with renowned artists, and her role as a connector and promoter of talent. She created and hosts the acclaimed platforms “Composers’ Café” and “Good Hearts Club Music Jam”, fostering a global community of musicians and singers. Lynn also serves on several prestigious boards and committees, including the Jazz Institute of Chicago, JEXA Awards Los Angeles, and Working In Concert.

Evelyn Danner is a vocalist/actor/teacher and costumer. She has been with Chicago’s Black Ensemble Theater for more than 25 years, singing, dancing, acting and often as “Miraculous Wardrobe Mistress”. Most recently, she was costume designer for Goodman Theater’s *Gem of the Ocean*. With more than 20 musical productions to her performance credit, Evelyn has portrayed the legendary jazz great Ella Fitzgerald in four different productions. She serves in the music ministry of her home church, Covenant Faith Church of God. She is a founding member of Black Voices in Cabaret.

T. Patrick Davis is a Chicago born vocalist known to masterfully belt and croon blues, soul, pop, jazz, and rock genres in his resonant voice. With his trademark fedoras, he can excite an audience to dance or have them swoon at his rich vocal style. T. Patrick has performed in Chicago Cabaret Professional’s *Musical Mondays*, *Merry Measures*, and *Strut Your Stuff*, in Working In Concert’s SongShop Live and Black Voices in Cabaret concerts, 3 Minutes in the Spotlight, Opportunity Knocks, Harris House of Music, and OTSM Blues Band Live Ensembles. T. Patrick sold out *Drew & Patrick Sing All-Time Favorites* at Davenport’s in 2022 and Epiphany Center of the Arts in 2023. He performs every season with his blues & soul band l’ensemble at Rosa’s Lounge. T. Patrick is planning a solo blues jazz show for late 2025.

Meiya Fitzhugh was born and raised in and around Chicago. The turning point in her musical journey was a chance attendance at a concert at the Old Town School of Folk Music. That led

to two decades of vocal and guitar classes, and the opportunity to be a part of a community that has changed her life. “The valuable lessons I’ve learned aren’t only matters of technique or theory —there’s also the act of challenging myself, being vulnerable on stage, and sharing with an audience through music.”

Sean Harris. An extraordinary singer with a rich and varied voice and repertoire, Sean has a firm commitment to conveying his songs to each member of the audience. Singing from lyric baritone to lyric tenor and countertenor, Sean has been deeply influenced by the likes of Mario Lanza for opera and Neapolitans, Johnny Mathis for pop, and his favorite jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald. With a repertoire that includes rhythm and blues, jazz, French cabaret, opera and oratorio, art songs and Broadway, Sean was mentored by pianist/band leader Joe Vito who said: “His is an unbelievable voice; you have to hear him live to fathom Sean’s smooth transitions between musical styles.” In demand from churches to senior centers, he performs often with pianist Geo Cooper and violinist Edgar Gabriel. He is featured singing in French and English on the two-CD set of the *Jazz Faure Project* (jazzfaure.com). He offers private voice lessons and can be reached by phone at 773-744-6537.

Rae-Myra Hilliard as an active recitalist regularly programs works featuring Black-American composers/lyricists or works written for a classical singer of color. Her debut CD, *Lifescapes: One Woman’s Journey* is a compilation of songs written by Black-American composers. Her Christmas CD featuring classical and popular works is underway. Her operatic roles include the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Serena in *Porgy & Bess*, and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*. As a concert artist, Rae-Myra has performed Ralph Vaughn Williams’ *Serenade to Music*, Vivaldi’s *Gloria*, and Saint-Saëns’ *Christmas Oratorio*. She teaches at the University of St. Francis, the Music Institute of Chicago, and Evanston Township High School. Rae-Myra is also the Music Director at St. James Lutheran Church in Lake Forest, IL. Her newest project is a lecture series entitled *Queens of Composition: Excellence in the music by Black-*

American Women". She holds her MM from the University of Northern Iowa and is a member of NATS, AGMA, and the National Association of Negro Musicians through the R. Nathaniel Dett Club.

Randolph Johnson, a native Chicagoan, is honored to work with BVIC. He has received excellent reviews for his portrayal of Charlie in *The Bridges of Madison County* (4 Jeff Awards): Horse in Kokandy's *Full Monty*, and Blood in ETA's production of *Every Night When The Sun Goes Down* a BTAA nomination for Cousin Acey in *The Clara Ward Story* at Open Door Theatre. Other Chicago roles include Amonasro, Aida's father in the Bailiwick Chicago's *Aida*, Philmore in Pegasus Players' *Jitney* (BTAA's award for Best Ensemble). Not to mention, Booker T. Washington in *Ragtime* at Porchlight Music Theatre and Big Noise Theatre; Bailiwick Theatre's *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* and Newt Lee in *Parade* (Jeff Citations). He was a featured vocalist for the Max Roach Trio and U of I Black Chorus, Chicago Chamber Opera. He is a James Scholar with a Masters in Music Ed. (vocal/instrumental) from the University of Illinois.

Holly McGuire. A veteran of the Chicago scene, Holly brings her own unique interpretation to jazz, pop, and blues. She began as an opening act for comedians and the famous Minsky's Burlesque at the Chicago Playboy Club. She brought Chicago-inspired music to outdoor festivals, dinner cruises on Lake Michigan, corporate events, weddings, and Andy's Jazz Club, appearing on the same bill with Roberta Flack and Dave Koz. Holly joined the Steve Sandner Quartet and toured many Midwestern resorts and clubs, and together they recorded and released the CD *Catch 38*, covering contemporary jazz standards. Holly was a part of the Ken Arlen Orchestra and Jeff Stitely Orchestra, performing for over 300,000 at Poland's Woodstock Music Festival. Now singing with Chicago Bar Association Choir, she has soloed at St. James Cathedral, Harold Washington Library, Lincoln Academy of Illinois Ceremony, with performances at Fourth Presbyterian Jazz service and Unity Chicago with a Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase.

Madeline Morgan got her music education the old fashioned way—from a family who believed in performance and were performers themselves. Her style is laid-back and her musical preference is jazz. She has sung in church choirs, community

choirs and the Sounds Good seniors choir. She has performed at Davenport's Cabaret several times, produced and directed projects *Ella and Sarah* with Judy Narcisse, at Infinity and her Luncheon Jazz series. She is a member of Chicago Cabaret Professionals.

Margaret Murphy-Webb is an award-winning entertainer crediting her unique vocal style and showmanship to the tutelage of legendary Chicago tenor saxophonist Von Freeman. Margaret has been featured at the Taste of Chicago, Winona Indiana Jazz Festival, Mississippi Valley Blues Festival, Hyde Park Jazz Festival, The Green Mill, Jazz Showcase, Winters Jazz Club among other Chicago festivals and jazz venues. She had the honor of performing for both Presidents Obama and Clinton, as well as ambassadors from Russia and Poland. Margaret is executive director of the nonprofit South Side Jazz Coalition which presents free live jazz, offers mentoring programs and advocates for Chicago musicians. Margaret was co-chair of The Year of Chicago Music 2020/21 and a member of the Chicago Cultural Council

Sonia Oyola, born in Santa Marta, Colombia and raised in the US, has been singing since the age of one. She started taking lessons at the Old Town School of Folk Music in 2010. Her first solo show, *Sonia and Bob Sing For You* with Bob Solone as accompanist and collaborator, debuted in 2021 at Le Piano, followed by sold out shows of *Songs We Love and Fear Not: Songs We Love #2* in 2022 and 2024 at Davenport's Cabaret. They are excited for their upcoming show October 2024 at Davenport's *Love Songs 3.0*. During the pandemic, her work as a family medicine physician led to many hours of reflection culminating in writing poetry and her first songs: "Finding My Way" and "Te Siento" with Bob Solone and "Rain" with Sami Scot. She is currently in two bands Libélulas and Para Mujeres which explore the worlds of Latin Jazz and traditional boleros. Sonia's life mission is to relieve suffering through mindfulness, kindness, joy, the promotion of compassion, and music.

Theodis Rodgers, Jr, Music Director, is an American Jazz pianist and multi-keyboardist from Chicago, Illinois. He has worked in theater, television and motion pictures as a performer, composer, arranger, producer and music conductor/director both nationally and

internationally. He has been music director/ keyboardist for Curtis Mayfield, Patti LaBelle, Angela Bofill, Jennifer Holiday, Sarah Vaughn, Ramsey Lewis, Freddie Hubbard, The Emotions and Dennis De Young. Theodis is a former member of the funk/rock band Love Craft. He co-wrote music for the movie *A Family Thing* featuring Robert DuVall and James Earl Jones. For the stage, he has served as musical director and/or pianist for *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Dreamgirls* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He is currently Music Director for Teatro Zinzanni Chicago. He travels internationally with his piano and organ Jazz trio, including the 2023 Chicago Jazz Festival, Jazz Showcase and Winters Jazz Club. His new music album release *Hot Jazz* can be found on all streaming platforms.

Patricia E. Tyson is a Chicago native, a registered nurse with a strong background in hospice and palliative care. Her life's passion, however, is music. Patricia is a composer, choral director and a classically trained vocalist and concert pianist. She has composed over 500 hymns, choral works, and songs of inspiration. Patricia's intention is to inspire and encourage the singers and listeners, to affect a change for positivity and to consider a more excellent way of living, doing, and being.

Gabriel Valentino emanates music, singing and composing R&B, hip hop, house, salsa, soul, gospel, reggae, reggaeton, folk, jazz, country, pop, and more. Born in the Chicagoland area by way of Panamá, Gabriel has performed as a singer, songwriter, dancer, and actor throughout Chicago. He sang with the Chicago Cabaret Professionals (CCP) in *Broadway Soul* at the Black Ensemble Theater and Cultural Center. He has performed his self-written & composed original music at Navy Pier, the Promontory, Le Piano, Davenport's Piano Bar & Cabaret, among other venues. He also performs with the Chicago Community Choir, a contemporary gospel choir originating from the historic First Baptist Congregational Church of Chicago. An individual of multiple talents, Gabriel describes his state of being often as "Soulful & Serene". He supports and promotes his soulful vibes via his social media presence: Umami Memories: Savoring, Story, Song, & Soul."

In 2024: **Dion Walton** is a 71-year-young performing artist, working singer, actor and artist with artwork in galleries throughout Chicagoland.

Dion is a 20-year veteran of Second Story as writer, reader, and director and 30-year veteran of the Goodman Theater's "Generations" program. He worked for two years at the Center on Halsted to inspire some of Chicago's gay homeless youth of color by creating and directing the Queer Cabaret program. In 2015, he was cast in the play, *All the Sex I Ever Had* at the Museum of Contemporary Arts and directed the *House Musical (Coming of Age in the Age of House Music)* in Chicago in 2023. He is working on his autobiography, entitled *The Happening*, reflecting on more than 50 years as a national performer and 30 years as a writer.

Eugene "Gene" Williams was the Mayor of Lynwood for 16 years. Gene is a past president of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) and served on several municipal committees and councils. In his retirement he has honed his natural talent for voice and music. He and his wife Darcelle have hosted a show together, singing songs of love, and have joined many other productions as well. In his not so spare time, he enjoys playing the piano and as he puts it, "learning new stuff". They have been married for 47 years and have three children.

Darcelle Williams received her BA in Theater Education from Illinois State University and a MA in Theater Directing. She taught Theatre, English and Speech, and directed theater productions at Percy Julian and Thornwood High Schools for over 20 years, including co-directing two State Championships for the Group Interpretations activity. More recently, she performed in *Ragtime*, as Motormouth Maybelle in *Hairspray* with the Drama Group in Chicago Heights, and other community theater productions. She directed a reading performance of *Death of the King's Horseman* and the musical *Sister Act* at the Drama Group. She can be seen on television in episodes of *The Chi* and *Blackboard Jungle*. She is a founding member of Griot Theatre Collective. Since the pandemic Darcelle rediscovered her love for music through Zoom groups and singing with her husband Eugene in several shows.



SO MANY THANKS TO...

Jim Block and Ruth Fuerst

For opening their home and hearth:

Jonathan Lewis

As stage manager extraordinaire

Carrie Hedges and the Vista Homes Condo

Association for the loan of beautiful chairs

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The participating artists who give more than they get

The Working In Concert home office:

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Juliana Engel, social media & communications

Kenneth Gourlay, webmaster

Claudia Hommel, executive director

Cappy Kidd, Board secretary and fundraiser

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Howard (catch her at the Cabaret Connexion),

Didier Durand (eat very well in France) and

Susan Boldrey (speak French via song!)

And THANK YOU to our audience

We invite you to stay connected via our email newsletters, to donate when you can, and to join us as fellow artists.

WORKINGINCONCERT.ORG



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SongShop welcomes singers each Tuesday evening at the DePaul School of Music for an ongoing workshop to hone our song interpretation and performance skills. Led by Claudia Hommel and music directed by Howie Pfeifer, SongShop Live concerts are an initiative of Working In Concert. Visit songshoplive.com.

Chicago welcomes the 6th international exchange of
Chicago Paris Cabaret Connexion
 Monday, October 28- Monday, November 4
 plus a bonus concert November 9



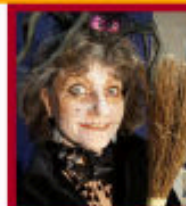
Concert Festival
Cabaret Connexion 2024
cabaretconnexion.org/rsvp



**Thurs
 Oct 31**

KURT WEILL CIRCUS by Anne Fromm (Lyon). Opening with WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF? Paulus the Cabaret Geek (London), a Paris trio, and hosted by Claudia Hommel (Chicago). Halloween costumes encouraged!

7:30 PM — DANKHaus, 4740 N Western Ave (Lincoln Sq)



**Fri
 Nov 1**

OH LA LA ! Isabelle Georges, direct from Paris. Opening with Chicago diva Lynne Jordan and host Jeff Harnar (New York)

8 PM — Rhapsody Theater, 1323 W Morse (Rogers Park)



**Sat
 Nov 2**

PIAF & PIZAZZ ! Featuring Tássia Minuzzo (Brazil), Steve Normandin (Québec), Jeanie Carroll (Las Vegas), Michèle Barbier, Angélique Dessaint, Wilfried Touati (Paris)

6 PM — Alliance Française, 54 W Chicago (River North)



**Sun
 Nov 3**

ON THE FUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET — a light-hearted showcase of Cabaret Connexion participants led by Angelina Réaux (San Diego)

3 PM — DePaul School of Music Recital Hall
 2380 N Halsted (Lincoln Park)



**Mon
 Nov 4**

FROM PARIS AND CHICAGO WITH LOVE — Anne & Mark Burnell host an international cast to celebrate Old Town's twin neighborhood of Montmartre. You can can-can, too.

5:30 PM — Franklin Fine Arts Center
 225 W. Evergreen (Old Town)



**Sat
 Nov 9**

TOUJOURS L'AMOUR—Jean-Claude Orfali offers piano inventions and variations on new and favorite French love songs, with guest vocalists Christine Steyer, Claudia Hommel, Angélique Dessaint

7:30 PM—PianoForte Chicago
 1335 S. Michigan Ave (South Loop)



Registration is now open for Master classes, workshops, round tables! Visit CABARETCONNEXION.ORG for schedules, session descriptions, personnel profiles and signups