

**Classical Movements Presents:**  
**“Sounds of Hope &  
Harmony”**

*Intimate, outdoor one-hour concerts  
for socially distanced audiences*

**An Evening of Grand Opera**  
**August 15, 2020, 6:00 PM & 7:30 PM**

Issachah Savage, tenor | Joy Schreier, piano

**Spirate pur, spirate**

**O del mio amato ben**

Stefano Donaudy  
(1879-1925)

**La Serenata**

Paolo Tosti  
(1846-1916)

**Ruhe, meine Seele!**

*Op. 27, No. 1*

Richard Strauss  
(1864-1949)

**“Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond”**

from *Die Walküre*

Richard Wagner  
(1813-1883)

Issachah Savage, tenor | Joy Schreier, piano

**Widmung**

*Op. 25, No. 1*

Robert Schumann, arr. Franz Lizst  
(1810-1856) / (1811-1886)

Joy Schreier, piano

**“Niun mi tema”**

from *Otello*

Giuseppe Verdi  
(1813-1901)



**Love Is Here to Stay/  
They Can't Take That Away from Me**

George Gershwin  
(1898-1937)

**I, Too**  
from *Three Dream Portraits*

**You Can Tell the World**  
from *Five Creek-Freedmen Spirituals*

Margaret Bonds  
(1913-1972)

Issachah Savage, tenor | Joy Schreier, piano

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## **Introduction and Program Notes**

**Classical Movements** welcomes you back to our "Secret Garden" at the Rectory, our home in Old Town Alexandria. This evening, we are delighted to bring you this next installment in our "Sounds of Hope & Harmony" series, glorious selections from the grand opera and art song repertoire performed by award-winning rising opera star Issachah Savage, accompanied by Joy Schreier.

-- **Classical Movements**

Our program this evening begins with two selections by turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century composer **Stefano Donaudy**, two of his classics **Spirate pur, spirate** and **O del mio amato ben**. Both of these charming songs come from Donaudy's *36 Arie di Stile Antico*, which is the work the composer is primarily known for. Born into a recently-unified Italian republic and the artistically rich city of Palermo, Sicily, Donaudy was successful in his lifetime, although his final work, an opera called *La Fiamminga* (The Flemish Woman,) was such a failure that he abandoned his composition career.

These two lovely songs are staples of the Italianate opera and art song repertoire because of their elegant and eminently singable character. Meant to evoke the simple and clean tonality of the neo-Classical 18<sup>th</sup> century (hence the name "Arias of the Antique Style,") these songs, while far from easy to sing, are delightful to listen to, and remain perennial favorites.

The next selection on the program is by another Italian, **Paolo Tosti**. Tosti was born and raised in the Naples area, a region with a distinctive dialect and subculture within Italy. This character influenced much of his work, which is known for its sentimentality and expressiveness that played well with his Belle Époque salon audience. In his thirties, Tosti moved to England, became the singing teacher for the British Royal Family, and spent most of the rest of his life there. His most well-known song, **La Serenata**, is a light and springy song that yet requires a significant voice to pull off. The lyrics of the song, which sometimes goes by the alternate titles *Addio* in Italian or *Good-bye!* in English, are a poem by a fellow Neapolitan, Giovanni Alfredo Cesareo, and speak of a blissfully sleeping lover, dreaming of distant shores and beautiful vistas.

We move across the continent now, to Germany, and the beloved *lieder*, or songs, of **Richard Strauss**. Strauss lived through a remarkable period of history, seeing within his lifetime the unification and deunification of Germany, two World Wars, and the rise and fall of the Nazis. He was a relative celebrity conductor and composer in his day, and his ravishing and richly intellectual music remains a favorite of audiences to this day. This song, **Ruhe, meine Seele!**, is a setting of a typically German introspective poem by Karl Henckell in which the speaker struggles to quiet his spirit in the ravages of a troubled world. It is a part of the same cycle as perhaps the composer's most famous song, *Morgen*. Strauss is particularly known for his love of the soprano voice, and his songs therefore fit beautifully in the tenor range as well. This song is no different, and the

dramatic climax (in both volume and harmony) of the song is breathtaking.

We move now to another German, a predecessor and major stylistic influence of Strauss. While **Richard Wagner**, born more than fifty years before Strauss, is arguably emblematic of the late German Romantic school that Strauss was a part of, and Strauss was indeed heavily influenced by him, their legacies remain quite different. Wagner's political and ideological affiliations are well-known: his vision of a superior and unified Teutonic race was among the chief influences of the National Socialists (Nazis) of the 1930s and 40s. Regardless, his music stands on its own as decades ahead of its time and deeply beloved by many to this day.

In this "aria", **Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond**, from the opera *Die Walküre*, the tenor hero, Siegmund, declares his love for Sieglinde, his fated match. The quotes are used because Wagner usually avoided writing stand-alone arias, preferring instead a through-composed style, in which no words or music halt or deviate from the action. This roiling and virtuosic selection does just that, as Siegmund pours his heart out in a single long declaration.

Next on the program is a famous arrangement for solo piano by **Franz Liszt** of an even more famous song by **Robert Schumann**. The opening song from his cycle entitled *Myrthen*, a wedding present for his beloved wife Clara, **Widmung** is a rapturous declaration of all-encompassing and long-enduring love. It is an essential in Schumann's much-cherished oeuvre of vocal music. In this arrangement, Liszt, the legendary pianist, takes Schumann's song from the parlor to the grand concert stage. He adds an extra layer of drama to the song, with additional octaves and exchange of registers in the melody to begin. The return of the main theme, after a mellow interlude, is punctuated by virtuosic arpeggios and flourishes. Liszt even adds a recapitulation on the recapitulation, by adding a fourth verse not present in the original song. This classic arrangement smoothly transfers a treasured song to a different instrument, and showcases the piano as only Liszt can.

We return to vocal literature with **Giuseppe Verdi**'s timeless example of the dramatic Italian opera, *Otello*. Based on the Shakespeare play of the same name, it tells the famous story of "The Moor of Venice," his doomed wife Desdemona, and the fantastically evil Iago. Verdi is among the most famous of Italian composers, certainly among

Italians, and this role is one of the most demanding in the repertoire. It has been taken on (sometimes controversially) by many of the most famous dramatic tenor voices of the last century, both Black and otherwise. The racial aspects of the opera are still a hot topic of discussion to this day, as opera companies seek to adapt to the shifting and progressing morals of our contemporary classical music world.

In this heartrending aria, **Niun mi tema**, Othello, having moments before strangled his wife Desdemona over her supposed infidelity, has just discovered the dastardly plot of Iago. Desdemona has been falsely accused, and Othello realizes the gravity of what he has done. He pulls his sword in a fit of rage, but softens when he sees her body and contemplates their time together. Filled with despair gazing at her innocent face, his grief surges, and he pulls a dagger and stabs himself. As he dies, he kisses his wife, and he slowly fades away with the remembrance of their sweet and ill-fated romance.

We move on to something a bit more lighthearted. **Love Is Here to Stay** and **They Can't Take That Away from Me** are two of the most beloved songs by early 20<sup>th</sup>-century American composer **George Gershwin**. Gershwin is, of course, most known for adapting jazz and other Black art forms like the spiritual for the concert and operatic stage of his day, with famous works like *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Porgy and Bess*. His songs endure as well-known favorites, their ubiquity sometimes to the degree that Gershwin is unknown by some as their author. Mr. Savage pairs these two upbeat love songs for a charming medley.

The final two songs of tonight's program come from a tragically underrated and lesser-known composer of the American vocal art form, **Margaret Bonds**. Bonds, a native of Chicago and graduate of Northwestern University, showed prodigious compositional talent from an early age, and grew to be one of the first Black classical composers to gain wide recognition in the United States. As an adult, she moved to New York City and dove headlong into the rich heyday of the Harlem Renaissance. She befriended legendary poet Langston Hughes, and many of her most well-known works are settings of his poetry. She took many commissions, most notably and often from the legendary soprano Leontyne Price. Bonds is primarily known for her work for the voice, and was committed in her lifetime to showcasing the complex beauty of the Black American experience, in all its struggles and joy.

The first song, **I, Too**, from *Three Dream Portraits*, is one of her famous Hughes settings, of the poem by the same name, often known by its first line, “I, too, sing America.” This short but effective song is a bold setting of Hughes’ audacious words, in which the speaker declares, even demands, his seat at the literal and figurative table. Bonds shows her skill by incorporating clustered jazz chords into this otherwise broad and tonally straightforward song. The second selection, and the final one of the evening, is **You Can Tell the World**, from the collection *Five Creek-Freedmen Spirituals*, a set of arrangements of spirituals that formed her first song cycle. This celebratory and dynamic song ends on a show-stopping high note. It was notably recorded by Jessye Norman, who brought it to an international stage, solidifying Margaret Bonds’ place in the American classical music canon.

## **Performer Biographies**

Dramatic tenor **Issachah Savage** is garnering acclaim as a “heldentenor par excellence” with “trumpet-like, clear, open-throated, powerful” singing (San Francisco Examiner). Praised for his “impressive natural instrument” (Opera News), Mr. Savage is the winner of the Seattle International Wagner Competition earning the main prize, audience favorite prize, orchestra favorite prize, and a special honor by Speight Jenkins.

In the 2019-2020 season Mr. Savage makes debuts with the St. Louis Symphony and National Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, Colorado Symphony for Verdi Requiem, Act I of Die Walküre with Ose! Symphonic Orchestra in Evian, France and Quad Cities Symphony Orchestra, and Stravinsky Pulcinella/Beethoven Mass in C with the Jacksonville Symphony (FL). Additional engagements include a recital with Ramón Tebar in Naples, FL and a return to the roster of the Lyric Opera of Chicago for Der Ring des Nibelungen.

Last season Issachah sang the title role in Verdi’s Otello at Austin Lyric Opera. He made his European debut as Bacchus in Ariadne auf Naxos at Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse and Siegmund in Die Walküre with Opéra National de Bordeaux conducted by Paul Daniel. In concert, he sang Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with the Oklahoma City Philharmonic and Utah Symphony and Verdi’s Messa da requiem with the Melbourne Symphony in Australia. He also made his Omaha Symphony debut in Mahler’s Das Lied von der Erde and his Chicago Symphony debut with

Riccardo Muti as the Messenger in concert performances of *Aida*.

Recently, he made his role debut in Verdi's *Otello* with Marco Parisotto conducting Orquesta Filarmónica de Jalisco. He also made his Los Angeles Opera debut as Narraboth in *Salome* conducted by James Conlon and was heard with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra in Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars*. On the concert stage, he sang Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl and in New York City at David Geffen Hall, and was heard in recital at Toronto Women's Musical Club. Additionally, he sang Act 3 of Rossini's *Otello* with the American Symphony Orchestra at Bard SummerScape.

Mr. Savage made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Don Riccardo in Verdi's *Ernani*. He recently sang Siegmund in *Die Walküre* at the Canadian Opera Company under Johannes Debus to great critical acclaim and made his mainstage debut as Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Seattle Opera. He made his role debut in the title role of *Rienzi* with the National Philharmonic at Strathmore Hall. He also debuted at Austin Lyric Opera as Radames in *Aida* and with the San Antonio Symphony as Manrico in *Il trovatore* under Sebastian Lang-Lessing. Issachah made his Houston Grand Opera debut as Radames in *Aida* opposite Liudmyla Monastyrska and Dolora Zajick.

He has sung Verdi's *Requiem* with the Los Angeles Master Chorale and Boston Philharmonic. He also debuted with Orchestre National de Bordeaux-Aquitaine under Paul Daniel in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* and at the Aspen Music Festival as Radames in *Aida* under conductor Robert Spano, a role he sang with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood under Jacques Lacombe. Other orchestral performances for the dramatic tenor include the world premiere of Wynton Marsalis's *All Rise* with Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic, the world premiere of Leslie Savoy Burr's *Egypt's Night* with Philadelphia's Opera North, with Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony in Gershwin's *Blue Monday*, and with the Opera Orchestra of New York alongside Elina Garanca in Massenet's *La Navarraise*.

With a sound that shines in Verdi and Wagner, Mr. Savage participated in San Francisco Opera's Merola Program for gifted young singers singing the finale to Wagner's *Lohengrin* at the Merola Grand Finale concert. Writing of his performances of the last act of *Otello* in the Schwabacher Summer Concert series, the San Francisco

Chronicle stated, “From his opening notes - impeccably shaded and coiled with repressed fury - to the opera's final explosion of grief and shame, Savage sang with a combination of power and finesse that is rare to observe.” Mr. Savage has participated in a number of programs designed for young artists with powerful voices including Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart Emerging Singers Program, Dolora Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices where he performed scenes from Otello and ACMA's Wagner Theater program where he performed scenes from Die Walküre, Parsifal and Samson et Dalila.

In addition to his 2012 grand prize with the Marcello Giordani International Competition, Issachah has received a number of prestigious awards, recognition and career grants from institutions such as Wagner Societies of New York, Washington, D. C., and Northern California, Licia Albanese International Puccini Foundation, Olga Forrai Foundation, Gerda Lissner Foundation, Jensen Vocal Competition, Opera Index, and Giulio Gari Foundation. The tenor's special talents were recognized early on by the Marian Anderson Society of Philadelphia, where he honored as its very first Scholar Artist and then again in 2009 as a prize winner in their Classical Icon competition. He has received two first places prizes in the esteemed Liederkranz Foundation competition, most recently in the 2012 Wagner Division and for General Opera in 2009. He possesses a Bachelor's Degree in Vocal Performance from Morgan State University and a Master's Degree in Opera Voice Performance from The Catholic University of America.

Praised by Plácido Domingo as an “orchestra at the piano” and hailed as a pianist who “really has it all – fiery technique and a rich, warm tone,” **Joy Schreier** is praised by The Washington Post as a “responsive accompanist” and an “ideal support” at the piano. She is credited as “providing much of the evening's musical nuance,” “so noteworthy that the room seemed to vibrate from her depth and skill,” and “perfection itself...the dream accompanist that a singer hopes to find at some point in one's lifetime.”

Schreier has been presented in recital at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Merkin Hall, the White House, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Corcoran Gallery, the National Gallery of Art, the National Museum for Women in the Arts, the National Portrait Gallery, the Phillips Collection, the Cosmos Club, Strathmore Hall, the Embassies of Austria, Australia, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy,

Korea, Poland, Russia, Taiwan, Anderson House on Embassy Row and recital halls throughout the country. Internationally, she has performed in England, Scotland, Wales, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. She has appeared with the Marilyn Horne Foundation, the Vocal Arts Society, Partners for the Arts, Philadelphia Lieder Society, and was a featured performer at the 2016 New Music Gathering. *Confessions*, her upcoming CD release with soprano Laura Strickling, celebrates women's words in song.

Schreier's concert engagements include a sold-out Carnegie Hall debut with soprano Danielle Talamantes at Weill Recital Hall in 2007, a recital series with mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard for the Marilyn Horne Foundation, and a nine-performance run of *Carmina Burana* performed with the Washington Ballet at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. In 2009, she and Talamantes were the only North American duo to advance in Thomas Quasthoff's *Das Lied* competition. That same year they were the grand prize winners in the Lotte Lehman Cybersing Competition. While at the Eastman School of Music, Schreier won the piano prize in the Jessie Kneisel German Lieder competition.

An avid chamber musician, since 2010 Schreier has performed as official pianist of the Washington International String & Voice Competitions at the Kennedy Center. She has served as official pianist for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions as well as Assistant Conductor at the Washington National Opera and coach for the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. She is the Assistant Conductor and Pianist of the Cathedral Choral Society. She received her Doctorate in Accompanying and Chamber Music in 2003 at the Eastman School of Music under Dr. Jean Barr where she was the recipient of the Barbara Koeng Award for Excellence in Vocal Accompanying.

## Coming Soon to “Sounds of Hope & Harmony”

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***Sounds of Hope & Harmony***

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**Lester Green, piano**

**Pamela Simonson, narrator**

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## **About the Rectory**

Built in 1785 and the home of Classical Movements' offices since 2014, the building formerly served as the rectory of the nearby historic Christ Church, once the church of George Washington. Since then, it has been owned by several distinguished Virginians and has been a commercial space since the 1960's. Located in the heart of beautiful Old Town Alexandria at 711 Princess Street, the Rectory is minutes away from the shops and restaurants of bustling King Street and is easily accessible by bus and metro.

## Seating at the Secret Garden

