LEAD CASTING + PREVIEW ANNOUNCED FOR CASTOR AND PATIENCE AT CINCINNATI OPERA

Gregory Spears, composer / Tracy K. Smith, librettist

World premiere: July 16 – 26, 2020

Latonia Moore as Patience / Kevin Short as Castor
Frederick Ballentine as Judah / Janai Brugger as Wilhelmina
Davóne Tines as West / Catherine Martin as Celeste

Moore, Short, Ballentine, Brugger now appearing in Porgy and Bess at The Met
Cincinnati Opera is pleased to announce the casting of principal roles for composer Gregory Spears and librettist Tracy K. Smith's new opera Castor and Patience, which will have its world premiere in Cincinnati, July 16 - 26, 2020, highlighting the company's 100th anniversary season.

The title roles will be sung by soprano Latonia Moore (Patience) and bass-baritone Kevin Short (Castor). Also appearing: tenor Frederick Ballentine as Judah, soprano Janai Brugger as Wilhelmina, mezzo-soprano Catherine Martin as Celeste, and bass-baritone Davóne Tines as West. Kazem Abdullah will conduct; the stage director is Kevin Newbury. Further additions to the cast will be announced in the coming months. The design team has also been announced: Vita Tzykun, scenic design; Jessica Jahn, costume design; Rachel Eliza Griffiths, image design; S. Katy Tucker, projection design; and Thomas C. Hase, lighting design.

Moore, Short, Ballentine, and Brugger, who are currently performing in The Metropolitan Opera’s acclaimed production of Porgy and Bess, will join Martin in singing excerpts from Castor and Patience in an invitation-only event on Friday, January 17 (6 - 7 pm), as part of Opera America's New Works Forum. The Harry T. Wilks Artistic Director of Cincinnati Opera, Evans Mirageas, will join Spears, Smith, and Abdullah to discuss the opera's genesis and artistic evolution. A reception with the artists and creative team will follow. The event will take place at Baruch Performing Arts Center’s Engelman Recital Hall, 55 Lexington Avenue in Manhattan.

Castor and Patience is Spears’ most ambitious opera to date – a two-act work running more than two hours, with a cast of twelve and a 36-piece orchestra. It will be Spears’ second work for Cincinnati Opera, following the extraordinary critical and popular success of Fellow Travelers, with librettist Greg Pierce, in 2016. Smith is one of the most lauded poets of her generation: a recent Poet Laureate of the United States, she won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for her collection Life on Mars. Her original story for Castor and Patience is both timeless and topical, setting a prototypical family conflict against the backdrop of recent events.

According to Smith, “Set during the mortgage crisis of 2008, with flashbacks to 1966 as well as to the 19th Century, Castor and Patience tells the story of African American cousins who find themselves at odds over the fate of land owned by members of their family since Reconstruction. Castor has a ballooning mortgage to contend with, so cashing in on his share of the family land would save his home and maybe even his sanity. Patience has been fighting as long as she can remember to stave off overzealous developers from whittling away the history she descends from. In order to address their most pressing concerns, these characters must come to grips with the past to which their respective futures are inextricably bound.

"This work is deeply invested in the lives of characters who are fictional, but whose dramatic conflict is a real one that African American families have confronted in one way or another for centuries."

Castor and Patience will premiere at the Corbett Theater in Cincinnati’s School for Creative and Performing Arts on July 16, 18, 21, 24, and 26 (matinee). During its final weekend, operagoers may also see Verdi’s Aida (July 25), with an outstanding, largely African American cast, including soprano Mary Elizabeth Williams in the title role; mezzo-soprano Ronnita Miller as Amneris; tenor Marco Berti as Radames; baritone Reginald Smith, Jr. as Amonasro; and bass Morris Robinson, Cincinnati Opera’s recently-appointed Artistic Advisor, as Ramfis. Christopher Allen will conduct; sets and costumes are by noted designer Zandra Rhodes.

Castor and Patience is generously supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The New Works Forum presentation is generously supported by Opera America.
THE CREATIVE TEAM

Gregory Spears is a New York-based composer whose music has been called "astonishingly beautiful" (*The New York Times*), "coolly entrancing" (*The New Yorker*), and "some of the most beautifully unsettling music to appear in recent memory" (*The Boston Globe*). In recent seasons he has been commissioned by Lyric Opera of Chicago, Cincinnati Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seraphic Fire, The Crossing, BMI and Concert Artists Guild, Vocal Arts DC, New York Polyphony, The New York International Piano Competition, and the JACK Quartet, among others. Spears' most recent evening-length opera, *Fellow Travelers*, written in collaboration with Greg Pierce, was featured in *The New York Times‘* Best in Classical Music for 2016. Cincinnati Opera released a commercial CD recording in 2017. Other operas include *Jason and the Argonauts*, written with Kathryn Walat; *O Columbia*, written with Royce Vavrek; and Spears and Walat's first opera, *Paul's Case*, described as a "masterpiece" and a "gem" (*New York Observer*) with "ravishing music" (*The New York Times*). His music is published by Schott Music and Schott PSNY.

Tracy K. Smith won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in poetry for *Life on Mars* (Graywolf Press 2011). A two-term Poet Laureate of the United States, her other books include the acclaimed memoir *Ordinary Light* (Knopf 2015); *Wade in the Water* (Graywolf Press 2018), winner of the 2019 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award; *Duende* (Graywolf Press 2007), recipient of the James Laughlin Award of the Academy of American Poets; and *The Body's Question* (Graywolf Press 2003), which won the Cave Canem award for the best first book by an African American Poet. She is the editor of *American Journal: Fifty Poems for Our Time* (Graywolf Press 2018).

Smith is the Roger S. Berlind '52 Professor in the Humanities at Princeton University and Chair of the Lewis Center for the Arts. Her daily poetry podcast “The Slowdown” is a production of American Public Media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.

ABOUT CINCINNATI OPERA

Founded in 1920 and the second oldest opera company in the nation, Cincinnati Opera presents a thrilling season of grand opera every summer. The company's repertoire includes beloved classics and contemporary masterworks brought to life by some of the world's most dynamic performers and creative teams.

Cincinnati Opera’s 2020 100th Anniversary Summer Festival takes place June 18 through August 1, 2020, and features Gioachino Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, the world premiere of William Menefield and Sheila Williams’s *Fierce*, Antonín Dvořák’s *Rusalka*, the world premiere of Gregory Spears and Tracy K. Smith’s *Castor and Patience*, and Giuseppe Verdi’s *Aida*. The 2020 season is made possible with support from ArtsWave, Ohio Arts Council, The Louise Dieterle Nippert Musical Arts Fund, and many generous individuals, corporations, and foundations. Cincinnati Opera's mission is to enrich and connect our community through diverse opera experiences. [cincinnatiopera.org](http://cincinnatiopera.org)

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