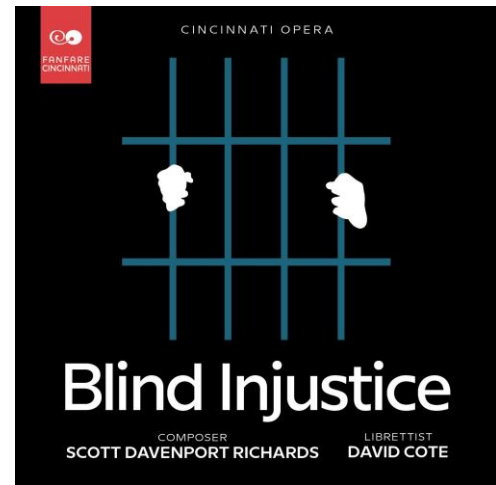


Cincinnati Opera Releases Premiere Recording of Scott Davenport Richards and David Cote's BLIND INJUSTICE

Cincinnati, Ohio—Cincinnati Opera is proud to release the live audio recording of the world premiere production of ***Blind Injustice***, the critically acclaimed new opera with music by Scott Davenport Richards and libretto by David Cote. Directed by Robin Guarino, *Blind Injustice* was hailed as a “powerful piece of music theater” (*The Wall Street Journal*) and a “masterpiece” (*CityBeat*). The opera was recorded in the Wilks Studio at Cincinnati’s Music Hall in July 2019 and is being released on the Fanfare Cincinnati label.

The digital album is now available for purchase via Amazon Music, iTunes, and other digital music retailers, and for streaming via Amazon Music, Apple Music, Spotify, Pandora, and other music streaming services. The compact disc release is available for pre-order at cincinnatiopera.org/bravo-shop.



Blind Injustice premiered at Cincinnati Opera in July 2019 to sold-out audiences and rave critical reviews. The opera explores the true stories of six innocent people who were convicted of crimes they did not commit, then ultimately freed by the Ohio Innocence Project (OIP). A collaboration with the OIP and Cincinnati’s Young Professionals Choral Collective (YPCC), the opera is based on casework by the OIP and the book *Blind Injustice* by University of Cincinnati law professor and OIP Director Mark Godsey, as well as interviews with the six exonerees: Rickey Jackson, Nancy Smith, Clarence Elkins, and the East Cleveland 3—Derrick Wheatt, Laurese Glover, and Eugene Johnson. Through Richards’s music and Cote’s libretto, the opera brings to life the anguish, perseverance, and grace of these men and women.

The recording features the original cast, the Cincinnati Opera Chorus, members of YPCC, and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra led by Cincinnati Pops Conductor John Morris Russell.

Lead support for the *Blind Injustice* recording has been generously provided by Dianne and J. David Rosenberg.

Blind Injustice received its initial workshop through Opera Fusion: New Works, a partnership between Cincinnati Opera and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) that supports the development of new operas. Opera Fusion: New Works is made possible through funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

For more information, visit cincinnatiopera.org.

Blind Injustice

World Premiere Recording

- Digital album now on sale via Amazon Music, iTunes, and other digital music retailers
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- CD now available for pre-order via cincinnatiopera.org/bravo-shop

Commissioned and produced by Cincinnati Opera

Composed by Scott Davenport Richards

Libretto by David Cote

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

John Morris Russell, conductor

Robin Guarino, stage director and dramaturg

Presented in partnership with the Ohio Innocence Project and the Young Professionals Choral Collective

Released by Fanfare Cincinnati

Cast

Prosecutor: Joseph Lattanzi

Defense Attorney: Samuel Levine

Alesha/Ensemble #1: Victoria Okafor

Nancy Smith: Maria Miller

Laurese Glover: Terrence Chin-Loy

Derrick Wheatt: Sankara Harouna

Eugene Johnson: Miles Wilson-Toliver

Clarence Elkins: Thomas J. Capobianco

Rickey Jackson: Eric Shane

Derrick's Mother/Ensemble #2: Deborah Nansteel

Earl Mann/Ensemble #3: Morgan Smith

Earl Mann's Cellmate/Ensemble #4: Joseph Parrish

Voice of Clarence's Niece: Shannon Cochran

Edward Vernon: William Boatwright

Featuring the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Cincinnati Opera Chorus, and the Young Professionals Choral Collective

About the Creative Team

Scott Davenport Richards (composer) creates works that inhabit various addresses at the intersection of jazz, musical theatre, and opera. New York City Opera performed two of his works—*A Star Across the Ocean* and *Charlie Crosses the Nation*—at its Vox Festival. Musical theatre commissions include *The Rumble of Myth* (The Public Theater) and *The Break* (Signature Theatre). Other musical theatre works include *A Thousand Words Come to Mind*, a musical monologue for Paulette Haupt's Premieres company, *Coyote Goes Salmon Fishing* directed by Molly Smith at Perseverance Theatre, and the original score for *A Christmas Story: The Musical* at Kansas City Repertory Theatre. His play-scores have been heard at Yale Repertory Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Madison Repertory Theatre, Powerhouse Theatre, and New Federal Theatre. An early recipient of the Jonathan Larson Award, he

taught at New York University's Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program and is currently professor of musical theatre and composition at Montclair State University's John J. Cali School of Music.

David Cote (librettist) is a librettist, playwright, and arts journalist based in New York City. Operas include *Three Way* (BAM and Nashville Opera) with Robert Paterson; *The Scarlet Ibis* (Prototype Festival and Chicago Opera Theater) with Stefan Weisman; and *We've Got Our Eye on You* (SUNY New Paltz) with Nkeiru Okoye. Plays include *Saint Joe*, *Fear of Art*, and *Otherland* (O'Neill Theater Center National Playwrights Conference finalist). Premieres in 2021 include the Bach-inspired *Cocoa Cantata* with Robert Paterson at the Mostly Modern Festival and a short opera with Nkeiru Okoye co-commissioned by Cleveland Opera Theater and On Site Opera. Cote also wrote the text for Okoye's Black Lives Matter piece for baritone and orchestra, *Invitation to a Die-In*, and lyrics for Paterson's dating-site song cycles *In Real Life I* and *In Real Life II*. Cote's reporting and criticism appear in *4 Columns*, *Observer*, and *American Theatre*. He has written popular companion books about the hit Broadway musicals *Wicked*, *Jersey Boys*, and *Spring Awakening*.

Robin Guarino (stage director and dramaturg) is a theatre, opera, and film director who has directed more than 90 original productions. Her work has been presented by esteemed opera companies, festivals, theatre companies, and symphony orchestras around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, BAM Next Wave Festival, Canadian Opera Company, Cincinnati Opera, Seattle Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera's HGOco, The Glimmerglass Festival, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, among others. Guarino's films have been shown at international film festivals throughout the U.S. and Europe, and her film, *Crossing the Atlantic*, was broadcast on PBS. As co-artistic director of Opera Fusion: New Works, a groundbreaking partnership between the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) and Cincinnati Opera, she has co-produced 18 workshops of new operas, many of which have gone on to world premieres at major U.S. opera houses. Renowned as a teacher and leader in young artist training, she has taught at The Juilliard School and held The J. Ralph Corbett Distinguished Chair of Opera at CCM for more than a decade. She has also taught at the San Francisco Opera Center and the Merola Program, Wolf Trap Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Program, and Houston Grand Opera's young artist program. She is currently working with Scott Davenport Richards and David Cote on a second opera about the singer and activist Paul Robeson.

John Morris Russell (conductor) is in his tenth year as conductor of the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. Russell is also music director of the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra, where he leads the classical subscription series and the prestigious Hilton Head International Piano Competition. Additionally, Russell serves as principal Pops conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, following in the footsteps of Marvin Hamlisch and Doc Severinsen. With the Cincinnati Pops, Russell leads performances at historic Music Hall, concerts throughout the region, as well as domestic and international tours. His visionary leadership at the Cincinnati Pops created the "American Originals Project," which has garnered both critical and popular acclaim for its two landmark recordings: *American Originals*, featuring the music of Stephen Foster, and *American Originals 1918*, a tribute to the dawn of the Jazz Age, for which Russell was awarded a GRAMMY nomination for "Best Classical Compendium." Russell helped launch the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's wildly successful Classical Roots initiative, which celebrates African American musical traditions. As a guest conductor, Russell has worked with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Boston Pops, and the National Symphony Orchestra.

The **Ohio Innocence Project** at Cincinnati Law (OIP) was founded in 2003 and is the primary component of the University of Cincinnati's Rosenthal Institute for Justice. Harnessing the energy and intellect of law students as its driving force, the OIP seeks to identify inmates in Ohio prisons who are innocent of the

crimes they were convicted of committing. To date, the OIP's work has led to the release of 32 wrongfully convicted citizens who served a total of more than 625 years behind bars for crimes they did not commit. The book *Blind Injustice* written by Mark Godsey, the director of the Rosenthal Institute for Justice/Ohio Innocence Project, served as source material for the opera of the same name.

The **Young Professionals Choral Collective** (YPCC) is an innovative choral ensemble that combines Cincinnati's love of singing, socializing, and culture for young professionals ages 21 to 45. The ensemble brings together young, energetic people to create quality choral music and connect in a fun, accessible, and low-pressure environment. YPCC was formed in 2011 at Below Zero Lounge in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. Now comprised of a roster of more than 1,200 volunteer singers who live and work throughout the area, YPCC has quickly found a niche in the vibrant arts community of Cincinnati and has pioneered a choral model that is gaining national attention.

About Cincinnati Opera

Cincinnati Opera's mission is to enrich and connect our community through diverse opera experiences. Founded in 1920 and the second-oldest opera company in the nation, Cincinnati Opera presents a thrilling season of grand opera every summer and engaging programs throughout the year. The company's repertoire includes beloved classics and contemporary masterworks brought to life by some of the world's most dynamic performers and creative artists.

Cincinnati Opera receives support from ArtsWave, the Ohio Arts Council, The Louise Dieterle Nippert Musical Arts Fund, Patricia A. Corbett Estate and Trust, and the Harry T. Wilks Family Foundation, along with many other generous individuals, corporations, and foundations. Cincinnati Opera is a proud member of OPERA America.

To learn more, visit cincinnatiopera.org.

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