

Inaugural HBCU Opera
& Musical Theater
Summer Festival

Student Showcase

7:00 p.m., June 12, 2026
F.D. Hall Music Center
Jimmie James, Jr. Recital Hall
Jackson State University

conducted by
Julius P. Williams,
Berklee College of Music



OPERA



"EMPOWERING VOICES, CELEBRATING DIVERSITY"

HBCU OPERA &
MUSICAL THEATER
COLLECTIVE



Yale

OPERA
AMERICA





Three Jackson State University Department of Music scholars chosen to be a part of the Festival.
(L-R) Donte Wright, Julia Johnson, and Joshua Taylor. (Aron Smith/Jackson State University)



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from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Inaugural HBCU Opera and Musical Theater Festival

Dr. Julius P. Williams, conductor

Dr. Daniel Fung and Dr. Lester Green, pianists

Welcome

Dr. Phyllis Lewis-Hale
Associate Professor of Music, Jackson State University
President of HBCU Opera and Musical Theater Collective

from *Agrippina*
Bel piacere

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)
Angelina Persaud Farrell, soprano

Amarilli mia bella

Giulio Caccini (1551-1618)
Joshua Taylor, tenor

from *Don Giovanni*
La ci darem la mano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Edwin Jhamal Davis, bass
Sakinah A. Davis, soprano
Anna Sims, soprano

Batti, batti o bel Masetto

Clarinet Sonata in E Flat
II. Molto Allegro

Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)
Jalah Dorsey, clarinet

from *Le nozze di Figaro*
Porgi amor

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Julia Johnson, soprano

from *Orfeo ed Euridice*
Che faro senza Euridice

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787)
Ja'Myri Jones, mezzo soprano

from *Carmen*
Je dis que rien ne m'epouvante

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)
Phylicia Jones-Watkins, soprano

from *Le nozze di Figaro*
Dove sono i bei momenti

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Naomi Lee, soprano

Mother Goose Suite

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Marnix van den Berg (b. 1978)

- I. Pavane of Sleeping Beauty
- II. Tom Thumb
- III. The Fairy Garden

Romanian Folk Dances

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

- I. Jocul cu băță
- II. Brâul
- III. Pe loc
- IV. Buciumeana
- V. Poarga românească
- VI. Mărunțe

-----*Intermission*-----

from <i>Gianni Schicchi</i> O mio babbino caro	Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) Julia Johnson, soprano
from <i>La Boheme</i> <i>Vecchia zimarra, senti</i>	Edwin Jhamal Davis, bass
Cello Sonata in G Minor III. Andante	Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) Sage Mae Lima-Jeffries, cello
from <i>The Ballad of Baby Doe</i> Warm as the Autumn Light	Douglas Moore (1893-1969) Donte Wright, baritone
from <i>Porgy and Bess</i> Summertime	George Gershwin (1898-1937) Imani Harrison, soprano
The Negro Speaks of Rivers	Howard Swanson (1907-1978) Caris Green, bass
I Want Jesus to Walk with Me	arr. Edward Boatner, (1898-1981) Anna Sims, soprano
Give Me Jesus	arr. Moses Hogan, (1957-2003) Ja'Myri Jones, mezzo soprano
from <i>Little Shop of Horrors</i> Somewhere That's Green	Alan Menken (b. 1949) Tru Jones, mezzo-soprano
from <i>Wicked</i> For Good	Stephen Schwartz (b. 1948) Tru Jones, mezzo-soprano Naomi Lee, soprano
Valse Triste	Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)
Czardas	Vittorio Monti (1868-1922) Tyfarri Lee, steel pan

Festival Chamber Orchestra

<u>Violin</u> Bonnie Brown* Whitney Cooper Tyler Dennis* Asha White	<u>Bass</u> Glenn Hale*	<u>French Horn</u> Lisa Davis*
<u>Viola</u> Tammy Luke*	<u>Flutes</u> Zen Stewart Cheri Waite*	Robert Lamkin
<u>Cello</u> Emily Baker* Sage Mae Lima-Jeffries Ishmael Sutherland	Kendrick Williams <u>Clarinet</u> Jalah Dorsey Greg Harper James Masuka*	<u>Bassoon</u> Jon Wenberg*
		<u>Oboe</u> Brian Tucker*
		<u>Percussion</u> Tyfarri Lee

*denotes Mississippi Symphony Orchestra

Festival Faculty

Mr. Edwin Davis
Dr. Sakinah Davis
Dr. LaTannia Ellerbee
Dr. Daniel Fung

Dr. Lester Green
Dr. Albert Lee
Dr. Phyllis Lewis-Hale
Dr. Julius P. Williams

Guest Artists Clinicians

Dr. Tiffany Renée Jackson, soprano
Mrs. Sarah Ruff, violin

Festival Opera & Musical Theater Cohort

Caris Green
Imani Harrison
Julia Johnson
Ja'Myri Jones

Tru Jones
Phylicia Jones-Watkins
Naomi Lee
Angelina Persaud Farrell

Anna Sims
Joshua Taylor
Donte Wright

Festival Instrumental Cohort

Whitney Cooper
Jalah Dorsey
Greg Harper
Robert Lamkin

Tyfarri Lee
Sage Mae Lima-Jeffries
Zen Stewart

Ishmael Sutherland
Kendrick Williams
Asha White

Acknowledgements:

Dr. Denise Jones Gregory, President
Dr. Preselfannie McDaniels, Interim Provost, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dr. Almesha Campbell, Vice President for Research and Economic Development
Dr. Rico Chapman, Dean, College of Liberal Arts
Dr. Lisa Beckley-Roberts, Chair, Department of Music
Mr. Ramon Jackson, Assistant Chair, Department of Music
Ms. Jaelin Walker, Administrative Assistant, Department of Music
Dr. Robert Luckett, Director of Margaret Walker Center
Patrice Jones, Margaret Walker Center
Patricia Syner, Margaret Walker Center
John Christopher Adams
JSU Development Foundation
JSU Office of Events
JSU Office of Institutional Advancement
JSU Public Relations
Visit Jackson
The Orchid Bed & Breakfast
Sodexo Catering

Volunteers:

Patrice J. Boone
Rayveon Clark
China Collins
Ryanna Cotton
LaTannia Ellerbee

Ja'Myri Jones
Dalre Martin
Twana Rigsby
Kayla Sanders
Octavia Simmons

Logan Tucker
Conesha
Washington-Barron
Bobbie Wilson



In 1971, the OPERA/SOUTH Company was founded as a groundbreaking intercollegiate opera initiative involving Jackson State College (today Jackson State University), Tougaloo College, and Utica Junior College (today Hinds Community College – Utica). Established through the Mississippi Intercollegiate Opera Guild under the leadership of Sister Mary Elise Sisson and other visionary educators, OPERA/SOUTH became one of the nation’s most significant Black opera companies and a pioneering force for African American artists in classical music and opera.

The company gained national recognition for presenting culturally relevant productions, commissioning and premiering works by Black composers, and creating professional opportunities for Black singers, musicians, dancers, and technicians during a period when access to major opera stages remained limited. Over several decades, OPERA/SOUTH established Jackson as a center for African American operatic artistry. Founding supporters included prominent figures such as Sidney Poitier, Ossie Davis, and Margaret Walker.

In 2006, OPERA/SOUTH was revived at Jackson State, preserving the company’s educational and performance mission. Under the leadership of Dr. Phyllis Lewis-Hale, the modern OPERA/SOUTH revitalization initiative seeks to restore the organization as a nationally recognized HBCU-centered hub for opera, musical theater, cultural preservation, community engagement, and professional artist training.

Through local and national collaborations, the HBCU Opera & Musical Theater Summer Festival was created to support the mission of OPERA/SOUTH to cultivate artistic excellence, preserve cultural legacy, and build a nationally recognized HBCU-centered ecosystem for classical vocal and theatrical training. The week-long summer festival combines masterclasses, coaching, performances, career-building workshops, recitals, chamber orchestra collaborations, and the development of new works, including the concert reading of *Jubilee: A Folk Opera*.

"EMPOWERING VOICES, CELEBRATING DIVERSITY"

HBCU OPERA & MUSICAL THEATER COLLECTIVE

As a collective of students and faculty from Historically Black Colleges and Universities in partnership with industry professionals, we aim to inspire artistic excellence, cultural preservation, and professional opportunity.





Jubilee

A FOLK OPERA

Premiere Concert Reading
Music by Randy Klein
Libretto by Joan Ross Sorkin

4:00 p.m., June 14, 2026
F.D. Hall Music Center
Jimmie James, Jr., Recital Hall
Jackson State University

