

Brian Stokes Mitchell

with the University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra

Dr. William LaRue Jones, conductor

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

7:30 pm



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THE PROGRAM

The University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra

DR. WILLIAM LARUE JONES, Conductor

Concerto for Two Pianos in E-flat Major, K. 365 Wolfgang A. Mozart

Allegro

(1756-1791)

Andante

Rondo-Allegro

RÉNE LECUONA and ALAN HUCKLEBERRY, pianists

Danzón No. 2

Arturo Márquez

(1950-)

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Brian Stokes Mitchell AND HIS TRIO

MARK HUMMEL *Grand piano*

CLINT DeGANON *Drums*

GARY HAASE *Acoustic Upright Bass & Electric Bass*

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The University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra

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BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL

Dubbed “the last leading man” by the *New York Times*, Tony Award-winner Brian Stokes Mitchell has enjoyed a career that spans Broadway, television, film, and concert appearances with the country’s finest conductors and orchestras. He received Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle awards for his star turn in *Kiss Me, Kate*. He also gave Tony-nominated performances in *Man of La Mancha*, August Wilson’s *King Hedley II*, and *Ragtime*. Other notable Broadway shows include *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Jelly’s Last Jam*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* and this past Broadway season, *Shuffle Along*. Off-Broadway includes *Do Re Mi*, *Carnival*, *Kismet*, and *The Bandwagon* at City Center Encores and *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Delacorte Theater’s Shakespeare in the Park.

Stokes (as he prefers to be called) was born in Seattle, Washington, on Halloween. His father, George Mitchell, was a civilian electronics engineer working for the Navy and later the chief radio officer with both Scripps Institute of Oceanography and Exxon. His father was also one of the original “Tuskegee Airmen” having taught radio code at Moton Field, Alabama. His mother, Lillian Mitchell, was an educator. Stokes spent his childhood in Seattle, San Diego, Guam, and the Philippines. He moved back to the United States at the age of 14 and began studying acting, singing, and dancing at San Diego Jr. Theatre. Within two years he was performing on various San Diego stages including the Old Globe Theatre and San Diego’s Starlight Opera Company. A transfer to Los Angeles with the 12th Night Repertory Company gave him the opportunity to start a long career in television and film.

An extremely versatile singer, Stokes has performed at venues all over the country spanning jazz, opera, pops, country, and the musical theater world. He has performed with John Williams, Gustavo Dudamel, Marvin Hamlisch, Keith Lockhart, Michael Tilson Thomas, Leonard Slatkin, Bobby McFerrin, Dianne Reeves, The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Big Band, The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and the Muppets. Stokes has made multiple appearances at Carnegie Hall beginning with his debut with the San Francisco Symphony through his televised performance in *South Pacific* opposite Reba McEntire to his sold-out solo concert, which he continues to perform throughout the U.S. Venues he has appeared at include Disney Hall, Tanglewood, Ravinia, The Hollywood Bowl, Radio City Music Hall, Boston’s Symphony Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center. He has twice been invited to perform at the White House and has sung for Presidents Clinton and Obama.

Stokes has delved deeply into various music disciplines. In addition to singing, he began piano studies at the age of six. His musical curiosity lead him to an interest in orchestration, arranging, and film scoring which he first started studying on his own in his late teens. He later studied film scoring, orchestration, and conducting through UCLA and scored and conducted a number of *Trapper John, M.D.* episodes, a series on which he was also a regular cast member. His musical talent has extended to the present day as producer, arranger, and orchestrator on his own albums including his last release, *Simply Broadway*. *Simply Broadway* is an album of classic Broadway tunes that have been musically reimagined but still retain the spirit of the originals. It features the Tony-winning singer accompanied by a solo piano and was released in the fall of 2012. It was recorded in the “old-school” style, without overdubs or audio separation—Stokes and his pianist, Tedd Firth, were in the same room at the same time as they recorded the tracks. The song selection includes works from *Camelot*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Company*, *Sunday in the Park With George*, *Les Misérables*, and other classics. Stokes has appeared on more than 20

albums, his most recent being a recording of “What The World Needs Now” with other members of the Broadway community to help those affected by the tragedy at The Pulse club in Orlando, Florida. He is currently in the studio completing his latest album, *Plays With Music* which will be released this year.



His extensive screen credits began with a guest starring role on *Roots: The Next Generations* which lead to a 7-year stint on *Trapper John, M.D.* His 40-year long TV/Film run continued with memorable appearances on everything from PBS' *Great Performances* to *Frasier*, *The Prince of Egypt* (singing “Through Heaven’s Eyes”), *Glee*, *Jumping the Broom*, *Madam Secretary*, and *The Blacklist*. For the past two seasons he has recurring roles on *Mr. Robot* and Hulu’s *The Path*. As a voice-over artist he has portrayed dozens of characters on animated TV episodes. NPR aired his narration of Aaron Copland’s *Lincoln Portrait* with the U.S. Marine Band. His second performance at the White House, *A Celebration of American Creativity*, was aired this year on PBS.

As a writer, Stokes has contributed to the book *Hirschfeld’s Harlem*, wrote the preface to *At This Theatre*, and co-authored the children’s book *Lights on Broadway*.

Stokes has received a number of awards for both his charitable and artistic work including the New Dramatist’s Distinguished Achievement Award, the Actors Fund Julie Harris Award, Canada’s Dora Mavor Moore Award (The Canadian “Tony”), and the Americans for the Arts Outstanding Contribution to the Arts Award. In 1998 he joined the likes of Helen Hayes, Sir John Gielgud, Alec Guinness, and James Earl Jones when he became the sole recipient of the Distinguished Performance Award from the Drama League, the nation’s oldest theatrical honor, for his performance in *Ragtime*. In November of 2016 he was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame.

Stokes is a great proponent of arts education and speaks passionately about the importance of art in all of our lives. Last year he was the entertainment host at the first night of Lincoln Center’s Global Exchange and is a member of Americans for the Arts, a non-partisan arts lobbying organization. He has enjoyed working with numerous other charitable organizations from the March of Dimes to the USO. Stokes has been the Chairman of the Board of the Actors Fund for the last 13 years and this year received the Isabelle Stevenson Tony Award for his work with that organization.

For fun he has been known to fly planes and jump out of them (usually not at the same time), and he can ride a bicycle on a high wire. He resides in New York City with his wife, son, and rescued mutt.

For more information go to brianstokes.com.

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WILLIAM LARUE JONES

William LaRue Jones is “one of the most active and versatile symphonic conductors in America today, possessing a unique ability to work effectively with musicians at all levels of performing capability and experience” (Minneapolis *Star Tribune*). His conducting schedule includes a wide array of professional, festival, collegiate, and student ensembles throughout North America, Latin America, Europe, and Asia, ranging from the Minnesota Orchestra and the Minneapolis Pops to the Penang (Malaysia) Symphony, the Antofagasta (Chile) Symphony, and the Symphony Orchestra of Lucerne (Switzerland) to the Orquestra Sinfônica do Theatro da Paz (Belem, Brazil). He returns annually to China to conduct orchestras and present conducting master classes. Recent engagements include conducting orchestras in the Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Xi'an, Nanning, Shenyang, Zhengzhou, Shijiazhuang, Tianjin, Nanchang, Sichuan, and Hong Kong. Other orchestras in Asia include Singapore, and in the Malaysian cities Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Kedah, and Penang. In addition, Jones has conducted over 100 all-state orchestras with additional festivals and clinics in each of the 50 United States and each Canadian province.

As a professional performer, noted for his outstanding technique and musicality, Jones was principal bassoon of the Minnesota Opera and Minnesota Ballet, and was first call associate with the Minnesota Orchestra and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra for over 15 seasons. He has performed under such esteemed maestros as Stanisław Skrowaczewski, Klaus Tennstedt, Antal Doráti, Charles Dutoit, Aaron Copland, Zubin Mehta, Neville Marriner, Edo de Waart, Daniel Barenboim, and Leonard Slatkin, to name a few.

Since 1997, Dr. Jones has been professor of music, director of orchestral studies, and conductor of orchestras and opera at the University of Iowa (Iowa City). In 2008/9, the State of Iowa and the University of Iowa selected Dr. Jones for the Regents Award for Faculty Excellence. He was also appointed an Obermann Scholar and a Stanley International Fellow in 2008. In 2011, he received the designation of Collegiate Fellow in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Jones is currently music director/conductor of the Ottumwa Symphony Orchestra. He has previously held the position of music director/conductor of the Oshkosh Symphony Orchestra, Bloomington (MN) Symphony Orchestra. He holds the titles of founder and conductor laureate of Greater Twin Cities' Youth Symphonies (MN) and conductor emeritus of the 3M Symphony.

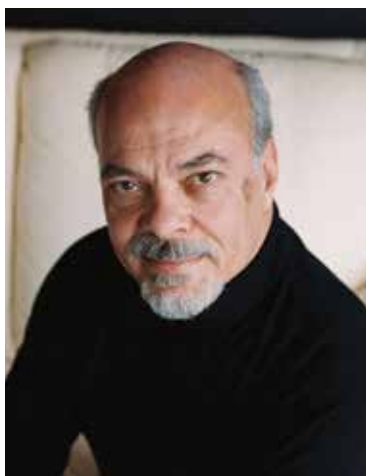
For his untiring work on behalf of music and arts education, he has been honored with the 2013 “Medal of Honor” presented by the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic (Chicago). In addition, he has received the American String Teachers Association's Exceptional Leadership and Merit Award, the David W. Preuss Leadership Award, the Sigma Alpha Iota Musician of the Year Award, WCCO Radio “Good Neighbor Award” and the State of Minnesota Governors' Proclamation of “Dr. William LaRue Jones Week”.

Recognition of Jones' outstanding gestural skills and score analysis has made him a sought-after teacher of conducting. He is the founding artistic director of the critically acclaimed Conductors Workshop of America and was the lead member of the conducting faculty of the International Workshops where he also served as conductor of the International String Orchestra. Jones has also presented conducting seminars/workshops internationally for professional/educational associations in Japan, Norway, Australia, Scotland, Austria,

Germany, Malaysia, Switzerland, France, Brazil, and China.

In 1972, Dr. Jones founded the Greater Twin Cities' Youth Symphonies (MN) which he guided to international acclaim during a 25-year tenure. The program became a model for youth orchestra structures worldwide, comprised of eight full orchestras involving over 1000 students annually.

A Texas native, Dr. Jones holds degrees from the University of Wisconsin, University of Iowa and Kansas State University, with additional studies at The Juilliard School of Music and the University of North Texas.



RÉNE LECUONA

Dr. Réne Lecuona has been praised by critics in Germany, the UK, and the U.S. for her chamber music interpretations and solo performances, and she has performed throughout South America, Mexico, the Caribbean, and the United States. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in Weill Recital Hall with mezzo-soprano Katherine Eberle and in the Goodman Hall at Lincoln Center with soprano Rachel Joselson. Her playing has been featured on many compact discs, including a recording of the music of Margaret Brouwer (CRI label), which won the 2000 Contemporary Art Music Burton Award. She may be heard on



Centaur Records, Innova Recordings, Capstone Records, Cybele Recording, Albany Records, and Composers Recordings International.

Dr. Lecuona is professor of piano at the University of Iowa. A devoted teacher, Réne has prepared students for admission and scholarship in performance programs at prestigious institutions such as the New England Conservatory, the University of Michigan, Florida State University, the Manhattan School of Music, the Eastman School of Music, Northwestern University, Peabody Conservatory, and Aspen Music Festival. Her former students hold teaching posts in Germany and Brazil as well as in the U.S.

Réne Lecuona earned a doctor of musical arts degree in piano performance and was awarded a performer's certificate at the Eastman School of Music. She received undergraduate and master's degrees at the Indiana University School of Music. Her major teachers have included Menahem Pressler of the Beaux Arts Trio, the late György Sebök, Edward Auer, Shigeo Neriki, and Rebecca Penneys. Réne was raised in Corning, New York, and studied piano for many years with Laurie Conrad of Ithaca, New York.

ALAN HUCKLEBERRY

Praised for his “impeccable musicianship, exhilarating technique, and panache” (*American Record Guide*), pianist Alan Huckleberry is recognized as a multi-faceted artist on the classical music scene. He has performed both in recitals and as a soloist with orchestras in Germany, England, Czech Republic, Italy, Austria, Spain, France, Costa Rica, Colombia, and across the United States.



Huckleberry is also in demand as a chamber musician, with recitals across the United States, Australia, and Europe. He can be heard on nine compact disc recordings on the Crystal Record, MSR Albany Record, and Summit labels. His tenth CD of oboe, bassoon, and piano trio music was released in 2017. This summer he will also commence recording the complete 28 sonatas with piano by Paul Hindemith. By Hindemith's 125th birthday in 2020, all seven CDs will be available for download.

Dr. Huckleberry is currently professor of piano, piano pedagogy, and collaborative arts at the University of Iowa. There he heads the piano pedagogy program, which is recognized as one of the leading programs in the nation. He is a sought-after speaker on pedagogical topics, including talks at the World Piano Pedagogy Conference, the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy, and the Music Teachers National Conference. At the University of Iowa, he maintains a studio of national and international students, who themselves are beginning to leave their mark in their field. In fact, all DMA graduates from his piano pedagogy program are now teaching at academic institutions across the country and abroad.

A native of Indiana, Huckleberry began piano lessons with Juanita Cleveland (now Nash) before moving to Germany where he studied with Polish pianist Barbara Szczepanska. Further studies at the conservatories of Karlsruhe and Cologne with Japanese pedagogue Naoyuki Taneda and German pianist Josef A. Scherrer solidified a diverse and international musical background. He then returned to the United States where he received his doctorate at the University of Michigan under the guidance of Arthur Greene (performance), Martin Katz (collaborative piano), and John Ellis (pedagogy).

Huckleberry's repertoire not only includes the standard works of the piano literature, but he is an ardent supporter of new music and young composers, as seen by a long list of compositions which were written for him. Among the many 20th and 21st century styles he enjoys, he is particularly interested in contemporary rags and other crossover genres.

Dr. Huckleberry is in the midst of a massive video recording project. Together with Dr. Jason Sifford, he is creating the largest known database of performances of piano pedagogical literature. In the end, it will encompass some 9000 videos of beginning to intermediate repertoire. The videos are available to all, free of charge, at YouTube (search: UIPIANOPED). To go along with his video project, Dr. Huckleberry has created a Wiki style website, which includes piano pedagogical information on each recorded piece, as well as composer and publisher information. Visit alanhuckleberry.com.

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Can Balcik Moretti*
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Joshua Palazzolo*
Catherine Rinderknecht Moritz*
Maia Hove*
Mila Kaut
Joanna Held
Daniel Thompson
Xinyi Peng

VIOLIN 2

Samuel Stapleton*
Amalia Helmkamp*
Anna Bonder
Arielle Soemadi
Ella Lee
Guillermo Najarro
Montana Crawford
Patrick Hiatt
Haemin Han
Nicole Allen
Nora Barker
Logan Flott

VIOLA

Tyler Hendrickson*
Alyssa Adamec*
Mary Otto*
Dana Mietus*
Kaitlyn Voss
Margaret Allen
Anjah Droe
Alex Jiricek
William Narhi
Anton Nicholas Hoherz

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Bennet Huang*
Tonio Meade*
Rachel Gibbons*
Caleb Fruhling
Alexander Wemmie
Nathan Golden
Joseph Ellis
Brooke Steele

BASS

Alexander Ferkey*
William Yager*
Derek Barnes*
Greta Tesdahl
Dalton Hinz
Cescily Vance

FLUTE

Daniela Volkovinsky
Maeve McGonigal
Cristina Bates
Gregory Bardwell

OBOE

Matt Goulding
Josh Yem

CLARINET

Joe Valenti
Mario Zavala

BASSOON

Shawn Seguin
Rob Hillman

HORN

Komsun Dilokkunanant
Amanda Thomas
Katey Halbert
Max Kayser
Michael Kegel

TRUMPET

Evan Fowler
Kenken Gorder
Kamal Talukder

TROMBONE

Austin Seybert
Caleb Lambert
Matthew Halbert

TUBA

Jakson Cole

TIMPANI

Travis Newman

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Paul Downing
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HARP

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Ferdinand Bac (French, 1859-1952), *What are looking for in the sky, crazy old man?*, c. 1950, ink on paper, Collection of Madame Sylviane Jullian



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PROGRAM NOTES

CONCERTO FOR TWO PIANOS IN E-FLAT MAJOR, K. 365 WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Mozart's Concerto for two pianos in E-flat major was probably composed in 1779 in his native Salzburg after he had returned from touring. The work was intended for Mozart's sister Nannerl, a talented pianist who had performed with him during their childhoods. Two years later, when Mozart took up residence in Vienna, he requested that his father send him the score of the Double Concerto. The composer played it twice with his piano student, Josepha Auernhammer, first in a salon performance attended by aristocrats and again in 1782 at the Augarten concerts, a more public venue. During World War II, the Concerto's autograph was removed for safekeeping from the Berlin State Library, along with those of multiple composers, and was for many years believed lost. However, it later reappeared in the Jagiellonian University Library in Kraków, Poland.

The Concerto opens boldly with a unison downward leap, turning quickly to the expected hustle and bustle of a lively Allegro. When the pianists enter they decorate the leap with trills. Mozart takes full advantage of the double soloists, who toss thematic material back and forth throughout the movement and also introduce the charming second theme. The recapitulation of the opening makes a turn into the darker minor mode, an unexpected harmonic shift that also takes place in the following two movements. The serene Adagio, opening with oboes and strings, likewise introduces the soloists with trills and exudes rococo elegance. The tunefulness of the final Rondo sometimes evokes opera buffa, though its propulsive rhythms allow for much pianistic brilliance. A cadenza for two soloists would have been difficult to improvise, so Mozart provided the final one himself.

—Marian Wilson Kimber

DANZÓN NO. 2 ARTURO MÁRQUEZ

Arturo Márquez is widely acknowledged as one of the foremost composers of Mexican music. Drawing on the sounds of both mariachi musicians and folk singers, Márquez writes in a language that is heavily inspired by the dance parlors of his childhood. The composer left a career in folk music to pursue musical composition, enrolling in the National Conservatory of Music in Mexico City at sixteen. He later studied privately with Jacques Castérède in Paris. Although Márquez has been an enthusiastic collaborator in a number of multimedia projects (*Música de cámara*, *Son y Tamayo*), he is most recognized for the fusion of folk and orchestral music in his numerous settings of the *danzón*.

Since its 2007 premiere by the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra under renowned conductor Gustavo Dudamel, *Danzón No. 2* has afforded Márquez a great deal of fame—so much so that it is frequently referred to as Mexico's second national anthem. *Danzón No. 2* is scored for full orchestra and features solos for clarinet, oboe, piano, violin, trumpet, and piccolo. Thanks to an arrangement by Oliver Nickel, the piece has also earned a spot in modern concert band literature. Like the Cuban dance for which it is named, the piece creates rhythmic interest through varying accents and tempi. Márquez is not the only composer for whom the *danzón* held particular significance: Aaron

Copland wrote his *Danzón Cubano*, inspired by the “stately dance” that provided an “elegant and precise” contrast to other stylistic forms, following a visit to Cuba in 1942. Of his own *Danzón No. 2*, Márquez states, “I discovered that the apparent lightness of the danzón hides a music full of sensuality and rigor, music of nostalgia and joy that our old folks live with, a world that we can still grasp in the dance music of Veracruz and the dance halls of Mexico City. *Danzón No. 2* is a tribute to the world that nurtured it.”

-Arthur Scoleri



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The Promise of Happiness:

A bit of background on some of the songs you're about to enjoy

By Jake Stigers

Please note: Mr. Mitchell's program is subject to change.

The program for tonight's concert is a selection of songs celebrating the spectrum of human experience, emotion, and even our sense of fun. Some are beloved standards lifted without need for context from old-chestnut musicals. But some of them play pivotal roles—both in plot and character evolution—in propelling specific aspects of a show forward. And while the songs are delightful on their own, hearing them can be much more meaningful with a little context and backstory.

“Getting Married Today” is a tongue-twisting patter song that chugs at warp speed through the terrified delusions of Amy, a neurotic, delightfully kooky bride-to-be desperately clinging to every fear she's ever had about the unnamed terrors of marriage that she is certain await her. She's betrothed to the ever-patient Paul, who has spent their entire courtship and engagement keeping her calm and focused while keeping himself blissfully optimistic about the certainty of their upcoming wedding...only to have Amy dramatically threaten “look, perhaps / I'll collapse / in the apse / right before you all” to scare Paul and all their guests away the morning of their nuptials.

Amy and Paul are one of five couples in various stages of courtship, marriage, disillusionment, and divorce who help shape the bachelor protagonist Bobby's views of relationships in *Company*, the 1970 character-study musical conceived by the composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim and book writer George Furth.

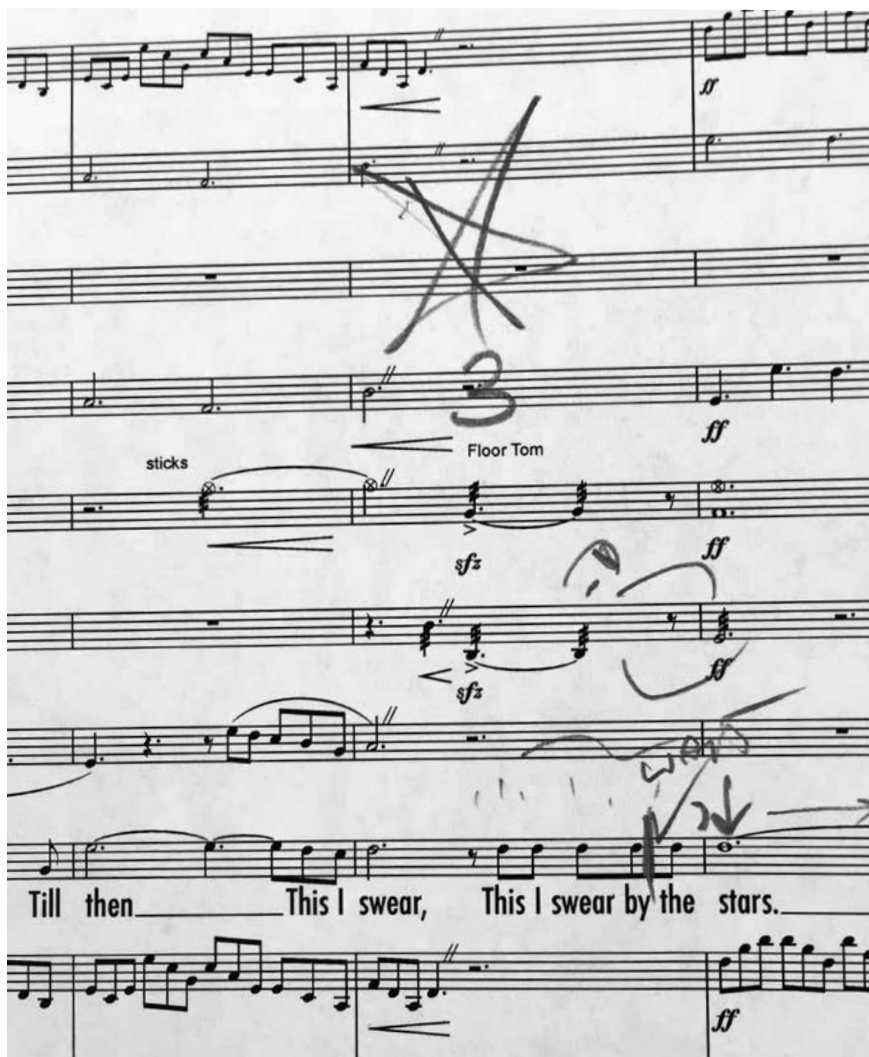
As any die-hard Sondheim fan—there's probably one sitting within a couple chairs of you as you read this—can attest, “Getting Married Today” is Sondheim at his inspired finest: It's a Swiss-watch assemblage of rapid-fire words, emotions, plot points, and cultural references that effortlessly—well, unless you're singing it—define Amy and the world that both terrifies and shapes her... without one extraneous word or note.

Every leading comedic actress since 1970—from Carol Burnett to Madeline Kahn to Julie Andrews—has tackled the song in concert, but it's rare that you get to hear a man—especially one with such a decidedly not-psychotic presence as Brian Stokes Mitchell—brave this riveting lunacy backed by a full orchestra.

Fun fact: “Getting Married Today” was originally sung by the neurotic, delightfully kooky Beth Howland, whom audience members of a certain age will likely remember for her portrayal of the neurotic, delightfully kooky Vera Gorman on the sitcom *Alice* from 1976 to 1985.

While “Getting Married Today” shimmers in a galaxy of literally breathtaking eighth notes, **“Stars,”** from the musical *Les Misérables*, provides a firmament of illumination into the motivations of a fixated, driven man.

It's sung by Inspector Javert, who—after losing track of the fugitive Jean Valjean twice in his decades-long obsession with returning him to prison for stealing a loaf of bread—finally crosses paths with Valjean again amid the early rumblings of a peasant uprising in Paris. Though Valjean escapes, Javert makes a solemn vow to the stars above him that he will recapture Valjean and return him to



A detail of Brian Stokes Mitchell's sheet music for *Stars*.

his rightful imprisonment, just as the stars “fill ... the darkness / with order and light.”

In the sociopolitical chaos and moral uncertainties of his world, Javert sees in the stars above him a just and ordered universe to guide him. “You know your place in the sky / you hold your course and your aim,” he sings, seeing their stalwart presence as divine guidance telling him “that those who falter and those who fall / must pay the price.”

Les Misérables reawakened American appetites for grand, operatic musicals when it came from London to Broadway in 1987. Based on the grand, operatic 1862 novel by Victor Hugo, it brings the thoughts and motivations of flawed, complex characters to life through gorgeous music by Claude-Michel Schönberg and English lyrics by Herbert Kretzmer and James Fenton.

Javert sings “Stars” toward the end of Act I, and the song—a tour-de-force of nuance and bombast that sits right in every baritone’s money-note range—brings human, emotional insight to the curiously obsessive crusade of a man driven by gods the rest of us don’t know. And whether or not you agree with Javert’s thinking, the song brilliantly helps you understand his motivations.

In joyful contrast to the orderly, draconian emotions of “Stars,” **“Wheels of a Dream”** celebrates the possibilities both dreamt and undreamt for a young man and his new family in a glorious, changing world.

The song is from *Ragtime*, the 1998 Tony-winning musical by composer/lyricists Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens and book writer Terrence McNally. It explores the clash of cultures and the assimilation of ideas among the white leisure class, the residents of black Harlem, and the European immigrants looking for a new life in America—all of whom cautiously circle each other both literally figuratively throughout the show in a mix of fear, curiosity, and resolve at the dawn of the 20th Century.

Based on the 1975 novel by E.L. Doctorow, the musical follows the life of ragtime pianist Coalhouse Walker, Jr.—a role for which Brian Stokes Mitchell received a Tony nomination in the original Broadway production—as he discovers that he has a young son with a star-struck woman named Sarah.

It is a new century, filled with the promise of new equalities and new frontiers for Coalhouse, Sarah, and their child. As a black man who has worked hard to overcome insurmountable obstacles to success, Coalhouse marvels with both awe and pride in “Wheels of a Dream” about “a country that lets a man like me / own a car, raise a child, build a life with you.”

Just as his car is a metaphor for the freedom and promise he’s earned for his family, ragtime music itself is a metaphor for the cultural conflicts and unexpected new beauties of the world evolving around him.

The unfamiliar dissonances and seemingly unrelated counterpoints of ragtime clash and blend and resolve into a brilliant new musical language that beautifully underscores what *Ragtime*’s prologue calls “an era exploding / a century spinning” in the early 1900s. As ragtime music was disassembling and rebuilding the way Americans heard music, the cultural proprieties of the Victorians and the social veneers of the Gilded Age started melting away in a sea of European immigrants looking to make new lives in America, along with the jubilant freedoms of black people who were starting to feel tangible changes and opportunities emerge from their generation-old emancipation so they, too, could claim their own place in America.

“Wheels of a Dream” is an anthem celebrating Coalhouse’s hopes and ambitions for the future he, Sarah, and their son long to have. From the piston-firings of its orchestration to the lyric “that car full of hope / will always gleam,” it takes the characters and the audience alike on a glorious emotional and musical journey.

Your journey tonight through the spectrum of music performed by Brian Stokes Mitchell—the original Coalhouse Walker, Jr., himself—promises to be just as glorious.

Jake Stigers is a writer, editor, performer, and unrepentant musical-theater lover living in Cedar Rapids. He hasn’t let go of his own dream that he, too, will one day sing “Getting Married Today” in front of a paying audience.

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MEET ERIN

One of Hancher's 197 student employees

Basic information:

Erin Durian. Senior from Iowa City majoring in dance and theatre.

What is your position at Hancher?

Stagehand.

How long have you worked at Hancher?

Two years.

What is your favorite part about Hancher?

I love the arts community connected to Hancher. I've met so many different people from different backgrounds, by working and coming to Hancher shows and we're all connected by this love of the arts. It's really nice to have this large of a community of people who care about and support art and are willing to come together and experience it all together. It's a great atmosphere.

Do you have any favorite Hancher show you've worked or attended?

I worked the first show in the new building with the aerial group Quixotic, and I got to put out flaming torches with my bare hands.

Do you have a favorite spot in Iowa City?

The public library. I love to just wander the shelves and pick out a few books that look interesting to me that day. I always find two or three. It's also really pretty and a quiet, cozy place to read or do homework on an armchair on the second floor.

Do you have any favorite TV shows, movies, bands, or books?

Books: *The Book Thief*, *Les Misérables*, *Harry Potter*. Movies: I really love all of Pedro Almodóvar's films, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Lord of the Rings*.

TV shows: *Seinfeld*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, *Sherlock*. Bands: Mumford & Sons, Lord Huron, Ben Howard.

Do you have any favorite classes you've taken at the University of Iowa?

I took a class on Don Quixote where we read the entire book in Spanish.

What are your eventual career goals? How does working at Hancher help you achieve those goals?

I hope to work in dance production. Working at Hancher has been a great experience [in terms of] working backstage and learning about the industry.

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