

**Detroit
Opera**

Detroit Opera Celebrates the Grandest of Operas with *Aida* in Concert December 30

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Photo Credit: Detroit Opera

DETROIT, December 21, 2022 - [Detroit Opera](#)'s 2022–23 opera season continues with a one-night-only concert performance of Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* on December 30 at 6:30pmET. The evening showcases an all-star cast in this grandest of operas, which returns to the Detroit Opera House stage for the first time since 2013. The concert features two of the most important sopranos of our time: **Angel Blue** debuts as Aida, in advance of her first full production of the work at London's Royal Opera Covent Garden in May 2023, Detroit Opera's own **Christine Goerke** makes her role debut as Amneris, and **Jonathon Heyward**, recently named Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, will conduct the performance. The stellar cast also features Riccardo Massi (Radamès), Reginald Smith, Jr. (Amonasro), Morris Robinson (Ramfis), Kenneth Kellogg (King of Egypt), plus Detroit Opera Resident Artists Melanie Spector (Priestess) and Leo Williams (Messenger).

Few operas offer as many musical thrills as *Aida*—from the powerful Triumphant March to the intimate passion expressed between secret lovers from rival kingdoms. Verdi's magic is his

ability to let you feel the grandness of the setting from the music alone. The four-act drama takes place in ancient Egypt, against the backdrop of war. Aida is an Ethiopian princess enslaved to Amneris, daughter of the Pharaoh. They both fall in love with Radamès, the Egyptian commander-in-chief who leads the Egyptians in victory against the Ethiopians. Radamès, torn between his love for Aida and duty to his country, ultimately commits treason and is entombed alive with Aida inside. Amneris mourns for Radamès as Aida dies in his arms.

In *Aida*, says Yuval Sharon, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director, “Verdi’s mastery is revealed less in the music’s opulence and more in its economy. The duet between father and daughter, Aida and Amonasro, is an example of the brevity and brilliance that the elder Verdi spent a lifetime perfecting. The Judgment Scene is a dramatic tour de force for Amneris, who realizes that her own position of authority means nothing within a pitiless political machine. And the final duet—Aida and Radames dying in a sealed-off tomb; Amneris, numb, condemned to joylessness—ends the opera not with blaring fanfares but in pianissimo. This concert, then, allows each audience member a recalibration of their ears to what this work might actually be saying. Your own imagination is now fully responsible for the scenic realization; feel free to populate the theater of your mind with the most exotic animals you’ve ever seen! But along the way, keep your ears open for the real Verdi.”

The December 30 event marks [Angel Blue](#)’s first appearance on the Detroit Opera stage as well as her role debut as Aida. The Grammy Award-winning opera singer made history as the first Black woman to sing the fully staged role of Violetta in Verdi’s *La traviata* in Italy’s Teatro alla Scala in March 2019. *Broadway World* described Blue’s recent performance as Violetta as “magnificent. Blue blends exquisite phrasing with a powerful voice to almost violent effect. With seemingly little effort, her performance makes one of London’s grandest stages seem more intimate.” Having appeared in recital and in concert in more than 35 countries, Blue won the Richard Tucker Award in 2022, and in 2020 she became the first Black singer to receive the Beverly Sills Award from the Metropolitan Opera.

“I’m excited to perform in the city which birthed Motown and so much of the music industry as we know it today,” says Blue. “I’m equally thrilled that Detroit is the place where I debut in the role of Aida. In this powerful story about love, Aida must choose between the love of her life or the love of her people. Through Verdi’s work and the beauty of opera, we can dramatically explore life’s complexities—allegiance, freedom and love.”

Detroit Opera’s Associate Artistic Director, [Christine Goerke](#), makes her role debut as Amneris on December 30. In September, Detroit audiences were treated to her signature portrayal of Brünnhilde in *The Valkyries*, “progressing from girlish enthusiasm to defiance to tragic acceptance, her soprano thrilling from top to bottom,” as the *Dallas Morning News* has described it. This fall, Goerke was awarded the Chevalier of L’ordre des arts et lettres by the French government, recognizing artists who have made a significant contribution to furthering the arts in France and throughout the world. This December 30 concert will provide Detroit audiences with another chance to hear Goerke in what is sure to become another signature role.

This concert also marks [Jonathon Heyward](#)’s debut appearance on Detroit Opera stage. At age 21, Heyward became the youngest ever semifinalist at the Blue Danube International Opera

Conducting Competition. Currently Chief Conductor of Germany's Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie and heralded as one of the most exciting conductors on the international scene, Heyward returns to Detroit following appearances with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra earlier this month.

Italian tenor [Riccardo Massi](#) returns to the Detroit Opera stage to reprise Radamès, a role he sang here in 2013. Bass [Morris Robinson](#) (Ramfis) performs for the second time at Detroit Opera; audiences will recall his 2020 performance as Hagen in the company's *Twilight: Gods*. Bass-baritone [Kenneth Kellogg](#) (King of Egypt) returns to Detroit for his third company performance, after portraying The Father in Detroit Opera's performances of Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's *Blue* (2021) and Sam Bakewell in Daniel Sonenburg and Daniel Nester's *The Summer King* (2018). The December 30 performance will feature the outstanding musicians of the Detroit Opera orchestra and two of Detroit Opera's [Resident Artists](#): soprano Melanie Spector and tenor Leo Williams, making their official Detroit Opera debuts.

Aida in Concert will be performed in Italian with English titles on Friday, December 30, at 6:30 pm. Run time is approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes, with one intermission. Tickets for *Aida in Concert* are available online at DetroitOpera.org and start at \$29. Orders for groups may be placed by emailing groupsales@detroitopera.org. Subscriptions for the 2022-23 season can also be purchased online or by calling 313-237-7464.

Upcoming 2023 opera productions at Detroit Opera include a revival of Tazewell Thompson's Glimmerglass production of Handel's *Xerxes* (March 4-12), directed by James Blaszko and conducted by Dame Jane Glover, and Golijov's *Fountain of Tears (Ainadamar)* (April 8-16), the latter a co-production with Opera Ventures, Scottish National Opera, and the Welsh National Opera, directed by Deborah Colker and conducted by Paolo Bortolameolli. The dance season continues as French company **Ballet Preljocaj** takes flight in a reinvention of the timeless masterpiece *Swan Lake*, co-presented with University Musical Society (February 17-19). **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** returns to the Detroit Opera House stage to transcend barriers and celebrate the African American experience (March 17-19). Nina Ananiashvili will lead a rare U.S. appearance of the esteemed **State Ballet of Georgia** (April 29-30).

AIDA IN CONCERT
December 30, 2022, 6:30pm
Detroit Opera House
Detroit, MI

Music by Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni
Conducted by Jonathon Heyward

Angel Blue, Aida
Christine Goerke, Amneris
Riccardo Massi, Radamès

Reginald Smith, Jr., Amonasro
Morris Robinson, Ramfis
Kenneth Kellogg, King of Egypt
Melanie Spector, Priestess
Leo Williams, Messenger

This concert of Aida is generously presented by the Detroit Opera Season Sponsor, the William Davidson Foundation, with support from Flagstar Bank.

About Detroit Opera

Detroit Opera (formerly Michigan Opera Theatre), one of the nation's most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, aspires to influence the future of opera and dance with a goal of invigorating audiences through new and re-imagined productions, relevant to current times. It is creating an ambitious standard for American opera and dance that emphasizes community, accessibility, artistic risk-taking, and collaboration. Founded in 1971 by the late Dr. David DiChiera, Detroit Opera is led by President and CEO Wayne S. Brown; Yuval Sharon, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director; Associate Artistic Director Christine Goerke; Music Director Roberto Kalb; and Board Chairman Ethan Davidson. For more information, visit www.detroitopera.org. Follow the company on Facebook and Instagram (@DetroitOpera), LinkedIn (Detroit Opera), as well as Twitter (@DetOperaHouse).

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