



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / OCTOBER 2021

- CONTACT:** Beatriz Ramirez | (407) 512-1900
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- WHAT:** ***The Secret River - WORLD PREMIERE***
music by Stella Sung and libretto by Mark Campbell
sung in English with English supertitles
- WHERE:** Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts
Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater
- WHEN:** Friday | December 17, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday | December 18, 2021 at 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.
Sunday | December 19, 2021 at 2 p.m.
- MORE INFO:** <https://operaorlando.org/river>
- TICKETS:** https://bit.ly/OO_River
Individual tickets on sale **NOW**
<https://bit.ly/2021-22SeasonTickets>
Season Subscriptions on sale **NOW**

Opera Orlando's "On the MainStage" series continues this December with an original chamber opera adaptation of ***The Secret River***, based on the book of the same name by Pulitzer Prize-winning author and Central Florida resident, **Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings**. Individual tickets are now on sale for this **world premiere** opera, which also marks the Company's first commissioned new work. Bring the whole family and enjoy the heartwarming story of how a young, African-American girl, Calpurnia, searches for a secret river to help her family and small town. This story for all ages demonstrates the power of trusting one's imagination and the goodness within us all: a perfect sentiment for this holiday season.

"***The Secret River*** is a beautiful story that we were excited to turn into an opera," shares **Opera Orlando's** general director **Gabriel Preisser**. "It has been a labor of love getting to this point among me, the creators, and the production team. I know our audiences will be blown away by this magical and earnest opera that has taken three years to develop, write, and produce. I am particularly grateful for all the support from the community and local and national foundations as we have workshopped the piece. After hearing the public reading of the work this past April at Mead Garden, I know we have something really special to share with Central Florida and beyond."

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With music composed by University of Central Florida Pegasus Professor **Stella Sung** and a libretto by Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning librettist **Mark Campbell**, this one-act chamber opera is set in Central Florida during the Great Depression. **Opera Orlando** is excited to welcome back former studio artist soprano **Kyaunnee Richardson**, singing the role of Calpurnia. Last season, **Ms. Richardson** was a fan favorite for her star turn as Adele in **Die Fledermaus** and as Gretel in the Company's **Hansel & Gretel**. She will be joined by acclaimed soprano **NaGuanda Nobles** and 2021-22 studio artist, baritone **Geoffrey Peterson**, playing the role of Calpurnia's mother and father. Mezzo-soprano **Kimberly Milton** will sing the role of the town's wise woman, Mother Albirtha, and Metropolitan Opera soprano **Emily Pulley** rounds out the cast, singing the role of the author herself, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.

This immersive production will be presented in the Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater at Dr. Phillips Center and features musicians from the **Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra** and members of the **Opera Orlando Youth Company** under the baton of **Dr. Everett McCorvey**, founder and music director of the American Spiritual Ensemble. It is directed by up-and-coming stage director **Dennis Whitehead Darling**, with puppetry created and performed by **Michelee Puppets** and dance choreographed by **Maxine Montilus**, performed by students from the **University of Florida**.

Opera Orlando has been fortunate to receive funding from several foundations and institutions to support **The Secret River**. The commissioning of **Stella Sung** has received funding from **OPERA America's** Opera Grants for Female Composers program, supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation. Also, the **Opera Orlando Youth Company**, which will be featured in **The Secret River**, has received funding from the **Elizabeth Morse Genius Foundation**, and **The National Endowment for the Arts** has approved a \$10,000 Grants for Arts Projects award to support the world premiere production, as well as an in-school touring production of the work. "The **National Endowment for the Arts** is proud to support this project from **Opera Orlando**," said arts endowment acting chairman, **Ann Eilers**. "**Opera Orlando** is among the arts organizations across the country that have demonstrated creativity, excellence, and resilience during this very challenging year." Additional funding has also come from the **Pabst-Steinmetz Foundation**, the **Miller Foundation**, and the **Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation**.

Sung in English with English supertitles, **The Secret River** will run approximately seventy-five minutes with no intermission. It is sure to sell out, so purchase tickets today or upgrade to a full season subscription boasting an exciting line-up of all new productions:

VIVA VERDI! | 2020-21 Season Opera on the MainStage Series

All performances take place at **Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts**

La Traviata at Walt Disney Theater

Friday | October 29, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. & Sunday | October 31, 2021 at 2 p.m.

— MORE —

info@operaorlando.org

(407) 512-1900

www.operaorlando.org



***The Secret River* at the Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater**

Friday | December 19, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday | December 20, 2021 at 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Sunday | December 21, 2021 at 2 p.m.

***Rigoletto* at Steinmetz Hall**

Friday | April 22, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. & Sunday | April 24, 2022 at 2 p.m.

Keeping safety as its first priority in the presentation of its 2021-22 season, **Opera Orlando** continues to monitor the development of COVID-19 and the vaccination plans relating to the virus. The Company has remained in consultation with its health partners and **Dr. Phillips Center** to implement an appropriate and comprehensive plan centered on reduction of the risk of infection and the protection of audience members, cast and production teams, staff, and volunteers.

Stay up to date with **Opera Orlando's** upcoming season and planning online at www.operaorlando.org. Individual tickets for *La Traviata* and *The Secret River*, as well as season subscriptions for **Opera Orlando on the MainStage** are on sale now through the **Dr. Phillips Center's Bill & Mary Darden Box Office** (445 S. Magnolia Avenue, Orlando), online at www.drphillipscenter.org, or by calling **(407) 839-0119, ext. 0**.

Season ticket packages are also available for **Opera Orlando on the Town**. Call **(407) 512-1900** or visit www.operaorlando.org for "On the Town" subscriptions. See **YOU** at the Opera!

Many thanks to our 2021-22 season sponsors:

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About Opera Orlando: Celebrating, expanding, and sharing the world's greatest art form, the 2021-22 season marks **Opera Orlando's** sixth season producing high-quality operatic entertainment and educational programs that engage Central Florida audiences.

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