Welcome to the world premiere of Harriet’s Spirit, a new opera inspired by the life of American abolitionist and humanitarian Harriet Tubman. Harriet’s Spirit is the latest of a series of operas for youth commissioned by Opera Parallèle as part of its Hands-On-Opera program, and was first presented in January 2018 at the African American Arts & Culture Complex in San Francisco. Since then it has been revised, following libretto readings and an orchestra workshop in 2020/21 with a new orchestration for ten players.

CAST
Visit www.operaparallele.org/harrietbios for full bios.

Tiffany Austin
‘Harriet Tubman’ Soprano

Christabel Nunoo
‘Modesty’ Soprano

Bradley Kynard
‘Montgomery’ Baritone

Ana Camila Vazquez
‘Ben’

San Francisco Girls Chorus
‘Say Nothing & Bully Chorus’


CREATIVE TEAM
Visit www.operaparallele.org/harrietbios for full bios.

Marcus Shelby
Composer

Roma Olvera
Librettist

Nicole Paiement
Conductor / Music Director

Jaymes Kirksey
Assistant Conductor

L. Peter Callender
Director / Dramaturg

Rachael Heiman
Set & Costume Designer, Kevin Myrick
Lighting Designer, Leontyne Mbele-Mbong
Stage Manager,
Jasmine Murray
Assistant Stage Manager, Denise Young Creative Contributor,
David Saenz
La Fauna Music Videographer, Dana Marie Chan Accompanist

HARRIET’S SPIRIT INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE
Amy Likar Flute (Piccolo)
Andrew Port Oboe
Leslie Tagorda Clarinet
Peter Josheff Bass Clarinet
Mark Clifford Percussion
Dan Flanagan Violin
Ilana Blumberg Thomas Violin
Ellen Ruth Rose Viola
Douglas Machiz Cello
Curtis Aikens Double Bass

SAN FRANCISCO GIRLS CHORUS LEADERSHIP & PRODUCTION STAFF
Valérie Sainte-Agathe Artistic Director
Laney McClain Armstrong Director of Choral Studies
Adriana Marcial Executive Director
Elaine Robertson Director of Artistic Operations
Jordan Holly Production Coordinator
Audrey Chandler Production Aide
Johann Joson Chorus School Manager

OPERA PARALLÈLE STAFF
Nicole Paiement General & Artistic Director
Ruth Nott Managing Director
Brian Staufenbiel Creative Director
Aileen Tat Development Director
Daniel Harvey Artistic & Community Manager,
Asst. to the General & Artistic Director
Jacques Desjardins Artistic Administrator
Lori Beth Milburn Marketing Manager
Tony Shayne Director of Production
Michael Mohammed Community Engagement Ambassador
Michael Stephens Grants Manager
Lisa Yu Bookkeeper
Dan Rivard Interim Development Associate
Keisuke Nakagoshi Resident Pianist
Dana Marie Chan Rehearsal Pianist
Jessica Bejarano Assistant Conductor
Jaymes Kirksey Assistant Conductor
Jon Finck Press Consultant
Scene 1
Harriet Tubman appears to Modesty. She sings words of strength and comfort.

Scene 2
Harriet Tubman and Modesty meet. Modesty shares a name with Harriet's grandmother which gives them an instant personal connection. Harriet encourages Modesty to find her inner strength and shares stories of her own resilience.

Scene 3
A crowd of bullies taunts and threatens a boy named Ben on the playground. They spit meaningless but hurtful insults at him while a small crowd of peers watches. They are too afraid to speak up for fear they may become the next target. Modesty witnesses the teasing as well but does nothing to speak up for her friend.

Scene 4
Harriet, visible only to Modesty, insists that Modesty find her strength and protect her friend. As Modesty makes her way into the crowd, the bullies surround her and target her instead. The say nothing chorus continues to witness in horror. Harriet returns to Modesty for support but is ultimately too intimidated to speak up.

Scene 5
The Janitor, Mr. Montgomery, interrupts the crowd and scolds the students for their misbehavior. He sends them home but pulls Modesty aside, especially disappointed with her treatment of her friend. Modesty defends herself claiming to have done nothing only to realize that has done...nothing.

Scene 6
Harriet and Modesty are alone. Harriet wonders to Modesty what kept her from defending her friend. Modesty explains how fear made it impossible for her to move. Harriet tells how fear can be a warning, an instinct, that helps you know when you are facing something important and remembering love helps you figure out how to act in the face of fear.

Scene 7
In a flashback, a boat with General Montgomery and Harriet Tubman travels down the river. Harriet warns the general that the waters are mined. When the signal is given, freed people approach the boat in panic and chaos, frightened for their lives and their freedom. General Montgomery demands Tubman get control of her people. While she doesn't know them, she compares them to people of Egypt and calls out in improvised song.

Scene 8
Harriet sings a blues reflecting on a painful past but survived by a determination to always move toward freedom. Joined by Modesty and the chorus, the crowd is guided to safety.

Scene 9
Faced again with bullying, Modesty and the say nothing chorus try to find their courage to speak up. Modesty in soliloquy, realizes that speaking up, moving closer, or standing up for what's right are the tenets of love and friendship. The crowd urges her to say something.

Scene 10
In the spirit of Harriet Tubman, Modesty sings "I Will Not Stand Still" referencing the history she has learned from Harriet's past and the urgency for action she has learned from Harriet's spirit. She is joined by the chorus in an anthem about agency and love. Understanding that her work is done, Harriet says goodbye to Modesty with her final words, "I go now, to prepare a place for you. Where I am, there you will be." forever connecting them.

"Use all your strength in all your limbs, you're meant to be always free."

Synopsis by Roma Olvera | Performance length: 50 minutes

ABOUT BAYVIEW OPERA HOUSE

The Bayview Opera House Ruth Williams Memorial Theatre is the cultural hub of the SF African American Arts and Cultural District. As such our mission includes preserving African American arts and culture in and for the Bayview Hunters Point community, whose legacy and culture are threatened by displacement and gentrification. We provide an environment in which Black and Brown artists can grow, be supported, collaborate and perform in front of appreciative audiences, and young people are educated and learn real world skills in different art forms, including theatre technical arts, virtual or in-person. Generous support for BVOH has been provided by the San Francisco Arts Commission, Grants for the Arts, and the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation. Tools of the Trade is funded by the Dreamkeeper Initiative of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development.

BAYVIEW OPERA HOUSE STAFF
Barbara Ockel Executive Director
Ashley Smiley Program Manager
Zarahia Perdomo Production/ Facilities Manager
Franco Martinez Production Assistant
Ules Tabron Custodian

TOOLS OF THE TRADE INTERNS
Maurice Abbott, Rawan Abdallah, Reyna Brown, Angelina Curry, Relena Ellis, Jamal Garry, Ayran Mateo, Ryan Pinkston, Lilla Pittman, Claudio Santomé, Angelica Troncoso, Totiana White, Carl Winters

SUPPORTERS
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