

# Harriet's Spirit



Music by Marcus Shelby  
Libretto by Roma Olvera

November 13 & 14, 2021

Bayview Opera House Ruth Williams Memorial Theatre

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](http://www.operaparallele.org/harrietbios) for full bios.



**Tiffany Austin**  
'Harriet Tubman' Soprano



**Christabel Nunoo**  
'Modesty' Soprano



**Bradley Kynard**  
'Montgomery' Baritone

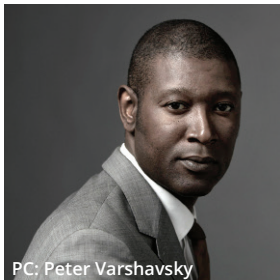
**Ana Camila Vazquez**  
'Ben'

**San Francisco Girls Chorus**  
'Say Nothing & Bully Chorus'

Claire Algazi, Anushka Chandran, Natalie Chin, Arien Frey, Sofia Fung-Lee, Charlotte Kelly, Alexandra Peregudova, Elinore Pett-Ridge Hennessy, Nadia Rouag, Clara Sewell, Azaria Stauffer-Barney, Sophia Stolte, Linda Ye

## CREATIVE TEAM

Visit [www.operaparallele.org/harrietbios](http://www.operaparallele.org/harrietbios) for full bios.



PC: Peter Varshavsky  
**Marcus Shelby**  
Composer



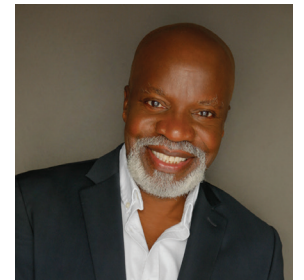
PC: Drew Altizer  
**Roma Olvera**  
Librettist



Photo by Cory Weaver  
**Nicole Paiement**  
Conductor / Music Director



**Jaymes Kirksey**  
Assistant Conductor  
Conducting Sun. Nov 14, 1PM



**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 Josen** Chorus School Manager

## OPERA PARALLÈLE STAFF

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**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

## SYNOPSIS

### Prologue:

Silhouettes are seen approaching, from behind, a girl reading in a chair. They physically taunt her, aggressively knock the book from her hands and pull the chair out from under her. Modesty falls holding her head in pain. She crawls to the book, clutches it to her chest. Harriet Tubman looks on at the altercation.

### 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. Modesty returns to Harriet 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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Additional support of OP has been provided in part by 2021-22 season Artist Sponsors as of November 11, including Janet Cluff, Clifford 'Kip' Cranna & Bruce Lamott, Paul Finnegan, Louise M. Fox, Alexandra Gillen & Hartmut Koeppen, Geoffrey Green & Marcia Green, Lisa Lindelef, Bernice Lindstrom, Sylvia & Paul Lorton Jr., Patrick McCabe, Elizabeth McMillan & George Varian, Alan Olejniczak and David Bourne, Nancy Petrisko & Don Beckham, Mary Ellen Poole, Robert Ripps & Steven Spector, John Roevekamp, Jack & Betty Schafer, and Blanche Germain Streeter.

## SPECIAL THANKS

3rd St Youth Services & Clinic; Tori Freeman at Project Wreckless; Michael Janis, Ms. Awele Makeba & her drama students at Skyline High School Oakland; Old Skool Cafe; Tacing Parker at Bayview Hunter's Point YMCA; Lyslynn Lacoste, Moira Rios, & Kayla Kunze at BMAGIC; SFJAZZ; Earl Shaddix at Economic Development on 3rd; Christopher Street; Carla Vaughn at Southeast Community Facilities Commission; Mrs. Emily Wade-Thompson at SFUSD; and Youth Speaks.