



For Immediate Release

**OPERA PARALLÈLE & THE TRANSGENDER DISTRICT PRESENT
EXPANSIVE – A SHOWCASE OF TRANSGENDER & AGENDER CLASSICAL ARTISTS
BREANNA SINCLAIRÉ, RAHZÉ CHEATHAM, REUBEN ZELLMAN & AFRIKA AMERICA
FRIDAY, JUNE 17 AT 7:30 P.M. AT PIANO FIGHT**



Reserve Free Tickets: operaparallele.org/expansive

SAN FRANCISCO (May 16, 2022) — In celebration of the upcoming Pride Month, Opera Parallèle today announced a brand new and exciting collaboration with The Transgender District for the presentation of *Expansive – A Showcase of Transgender and Agender Classical Artists*, **Breanna Sinclairé**, soprano; **Rahzé Cheatham**, baritone; and **Reuben Zellman**, countertenor, in performance at **PianoFight**, Friday, June 17 at 7:30 p.m., a renowned cultural venue in the heart of the Tenderloin, 144 Taylor Street. Serving as the evening's host will be exuberant personality, San Francisco's own DIVALicious Dreamgirl, **Afrika America**.

This free, public event is part of a new partnership between both organizations designed to create more opportunities for emerging transgender or gender-expansive performers. The *Expansive Showcase* serves as an open invitation from The Transgender District to join them in their place, an area of great cultural and historical significance for the trans community.

The artists will perform repertoire of their choice ranging from classic Puccini & Baroque arias to spirituals and contemporary work by local San Francisco composers. Host Afrika America will

also join the artists in conversation to share insights and stories about their lives; musical accompaniment will be provided by Opera Parallèle. The three singers will also join together for a musical finale.

PianoFight is limited in its venue capacity and invites the public to reserve free tickets by visiting operaparallele.org/expansive. The performance showcase will be recorded on video and shown online the week of June 27 via operaparallele.org.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Soprano Breanna Sinclairé is a graduate from CalArts and San Francisco Conservatory of Music as the first trans person in the opera program. On the stage, she has performed in many operatic works: *Carmen*, *Samson and Delilah*, and Durufle's Requiem to name a few. She has sung with the San Francisco, Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles Gay Men's Choruses and recently performed for the Americans for the Arts Annual Convention (alongside Speaker Nancy Pelosi). She sang the national anthem for the SF Giants and the Oakland A's as the first trans singer to perform at a national sporting event. Breanna was named *OUT* magazine's "LGBT Hero of the Year 2015." Sinclairé has traveled across the United States and Canada. Her debut at the Walt Disney Concert Hall on July 2017 was a huge milestone in her operatic career. She performed at the Lincoln Theater, Nourse Theater and many celebrated halls. She made her debut with the San Francisco Symphony in 2018 as the first trans singer to perform with the orchestra.

Breanna Sinclairé sang a rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in an episode for the Emmy Award-winning television show *United Shades Of America with Kamau Bell* on the 2021 Memorial Day Special. Recently she made her Canadian Opera debut in the role of Kelly Davidson in the new opera film, *Bound* with Against the Grain Theater Toronto. In August 2022, Sinclairé will perform the role of Gertrude in Humperdinck's *Hansel und Gretel* at the Berlin Opera Academy.

Baritone Rahzé Cheatham (they/them) is praised as a "wonderfully sensitive" performer with "crystalline diction" and a strong foundation in music, theatre art, and dance applications. An emerging new music artist in both concert and operatic repertoire, notable roles include Hannah before (*As One*), Brennan (*Mallory*) Blues Soloist/Street Singer (MASS), Betto di Signa (*Gianni Schicchi*), L'Aubergiste (*Chérubin*), Bob (*Old Maid and the Thief*), and Bernardo (*West Side Story*). They have been featured in numerous projects, including opera scenes, performing as: Sam, *Trouble in Tahiti*; Dr. Pangloss, *Candide*; and Figaro, *Le nozze di Figaro*. For five years, Cheatham served as a Section Leader and soloist for the Sanctuary Choir of First and Franklin Presbyterian Church.

Armed with the perspective of the intersection of mis- and underrepresented communities, Cheatham seeks to break through an otherwise homogenous music scene. In addition to performing original works, Cheatham enjoys learning and performing works from 1900-forward, by little-known and unknown composers and poets, especially artists of color and LGBTQ-identified artists. While hosting a private voice studio of beginner, intermediate, and advanced students across multiple genres, they currently maintain teaching positions at the Baltimore School for the Arts and the Baltimore School of Music. Cheatham holds a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and a Minor in Music Theory from the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University where they studied with American baritone William Sharp.

Countertenor Reuben Zellman (he/they) is a longtime Bay Area soloist and chorister, recently singing roles in Handel's *Tamerlano* and *Semele* with the Handel Opera Project, works of Bernstein with the UC Berkeley Chorus and Orchestra, and cantatas of Charpentier and Schütz with DeAnza College. He is a staff countertenor with the Grace Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys, and sings regularly with San Francisco Renaissance Voices. Zellman also teaches in the School of Music at San Francisco State University and serves as baal korei (Torah chanter) at Congregation Ner Tamid. He holds master's degrees in choral conducting and in Hebrew literature, and rabbinical ordination from Hebrew Union College, where he also trained in theory and performance practice of Jewish music. Zellman speaks and writes extensively on issues of gender identity and religion, as well as Jewish music of the Baroque and early Classical periods.

Zellman proudly serves as the founding director of New Voices Bay Area TIGQ Chorus, a 35-voice choral ensemble for singers identifying as transgender, intersex, or gender-queer. Based at San Francisco's Community Music Center, the chorus learns and performs great music of many styles and traditions, builds strong connections, and lifts up our community's strength and struggle through choral singing. Joyfully upending gendered conventions in choral music, NVBA debuted in 2018 at SF Trans Day of Remembrance, and has been featured at the Fresh Meat Festival, the National AIDS Memorial, Ashkenaz, Grace Cathedral, the 2021 Billboard Music Awards, and on NPR and in the SF Chronicle. The chorus continues to welcome new TIGQ singers, without audition.

Host Afrika America Social justice warrior, activist, producer and performer. These are just a few adjectives that characterize this phenomenal 'Drag Out the Vote Ambassador' and our host for Expansive! She produces multiple shows throughout the San Francisco Bay Area under her DIVALICIOUS brand such as BQM (Black Queer Magic), DRAGtastic and Let the Games Begin: Trivia, Bingo, DRAG, WERQ and ICON! Having performed all over the world from Singapore and Cologne to Sydney and on *America's Got Talent*, she toured the south in 2017 with SWAG,

(Singers with a Goal) and the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, and was a featured performer in the documentary, *Gay Chorus: Deep South*.

ABOUT PIANOFIGHT: We are a community-driven indy arts venue that takes pride in partnering with local artists to make great shows and offering delicious food and cocktails, all adding up to a uniquely San Francisco experience. PianoFight's two intimate theaters and cabaret stage host music, comedy, plays, dance, film screenings, drag, magic, variety shows and more, while the restaurant and bar serve up new American bites and classic cocktails. The venue provides space and infrastructure to hundreds of artists, who create and stage 1,500 performances for over 50,000 audience members each year. During the day, we are the home base for the offices and classrooms of community non-profits like Tenderloin Walking Tours and Code Tenderloin which runs a job-readiness program for TL residents.

The Transgender District was co-founded by three black trans women in 2017, originally as Compton's Transgender Cultural District, it is the first legally recognized transgender district in the world. The district encompasses six blocks in the southeastern Tenderloin crossing over Market St. and two blocks of 6th St. Our mission is to create and preserve an urban environment that fosters the rich history, culture, legacy, and empowerment of transgender people and its deep roots in the southeastern Tenderloin neighborhood. We aim to stabilize and economically empower the transgender community through ownership of homes, businesses, historic and cultural sites, and safe community spaces.

Opera Parallèle: Born in San Francisco, a city built on both old and new, between art and technology, Opera Parallèle merges tradition with innovation to reimagine the power of opera in the modern world. The company champions the work of living artists, as it presents cutting-edge productions by today's leading composers including Jake Heggie, Laura Kaminsky, Stewart Wallace and Philip Glass. Collaboration is at the heart of every OP production, with creative interdisciplinary partnerships and intentional community engagement designed to enrich our audience's experience. Opera Parallèle's contemporary operas highlight stories of social relevance that explore the depth of the human condition. We embrace rituals of old while bravely finding space for the new. This tension sparks creativity— colorful collisions that inspire new ways of experiencing opera.

COVID Protocols: Each audience member must show proof of vaccination to enter PianoFight, no exceptions. PianoFight will comply with all local, state, and federal requirements in effect at time of show. The venue reserves the right to add additional requirements they deem necessary to keep the staff, artists, and audiences safe.

Funding for 'Expansive' is provided in part by a Civic Practice Grant from OPERA America's Opera Fund.

Opera Parallèle's BULLHORN is the next evolution of the company's community programs. Designed to uplift and inspire, to activate and initiate, and to challenge expectations of what an opera company can be or do. The company's goal is to be a 'Bullhorn' for the community and build long lasting relationships particularly within the San Francisco Bay Area's vital LGBTQ & BIPOC communities.

For more information about Opera Parallèle's 2021-22 season, visit operaparallele.org.

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Press Contact: Jon Finck

Jonfincksf@gmail.com / +1 415 577 1323

Please connect for interview, photos and press credentials.