

*Lyric*

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO



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Casting announced for Lyric Unlimited's Chicago premiere of  
critically acclaimed opera [Fellow Travelers](#) by  
Gregory Spears and Greg Pierce

Production conducted by Daniela Candillari and  
directed by Kevin Newbury

Four performances March 17 – 25 at the Athenaeum Theatre

CHICAGO (6/29/2017) – Lyric Unlimited is excited to announce casting for the Chicago premiere of [Fellow Travelers](#). Tenor Jonas Hacker and baritone Joseph Lattanzi will sing the lead roles of Timothy Laughlin and Hawkins Fuller, two men who fall in love during the height of the McCarthy era in 1950s Washington D.C. Devon Guthrie will sing the role of Mary Johnson, Hawkins's assistant and Timothy's confidante. Conducted by Daniela Candillari and directed by Kevin Newbury, the opera is based on the 2007 novel of the same title by Thomas Mallon.

Sung in English with projected English texts, [Fellow Travelers](#) runs March 17-25 for four performances at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Avenue, Chicago. Tickets go on sale Monday, July 10 at [www.lyricopera.org/fellowtravelers](http://www.lyricopera.org/fellowtravelers) or by calling 312-827-5600.

With music by Gregory Spears and libretto by Greg Pierce, the opera was praised as being "a near-perfect example of fast-flowing musical drama...characterized by the tonal freshness and propulsive momentum of Minimalism...reminiscent of the early baroque," by The

New York Times after its 2016 world premiere at Cincinnati Opera. Lattanzi, who created the role of Hawkins Fuller, was described as “superb” by The Wall Street Journal and as delivering a “career-making performance” by Seen and Heard International. The Chicago Tribune classical musical critic called *Fellow Travelers* , “one of the most accomplished new American operas I have encountered in recent years” and a “poignant and moving...smart and sharp-edged...deeply human love story.”

The Chicago premiere of *Fellow Travelers* also features Vanessa Becerra as Miss Lightfoot, Marcus DeLoach as Senator McCarthy, Amy Kuckelman as Lucy (previously seen in Lyric Unlimited’s world-premiere youth opera *Jason and the Argonauts*), Will Liverman as Tommy McIntyre (previously seen in Lyric Unlimited’s Chicago premiere of *Charlie Parker’s YARDBIRD*), Reginald Smith, Jr. as Senator Charles Potter, and Sam Handley as Potter’s Assistant (previously seen in Lyric Unlimited’s world-premiere opera *The Property*). Liverman and Handley are both alumni of The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at Lyric. Design team members are Vita Tzykun (sets), Paul Carey (costumes), Thomas C. Hase (lighting), and James Geier (wigs and make-up). Marcus Shields is assistant director.

*Fellow Travelers* is the latest offering from Lyric Unlimited , Lyric’s department devoted to education, community engagement, and new artistic initiatives. Lyric Unlimited has previously presented area-premiere and world-premiere works including *Cruzar la cara de la luna*, *El pasado nunca se termina*, *The Property*, and most recently *Charlie Parker’s YARDBIRD* at the Lyric Opera House and in other Chicago-area venues. *Jason and the Argonauts*, an opera for youth written by Gregory Spears , was also commissioned by Lyric Unlimited and received its world premiere last year in Chicago.

"Lyric Unlimited is thrilled to be presenting this recent work by Gregory Spears and Greg Pierce," said Cayenne Harris , director of Lyric Unlimited. "The story and themes explored, while set in the recent past, have meaning and resonance with current political and social issues."

Jonas Hacker (Timothy Laughlin) Praised for the “sweetness of his tone” by The New York Times and his “sure musical instincts” by the Washington Classical Review, tenor Jonas Hacker is establishing himself as a singer to watch, with debuts in companies and orchestras across the United States. A recent graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts, his 2017-18 season includes a return to Annapolis Opera to sing Laurie in *Little Women* after singing Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* there in 2015, and a company debut with Kentucky Opera as Count Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Hacker recently portrayed Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Academy of Vocal Arts, and Cesare Cibo in



vocal Arts, and George Gibbs in Our Town with Fresno Grand Opera. Active in oratorio, Hacker sang Obadiah in Elijah, was the tenor soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Columbus Symphony, and was the tenor soloist in a quartet rendition of Bach's Cantata No. 150 with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, conductor. In the summers of 2016 and 2017, Hacker was a Filene Young Artist at Wolf Trap Opera, where he portrayed Sospiro in Gassmann's comic opera L'opera seria, Roderick Usher in Glass's The Fall of the House of Usher, Bastianello in Musto's Bastianello, and also gave two recitals with collaborator Steven Blier. He was a Grand Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2016 and a recipient of the Robert Jacobson Award in the George London Foundation competition in 2017.



Joseph Lattanzi (Hawkins Fuller) A 2017 Sullivan Foundation Award recipient, baritone Joseph Lattanzi established himself as a young singer to watch with his portrayal of Hawkins Fuller in the world premiere of Greg Spears's Fellow Travelers with Cincinnati Opera. The New York Times wrote, "Joseph Lattanzi was splendid as Hawk, his buttery baritone luxuriant and robust." Opera News described him as a "confident, handsome presence, and a resonant baritone suggesting wells of feeling that the character might prefer to leave untapped." Recently, Lattanzi was a member of the Arizona Opera Studio, where he was heard in performances as Dandini in La Cenerentola, Riobobo in Florencia en el Amazonas, and the title role in Don Giovanni, among others. Lattanzi opens the 2017-18 season with his Virginia Opera debut as Sonora in La fanciulla del West and returns later in the season as Demetrius in A Midsummer Night's Dream. He will also return to Atlanta Opera as Anthony in Sweeney Todd. Lattanzi enjoys strong relationships with Cincinnati Opera, where he has been heard in multiple productions, and with Seattle Opera, where he was a member of the Young Artist Program, and was most recently heard as Kuligin in Katya Kabanová.

Devon Guthrie (Mary Johnson) Recent operatic engagements include creating the role of Mary Johnson in the world



premiere of *Fellow Travelers* at Cincinnati Opera; Daisy Buchanan in Harbison's *The Great Gatsby* in Boston at the New England Conservatory and Tanglewood; First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Philadelphia; Chocholka in *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the New York Philharmonic; Bubikopf in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with Central City Opera; Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at the Tanglewood Music Festival. At The Juilliard School, her roles included Donna Elvira, Sidonie/Armide, Drusilla/L'incoronazione di Poppea, and Laurie/*The Tender Land*. A dedicated recitalist and contemporary music interpreter, she has appeared several times at the Opera America Salon and has performed pieces such as *Lonely Child* by Claude Vivier; *13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* by Lukas Foss; Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*; Schubert's *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*; Orpheus and Euridice by Ricky Ian Gordon; and covered the role of Tatyana Bakst in the world premiere of *Great Scott* by Jake Heggie. Recent highlights include Pamina in a new production of *The Magic Flute* by renowned British actor and director Simon McBurney at ENO; two seasons singing with The Paul Taylor Dance Company for a series of performances of *Beloved Renegade*; her debut with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Pulcheria in *Riccardo Primo*; an acclaimed Santa Fe Opera debut as Marzelline in *Fidelio*, and Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Saito Kinen Festival. On the concert platform, she has performed a Huang Ruo Chamber Concert with Mimesis Ensemble at Carnegie Hall and was heard in Handel's *Messiah* with Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra.

Gregory Spears (Composer) is an award-winning composer whose work has been called "astonishingly beautiful" by The New York Times. He blends aspects of Baroque style, minimalism, and romanticism to create a distinctive sound. In recent seasons, he has been commissioned by Lyric Unlimited, Cincinnati Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seraphic Fire, and the JACK Quartet, among others. *Fellow Travelers*, written in collaboration with librettist Greg Pierce and director Kevin Newbury, premiered at Cincinnati Opera in June 2016. His opera, *O Columbia*, recently received its world premiere at Houston Grand Opera. He has won prizes from BMI and ASCAP, as well as awards and fellowships from the American Academy of Arts and Letters,





the Fulbright Foundation (Fellowship to Denmark 1999-2000), and the Vagn Holmboe Competition.



Greg Pierce (Librettist) is a critically acclaimed writer and lyricist. His play *Slowgirl* was the inaugural production of Lincoln Center's Claire Tow Theater (LCT3). It was subsequently produced by Steppenwolf Theatre and the Geffen Playhouse, among others. His play *Her Requiem*, a Lincoln Center Theater commission, premiered in 2016. *The Landing*, a musical written with composer John Kander, premiered at the Vineyard Theatre in New York. *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, co-written with director Stephen Earnhart, based on the novel by Haruki Murakami, premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival and went on to the Singapore Arts Festival. Pierce has received fellowships from the Edward F. Albee Foundation, Yaddo, The Djerassi Institute, the New York Public Library, and the Baryshnikov Arts Center. He currently holds commissions from Second Stage Theatre and Manhattan Theatre Club/Sloan Foundation. His work has been developed with Naked Angels, The New Group, Atlantic Theatre Company, Asia Society, the Rattlestick Theater, and the Public Theater's Under the Radar festival. His stories have appeared in literary magazines such as *New England Review*, *Avery*, *Berkeley Fiction Review*, *Confrontation*, and *Conjunctions*. He recently wrote a film for Lionsgate, *Burial Rites*, based on the novel by Hannah Kent.

Daniela Candillari (Conductor) is a sought-after conductor, pianist, and composer, having worked with preeminent artists around the world. A native of Slovenia, she served the Slovenian National Opera as assistant



conductor, chorus master, and principal coach for over twenty productions. She has served as assistant conductor for the European Opera Centre in partnership with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Sarasota Opera. As a collaborative pianist, she performed at Carnegie Hall with Julian Wachner and Novus NY and has worked with artists including Bryn Terfel, Dame Felicity Lott, Håkan Hagegård, Carol Vaness, Martina Arroyo, Dominic Argento, and William Bolcom. Candillari is the founder and artistic director of Gravity Shift, a New York-based chamber orchestra, and has recorded for NPR, Austrian Radio Broadcast Television, Slovenian National Radio and TV, and Serbian National TV. Highlights in the current season include serving as music director for *Extraordinary Measures*, a play by Eve Ensler, covering Julian Wachner on his new opera, *Rev. 23*, during the Prototype Festival, and joining the music staff at The Chautauqua Opera as assistant conductor to Steven Osgood. Future engagements include conducting *Acquanetta* at the 2018 PROTOTYPE Festival, with Bang on a Can All-Stars as the orchestra, and leading the Manhattan School of Music Philharmonia in a concert including Mendelssohn's *Symphony No. 3*.



Kevin Newbury (Director) The American director's production of *Fellow Travelers* received its world premiere in Cincinnati. Recent credits also include *Norma* (2016/17) and the critically acclaimed world premiere of *Bel Canto* (2015/16) at Lyric Opera of Chicago; Kevin Puts's *The Manchurian Candidate* (Minnesota); *Maria Stuarda* in Seattle; *Eugene Onegin* in Portland; and the national tour of a new music-theater work, *Kansas City Choir Boy*. This season, Newbury debuts at Long Beach Opera with Philip Glass's *The Perfect American* (also seen at Chicago Opera Theater) and returns to The Santa Fe Opera for Mason Bates's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (world premiere). Newbury has undertaken repeat engagements with Park Avenue Armory, The Minnesota Opera, The Santa Fe Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, New York's PROTOTYPE Festival, and the Wexford Festival Opera (including Mercadante's *Virginia*, winner of the 2010 Irish Times Theatre Award for Best Opera Production). He also has directed for Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Canadian Opera Company, L'Opéra de Montréal, the San Francisco Symphony, the Glimmerglass Festival, and Opera

Theatre of Saint Louis. Newbury has also directed three short films: Monsura is Waiting, Stag, and Another Dance of Death.

#### About Lyric

Lyric Opera of Chicago's mission is to express and promote the life-changing, transformational, revelatory power of great opera. Lyric exists to provide a broad, deep, and relevant cultural service to Chicago and the nation, and to advance the development of the art form.

Founded in 1954, Lyric is dedicated to producing and performing consistently thrilling, entertaining, and thought-provoking opera with a balanced repertoire of core classics, lesser-known masterpieces, and new works; to creating an innovative and wide-ranging program of community engagement and educational activities; and to developing exceptional emerging operatic talent.

Under the leadership of General Director, President & CEO Anthony Freud, Music Director Sir Andrew Davis, and Creative Consultant Renée Fleming, Lyric strives to become the great North American opera company for the 21st century: a globally significant arts organization embodying the core values of excellence, relevance, and fiscal responsibility.

To learn more about Lyric's current season, go to [lyricopera.org](http://lyricopera.org). You can also join the conversation with @LyricOpera on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. #Lyric1718 #LongLivePassion

#### About Lyric Unlimited

Lyric Unlimited is a long-term, evolving initiative that encompasses company activities that are not part of Lyric's mainstage opera season. Its mission is to provide a relevant cultural service to communities throughout the Chicago area and to advance the development of opera by exploring how opera as an art form can resonate more powerfully with people of multiple backgrounds, ethnicities, and interests. It also leads the development of innovative partnerships with a wide range of cultural, community, and educational organizations to create a breadth of programming through which Chicagoans of all ages can connect with Lyric. In the 2014/15 season, more than 126,000 children, students, and adults participated in Lyric Unlimited activities. For more information about Lyric Unlimited program offerings, visit [lyricopera.org/lyricunlimited](http://lyricopera.org/lyricunlimited).



Fellow Travelers is an opera by Gregory Spears. Libretto by Greg Pierce. Based on the novel Fellow Travelers by Thomas Mallon. Developed and co-commissioned by G. Sterling Zinsmeyer and Cincinnati Opera. Production owned by Cincinnati Opera.

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