

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:**

Jennifer Colgan  
Director of Marketing and Communications  
303.468.2025 | [jcolgan@operacolorado.org](mailto:jcolgan@operacolorado.org)



## **First of Free Opera Colorado Digital Programs Premieres March 4**

*The 90-minute, digital double-bill will feature Tom Cipullo's Josephine and an original program, The Promise of Living*

**Denver, CO (February 8, 2021)**—On Thursday, March 4, at 7:30pm, Opera Colorado presents the premiere of the first of two digital concerts, *Josephine & The Promise of Living*. The program will remain available on demand until 11:59pm on March 18. *Josephine & The Promise of Living* is free, but audiences are required to register. Registrations are available now at [operacolorado.org/promise](http://operacolorado.org/promise).

This digital double-bill includes an encore presentation of Tom Cipullo's *Josephine* and an original, multimedia program, both filmed in partnership with **Rocky Mountain Public Media**. The one-act opera *Josephine* casts a spotlight on jazz-age icon and civil rights activist Josephine Baker. **Laquita Mitchell** reprises her role in this intimate portrayal.

*The Promise of Living* takes audiences on a journey through American history that highlights the challenges, opportunities, and successes of the Black experience. **Laquita Mitchell** curated this multimedia program featuring **Nmon Ford**, **Israel Gursky**, dance by Denver's own **Davis Contemporary Dance Company** choreographed by **Terrell Davis**, poetry, and music by Copland, De Falla, Price, and more, with narration by the artists, Greg Carpenter, **Wellington Webb**, and **Wilma Webb**. Explore enslavement and exodus, war and rebellion, and the promise of the American dream—the promise of living—in this unique digital concert.

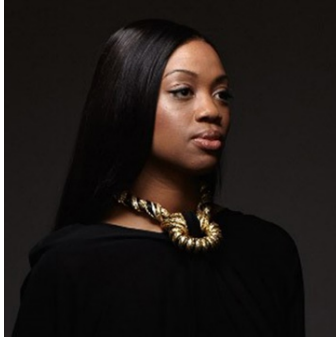
“Watching this program come together with these stellar artists and our partners at Rocky Mountain Public Media has been a thrill and an honor. Like operas of the past, we are telling an important story of our time through music, words, and dance. I can't wait to share it with audiences in Colorado and beyond,” said Greg Carpenter, General & Artistic Director.

Opera Colorado has launched the **Opera Colorado Amplified Resilience Fund** to raise the \$200,000 needed to produce this new digital content and execute creative, in-person programming when it is safe to do so. Donations to the Resilience Fund can be made at [operacolorado.org/resilience](http://operacolorado.org/resilience).

For more information about current and future programming at Opera Colorado, visit [operacolorado.org](http://operacolorado.org) or contact Jennifer Colgan at [jcolgan@operacolorado.org](mailto:jcolgan@operacolorado.org) or 303.468.2025.

---

**Artist Biographies**



Soprano **Laquita Mitchell** consistently earns acclaim on eminent international opera and concert stages, leading performances with Los Angeles Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, New York City Opera, Washington National Opera, Opéra Comique in Paris, New York Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, and Detroit Symphony Orchestra, among many others. This season, she performed as Violetta in *La Traviata* with Edmonton Opera and reprises the role of Bess in *Porgy and Bess* with Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and Grange Park Opera in the UK.

Upcoming engagements include a reprisal of her performance of Paul Moravec's *Sanctuary Road*, a piece she previously performed at its world premiere at Carnegie Hall with Oratorio Society of New York, and a role debut as Aida in *Aida*.



Panamanian-American baritone **Nmon Ford** won exceptional reviews when he appeared as Crown last season in the new Metropolitan Opera co-production of *Porgy & Bess* at English National Opera and later at Dutch National Opera. He stepped into new territory composing and starring in his own piece, *Orfeus: A House Music Opera*, slated for its world premiere at London's Young Vic Theatre and directed by Charles Randolph-Wright (*Motown, The Musical; Greenleaf; Live from Lincoln Center*). He sang *A Sea Symphony* under the baton of Robert Spano with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, prior to which he won accolades from press and public alike for his arresting performance as The Celebrant in Bernstein's *Mass* at Lincoln

Center. Recent career highlights include Jochanaan in *Salome* with Patricia Racette at Pittsburgh Opera, Don Pizarro in *Fidelio* with Christine Goerke at Cincinnati Opera, Iago in *Otello* with Russell Thomas in concert with the Atlanta Symphony, and performing at Carnegie Hall in Brahms' *Requiem*. He is a featured soloist on two Grammy-winning albums and has recorded for Universal/Decca, Concord, Telarc, and eOne.



Born in Tel-Aviv, **Israel Gursky** began his training in his native city, continuing at Stony Brook University and Manhattan School of Music with Arie Vardi, Gilbert Kalish, Thomas Muraco, Dalton Baldwin, and Otto-Werner Mueller. After graduating, he became assistant conductor with the Washington National Opera where, in 2007, he made his professional conducting debut with *Don Giovanni*. He has conducted for Los Angeles Opera, Bellas Artes, Opera Maine, Wolf Trap, Opera Birmingham, Yale School of Music, and Manhattan School of Music. From 2014 until 2017 he was Kapellmeister of Theater Regensburg and from 2017 until 2019 he was Kapellmeister and Head of Music Staff for Theater Bremen, where he

remains as casting consultant. Since 2019, he has been on the Music Staff of the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He has frequently conducted concerts with Plácido Domingo throughout the world and, since 2003, has worked with the Operalia Competition as official accompanist, assistant conductor, and pre-selection judge. He has been music director of Teatro Grattacielo in New York City since 2012, where he has conducted several US-premieres of important verismo operas. He has served on the faculty of the Salzburg Festival's prestigious Young Singers Project since 2017. He currently resides in New York City with his husband, Dr. Ian Tang.



Denver-based Davis Contemporary Dance Company (Davis Dance) was formed for charitable purposes with the intent of furthering dance education and the art of concert dance. Davis Dance is a multicultural, world-class arts organization, whose mission is to enrich the lives of many through the powerful language of dance. Rooted in the disciplines of Contemporary Jazz Dance, but not limited by one style, Davis Dance will touch any audience at its core and elevate it to greater heights.

They also strive to bring a greater awareness of dance to many diverse audiences, especially those who've never been exposed to the beauty of dance. Davis Dance will always be accessible to all people, overlooking all economic and social standings. They broaden people's horizons to dance, by using live performances, masterclasses, children's workshops, lecture demonstrations, and collaborations with other great artists.



**Terrell Davis** (choreographer) is the Founder and Artistic Director of Davis Contemporary Dance Company. He is also the Artistic Director for Denver School of the Arts' Classical and Contemporary Pre-Professional Dance Program. He was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. He has a B.A. in Political Science and a minor in dance from Western Illinois University (WIU). His dance training began at Lincoln Park High School in Chicago with Efe McWorter. He was a full scholarship student at the Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theatre. Mr. Davis was also a full scholarship student at the American Dance Festival for two consecutive

summers.

He got his professional start with the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company and worked with the legendary artist Sherri "Sparkle" Williams. His journey then brought him to Denver, where he danced with the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble for six years. Mr. Davis has taught at the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance School, Academy of Colorado Ballet, the Academy of Classical Ballet, Manuel High School, Smokey Hill High School, Hannah Kahn's Open Studio, Denver Dance Center, Danza Dance Academy, and many other dance schools in Denver. He currently teaches at Dance Kaleidoscope and director of the Elite Dance Company.



After Wellington Edward Webb (narrator), elected Denver's 42nd mayor and the city's first African-American mayor, walked the city and stayed in voters' homes throughout Denver prior to his underdog election in June 1991. He was elected to three terms through 2003. "I don't want Denver to be like other cities," he said. "I want to create a city that other cities want to emulate."

His administration spurred the revitalization of downtown, added more park space than any other mayor, completed building 85 percent of Denver International Airport, created the Denver Health Authority, and funded health clinics in the Denver Public Schools. Additionally, he revamped the city's local small business, turned the minority and women's business program into a national model and oversaw the redevelopment of Lowry Air Force Base and Stapleton International Airport. He began the Mile High Scholars program to recognize public school students, including a summer jobs program for teenagers. His bond proposals helped pay for major renovations to art, cultural venues and libraries, including the opening of the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library in historic Five Points.

He was elected by his peers as presidents of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Conference of Black Mayors, and the National Conference of Democratic Mayors. He is the recipient of honorary doctorate degrees, and hundreds of prestigious awards.

After leaving office, he was appointed by President Barack Obama as a delegate to the United Nations. He founded Webb Group International, a consulting firm, in 2003.



The Honorable Wilma J. Webb, (narrator) served Colorado and the nation as Denver's first active First Lady and first African American woman to be Denver's First Lady, the U.S. Labor Department's first woman to be Regional Administrator for Region VIII, and District 8's first woman to be elected to the Colorado House of Representatives. As an accomplished political force, she is the first and only Colorado African American woman who has served on all three levels of our government, and it continues to be her hope that more women exceed her record in this major achievement.

As a Colorado lawmaker, she successfully initiated and delivered laws and programs which improve the lives of all people. Her substantive accomplishments include: The establishment of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Adoption of the Anti-Drug Abuse Treatment Program, a law to enable Subpoena Power to the Colorado Civil Rights Division, and more. She, along with other national leaders, carried legislation to provide for Sanctions Against South Africa whose purpose was to abolish Apartheid and to release political prisoner Nelson Mandela.

In her position as First Lady of Denver, she led the effort in developing Denver's Vision for the Arts. Additions to the People's Art Collection include Borovsky's *The Dancers*, Colorado's *Portrait of President Barack Obama*, Fernando Botero's *Man and Woman*, and more. She is the founder of the Denver Art, Culture, and Film Foundation. She envisioned Denver's Centennial Park, and Denver's Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library. She and her husband's life's work is permanently exhibited in the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, in Washington, D.C.

She is the honoree of several hundred commendations, including the National Humanitarian Award, The National Human Rights Award, induction into the Women's Hall of Fame in 1991, the Blacks in Colorado Hall of Fame, and others.



Greg Carpenter (narrator) is General & Artistic Director of Opera Colorado. He assumed the role in 2007 after serving as Director of Development for over three years. Mr. Carpenter served from 2001 – 2004 as Manager of Development for the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where he was responsible for all aspects of fundraising. Mr. Carpenter has also served as Artist and Event Services Manager for the Clarice Smith Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Maryland, where he developed new management models, directed multiple performing arts festivals and competitions, and created an office of recruitment for the

University of Maryland School of Music. Mr. Carpenter sang professionally for more than 10 years and earned degrees from Wittenberg University and Michigan State University as well as post-graduate studies at the University of Maryland.

---

###

### **ABOUT OPERA COLORADO**

Opera Colorado has served as a cornerstone of Denver's cultural community since 1981. In addition to its mainstage performances at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House each season, the company affirms its commitment to the future of the art form by annually presenting new works; with its nationally recognized Artist in Residence Program that trains the next generation of opera performers; and by each year reaching more than 45,000 students and adults through its many education and community engagement programs throughout the Rocky Mountain region. For more information, visit [operacolorado.org](http://operacolorado.org).

### **ABOUT ROCKY MOUNTAIN PUBLIC MEDIA**

Rocky Mountain Public Media (RMPM) is Colorado's largest statewide, member-supported, multimedia organization and the parent company of Rocky Mountain PBS (RMPBS), KUVO JAZZ and THE DROP. Rocky Mountain Public Media has more than 90,000 members representing every county in Colorado and reaches 98 percent of the state's citizens through television, radio and digital platforms. A non-commercial media organization by and for the people of Colorado, RMPM creates high-quality local and multimedia content through Regional Innovation Centers in Denver, Colorado Springs, Durango, Grand Junction and Pueblo. RMPBS, started in Denver in 1956 as Colorado's first public television station, is now a statewide television network, with stations in Denver (KRMA), Pueblo/Colorado Springs (KTSC), Steamboat Springs (KRMZ), Grand Junction (KRMJ) and Durango (KRMU). In its 35th year, KUVO JAZZ broadcasts jazz, blues, and a lineup of locally produced diverse music programs. Launched in 2019, THE DROP is the People's Station for R&B and Hip Hop.

In 2020, RMPM relocated to the Buell Public Media Center. For information about the Center, RMPBS, KUVO JAZZ and THE DROP, visit the [media kit](#).