

STRIKE THE ROCK!

Two one-act works about the wounds of war and racism will be performed as concert operas at various venues in Richmond in March and April. Here are some of the performers from Capitol Opera Richmond who will bring the works to life.



Sharon Munz Spencer was raised in Japan and Okinawa. She has a Bachelor of Music Education from Wheaton College Conservatory of Music in Wheaton, Illinois and a Master of Church Music from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary School of Church Music, Louisville, Kentucky.

Sharon has been active as a soloist in both Richmond and Northern Virginia churches. Besides her longtime association with First Presbyterian Church of Richmond, some of the churches she has sung for are St. James's Episcopal Church, Monument Heights Baptist Church, Second Presbyterian Church, and Vienna Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Virginia. She has been a recitalist in Richmond and in Vienna, Virginia. Sharon is an Adjunct Voice Professor at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, VA. She has also taught as an Adjunct Professor of Voice at Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia State University, and J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College. Her roles have included Susanna in **The Marriage of Figaro**, Blondchen in **Abduction from the Seraglio**, Fire Nightingale and Princess in **L'enfant et Les Sortilèges**, and Johanna in **Sweeney Todd** at Barksdale Theatre, Hanover, Virginia. Sharon studied for many years with the late Dr. Genevieve McGiffert of Williamsburg, Virginia. She is currently studying with Dr. Patrick Carlin of Richmond, Virginia. Sharon has been a public school teacher in the Fairfax County

Public Schools and the Chesterfield County Public Schools, both of Virginia. She maintains a private studio in Richmond, Virginia.



Soprano Michele Baez is a native of NYC. In addition to the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte*, she has also performed the roles of Madame Herz in *The Impresario*, Sissieretta Jones in the contemporary opera, *The Edge of Glory*, Sisa in the Filipino opera, *Noli Me Tangere*, Fiore in Walter Braxton's world premier of *To Damascus* and covered the role of Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Michele has appeared in recital and numerous concerts in NYC and Richmond. Upcoming performances include a musical theatre concert and recital in March and April. Michele began her studies at the Manhattan School of Music and completed her Bachelor of Music degree at Virginia Commonwealth University.



Gabrielle Maes, mezzo soprano, is a versatile vocal performer, writer, and actor who recently moved to Richmond from Canada. She has performed in multiple operas, most recently as the Witch in Capitol Opera Richmond's *Hansel and Gretel*, solo oratorio work, concerts, and musical theater in the U.S., Canada, Norway, and Malaysia where she has lived. Gabrielle was nominated for the Best Actor awards in Montreal and was the winner of a Best Actor Award in the 2011 Bob Cameroonian Arts Awards Malaysia. Gabrielle wrote and has performed one-woman shows in Singapore, Canada, Malaysia, Paris, and the U.S. She has a Master's Degree in vocal performance from the University of Concordia where she won the Mills Purchase Prize for Best Performing Artist during her final year. She has taught in the prestigious National Theatre School in Montreal Canada and LaSalle College of the Performing Arts in Singapore. She was soloist for the prestigious group "Voices" a Negro a spiritual ensemble located in Paris France.

Acclaimed by Richmond Times Dispatch's Tony Farrell "especially baritone **Chase Peak** ...who delivers every line with magnificent dynamics and indulges in terrific, expressive bits of acting business whenever he is onstage" for his role as Kapitan Tiago in COR's production of *Noli Me Tangere* in 2016. He was also heralded by M. D. Ridge of WHRO Norfolk as "robustly extroverted with a big, exuberant voice and confident manner" in the 2014 production of *La Bohème*, where he was featured in the role of Schaunard with Lyric Opera of Virginia. In 2008, he performed the National Anthem for President Barack Obama. Baritone Chase Peak is a



graduate of VCU's Department of Music with a vocal performance degree. Mr. Peak is in high demand for church and cathedral performances, and has most notably performed the solos for *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* (Vaughan Williams'), *Stabat Mater* (Dvořák), *Carmina Burana* (Orff), *Messa di Gloria* (Puccini), *Faure's Requiem*, and *Handel's Messiah*. He performed the role of Guglielmo in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with Virginia Opera's Young Artist Program.

Most recently, Mr. Peak performed the title role in the East Coast Premiere of *La Rinuncia* by Richard Rose, Stephan in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*, Peter the father in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, and Mr. Colas in Mozart's *Bastien and Bastienne*. These were all performed with Capitol Opera Richmond. In Chase's personal career he works as a Relationship Manager in Private Wealth Management with *Equity Concepts*, whose main focus is helping people to be the best stewards of what God has entrusted to them.



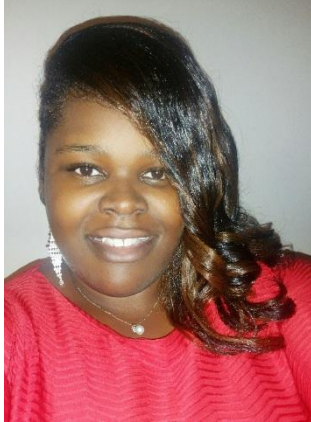
Catherine Butler Cooper (Amber) is excited to be performing for the first time with Capitol Opera Richmond. Past productions include *Once Upon a Mattress* (Jewish Family Theatre); *Food, Clothing, Shelter* (Firehouse Theatre); *The Hallelujah Girls* and *Into the Woods* (Swift Creek Mill); *The Sisters Rosensweig* and *Parade* (JFT); *Man of La Mancha* and *Bad Seed* (Dogwood Dell); Touring shows: *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Jamestown Story*, *The Snow Queen*, and *Sleeping Beauty* (Theatre IV); *Guys and Dolls* and *Camelot* (TheatreVirginia).



Mezzo-soprano, **Erin Wind** is native of Richmond, Virginia. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from Longwood University and a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Northern Iowa. During her school years Ms. Wind performed roles including Zulma in *L'italiana in Algeri* with Summer Garden Opera in Farmville, Virginia and the Third Spirit in *Die Zauberflöte* with the University of Northern Iowa Opera.

Since returning to Richmond in 2013, Ms Wind has performed in several productions with Capitol Opera Richmond. She premiered the role of Ichabod Crane in the Baroque pastiche, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, appeared as Mrs. Splinters in *The Tenderland*, and was a chorus member in

Hansel and Gretel and Die Fledermaus. In March of 2017, Ms. Wind appeared with the Northern Neck Orchestra in their performance of Gustav Mahler's Songs of a Wayfarer and also with the Minnesota State Band in a concert band arrangement of the fourth movement of Gustav Mahler's 4th Symphony. In addition to her opera and art song endeavors, Ms. Wind is the director of the Richmond Women's Chorus, a member of the Piedmont Singers, an alto section leader with Second Presbyterian Church, and is an active singer-songwriter and guitarist.



Angelica Powers is a versatile vocal performer who classifies herself as a classical soprano singer. She is a graduate of Virginia State University and performed there shortly with the Concert Choir. Angelica has been singing since the age of 6 and has been a featured soloist for a host of different events over the years, including the annual Wives of Beaux Twenty Debutante Cotillion, the Gillfield Baptist Church Rainbow Tea and the Carol Adams Foundation Gala. She sang with the Petersburg Symphony in high school and has continued to sing many solo works in her Church Choir at Gillfield Baptist Church. Angelica is an accomplished recording artist and has also performed two solo vocal recitals with each having produced CD's or her works. She has her website of her works: angelicapowersoprano.com. Her CD's to date are "Angelic Melodies" and Joyous Tidings". Singing is a huge passion of hers of which she one day wishes to make into a career.



Dynamic and diverse, pianist **Alyssa Darwin** has been praised for "sheer musicality, intuitive and sympathetic collaboration, and the ability to fully inhabit a musical work." Known within the midwest as a collaborative pianist and pedagogue, Alyssa recently relocated to Richmond, VA, where she is performing, teaching private lessons, and collaborating on instrumental and vocal performance. Alyssa had a Collaborative Piano assistantship at Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music, and has also performed at the Bayview Festival in Michigan, Interlochen Arts Camp, and internationally with Music Theater Bavaria. Pursuing a Master's degree in Collaborative Piano from CCM after a previous B.M. in Keyboard Pedagogy has inspired Alyssa with a passion for collaboration, exposing music to new audiences, and stimulating youth towards enlightening musical experiences. Her work as an Artist-in-Residence at Twin Towers Life Enriching Communities has taught her to intimately reach out to an audience, giving her the opportunity to individually touch people with the gift of music on a daily basis.



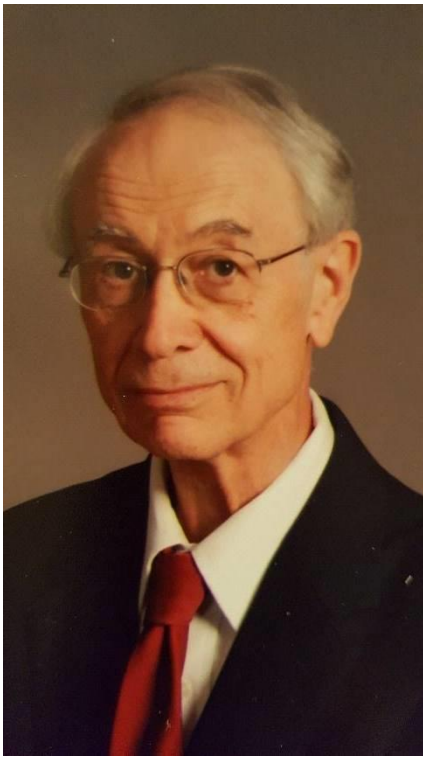
Hailing from the Hampton Roads area of Virginia **Del Fionn Sykes** is a graduate of Binghamton University/SUNY where she earned a Master of Music degree in Voice Performance. After her training at Binghamton, including three years in the Tri-Cities Opera Resident Artists Program, Ms. Sykes moved to New York City to continue her career in the classical music field. Among her invitations, Ms. Sykes was a featured artist with: El Paso Opera, New York Vocal Artists, Amato Opera, Regina Opera, Weill Recital Hall, and Symphony Space. From 2005-2013, Ms. Sykes resided in Germany where she performed as a soloist with orchestras, vocal ensembles, summer festivals and appeared on numerous German TV shows. Now back in the USA, Ms. Sykes continues her evolution and journey in the music landscape hoping to be challenged by new works, such **Strike the Rock**.

Ms. Sykes' solo repertoire spans from Bach to Brubeck. Her early successes: **Oratorio** solo performances include works such as: *The Messiah*, *Israel in Egypt* by Handel, *Elijah* by Mendelssohn, *The Creation* by Haydn, *Mass in C* by Beethoven, *Requiem* by Faure, *The Requiem and Exultate Jubilate* by Mozart, and *Ein Deutsches Requiem* by Brahms; **Operatic** successes have included heroines such as: **Contessa Almaviva**, **Suor Angelica**, **Cio-Cio San**, **Leonora** (*Il Trovatore*), **Rosalinda**, **Micaela** and **Nedda**. More recently she has added new oratorio roles: female soloist in a modern jazz mass by the late jazz icon Dave Brubeck, *To Hope! A Celebration* and *Requiem* by Maurice Durufle.



James A. McClure received his Bachelor of Music from Appalachian State University and Master of Music from UNC-Greensboro. Since joining Virginia Opera in 2015, James has most recently sang the role of Sid in *Puccini's La Faciulla del West* and covered the role of Kilian in *Der Frieschütz*, heaslo performed in the Celebrate Fairfax Festival, on behalf of the Virginia Opera, and is an active member of its chorus. He has been invited to perform as a guest artist with Brevard Chamber Orchestra and the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra. Some of his most memorable roles include: Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe*, Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Le Marquis in *Dialogues de Carmelites*, Gianni Schicchi in *Gianni Schicchi*, and Germont in *La Traviata*. James, native of Charlotte,

NC, is a local emerging artist currently residing in Richmond, VA



After three years in the U.S. Army, **Richard Rose** taught and administered science programs for 35 years and wrote and composed for fifty years. His operas have been performed in Northern Virginia and Oklahoma. Productions in Richmond were *The Fisher of the James* (2012) and the Capitol Opera Richmond productions of *La Rinuncia* and *Missa brevis* in 2015. Writings include books of poetry, the two-volume book of stories and poems, *Frameshifts* (2011), and a recent book of poetry, *Coming Around*, which is published by BrandyLane/Belle Isle press this spring as a companion work to *Monte and Pinky*. Please follow his work and book tour on <https://frameshifts.com>.



Elizabeth Carlton Dowdy graduated from VCU with a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education having studied under L. Wayne Batty, Melanie Day and Dr. Neil Wilson. She has performed as a soloist in concerts and programs with Capitol Opera Richmond, FAACV, Filipino and Asian American organizations, Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, and St. Patrick's Catholic Church, where she currently cantors. Elisabeth has been a professional cantor/chorister locally and was previously a soprano in the Richmond Symphony Choir. She has performed in productions of *Miss Saigon* as Kim; *Little Shop of Horrors* as Audrey; *Two by Two* as Leah; and *My Fair Lady* as Mrs. Pearce/Chorus. Former Capitol Opera Richmond performances include *Hansel and Gretel*, *Noli Me Tangere*, and most recently, local composer Walter Braxton's *To Damascus*. Elisabeth presently studies voice under Dr. Patrick Carlin and is the proud mother of Sam and Gemma.

The Production

Karine Marshall, COR ensemble manager,
Richard L. Rose, producer composer, <https://frameshifts.com/>
Alyssa Darwin, accompanist,
Marie McGranahan Turner, promotion

“STRIKE THE ROCK !” Production: Amber Ensemble:

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| Soprano | Ginny | Sharon Spencer Munz |
| Alto | Amber | Catherine Butler Cooper |
| | And | Gabrielle Maes |
| Tenor | Rusty | John Tyndall |
| Bass | Harry | James McClure |

Amber Chorus: Elizabeth Carlton Dowdy (S), Angelica Powers(S), Michele Baez (S), Catherine Butler Cooper or Gabrielle Maes (A), Del Sykes (A), Erin Wind (A), Devaunté Saunders (T), Chase Peak (T/Bar)

“STRIKE THE ROCK !” Production: *Monte & Pinky Ensemble:*

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| Soprano | Manager | Elizabeth Carlton Dowdy |
| Alto | Monte | Erin Wind |
| Alto | Pinky | Del Sykes |
| Tenor | T.C. Walker | Devaunté Saunders |
| Baritone | Grady | Chase Peak |

Monte and Pinky Chorus: Elizabeth Carlton Dowdy (S), Sharon Munz (S), Michele Baez (S), Sharon Spencer (S), Catherine Butler Cooper (A), Gabrielle Maes (A), John Tyndall (T), Devaunté Saunders (T), Chase Peak (Bar), James McClure (B)

Performance Schedule

3/31 "HIGHLIGHTS" CONCERT AT THE MAIN LIBRARY, GELLMAN ROOM

Concert begins 2:00 Saturday

4/7 "MONTE AND PINKY" AT THE BLACK HISTORY MUSEUM, WITH DISCUSSION TO FOLLOW (2:00 pm) Saturday. The discussion and readings immediately following the production will be by Del Sykes, Diana Carver. Performers are welcome to attend and talk with the audience. We will call attention to the part played by African-American domestic workers in the 1940s-1950s. By offering the actual words and stories of these women for consideration, we aim for goals of greater respect and appreciation of their work and lives. This production will be video-recorded.

4/10 "AMBER" (without chorus at beginning and end) at the Firehouse Theater at 7:00 pm Tuesday

4/22 "STRIKE THE ROCK" (Both M&P and Amber, with chorus) 2:00 p.m. Sunday at Church of the Holy Comforter- WITH DISCUSSION TO FOLLOW. Following this performance, performers are welcome to talk with the audience.



Makers, performers, readers, watchers, and listeners create the artwork. Be present for the creation.