

PITTSBURGH OPERA

March 16, 2022

Contact:

Chris Cox, Director of Marketing and Communications

412.281.0912 ext. 217

ccox@pittsburghopera.org

**Pittsburgh Opera presents the gripping *Blue*,
April 23-May 1 at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center**

What:	<i>Blue</i> Music by Jeanine Tesori , libretto by Tazewell Thompson
Where:	August Wilson African American Cultural Center (AWAACC), downtown Pittsburgh
When:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sat., April 23, 2022 * 8:00 PM• Tues., April 26, 2022 * 7:00 PM• Thurs., April 28, 2022 * 10:00AM Special Student/Community Matinee• Fri., April 29, 2022 * 7:30 PM• Sun., May 1, 2022 * 3:00 PM
Run Time:	2 hours with one intermission
Language:	Sung in English with English supertitles projected above the stage
Tickets:	Single tickets for adults start at \$15; tickets for kids and teens ages 6–18 are half-price. For tickets call 412-456-6666, visit the Box Office at Theater Square, or online at pittsburghopera.org/tickets or CulturalDistrict.org . Group discounts, including student discounts, are available. Pittsburgh Opera has a no-hassle refund policy for all 2021–22 operas so patrons can purchase their tickets with confidence.
COVID Protocols:	Per the AWAACC's COVID protocols , proof of vaccination is required for all patrons including children. No exceptions to the vaccine requirement will be allowed. Masks are mandatory, and “the only approved masks are N95 & kN95 masks. Individuals who cannot wear a mask are asked not to visit at this time.” See the AWAACC's COVID protocols webpage for full details.
Media Event:	Full Dress Rehearsal (Thurs., April 21 st , 7:00 PM) - AWAACC
Related Events:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opera Up Close (Sunday, April 10th, 2:00 PM, on Zoom)• WQED Preview (Saturday, April 16th at 12:30 PM & Friday, April 22nd at 7:00 PM, 89.3FM or wqed.org/fm)• Pre-Opera Talks (one hour before each performance, AWAACC)• Audio Commentary (Tuesday, April 26th, during the performance)



Photo by Karli Cadel

Reflective of an all-too-familiar American headline, [Blue](#) centers on the hopes and fears of a young Black couple as they raise their son.

As the boy grows into a young man, he becomes a student artist and activist. His mother worries for his future, while his father tries to prepare him for the harsh realities of 21st-century America. The father also wrestles with his own identity as a police officer, a "Black man in blue", and the friction that causes within the family.

When their deepest fears come true, the grieving parents must navigate the turbulent waters of loss at the hands of police, while seeking answers and support from their church and community.

Tony Award®-winning composer [Jeanine Tesori](#) and NAACP Theatre Award-winning librettist [Tazewell Thompson](#)'s new opera is inspired by contemporary events and Black literature. Exploring race, violence, and reconciliation, *Blue* places timely issues at the forefront of modern opera and invites audiences to the emotional epicenter of their impact.

Besides its traditional four-performance schedule, **Pittsburgh Opera is adding a special student/community matinee as a fifth performance** at 10:00AM on Thursday, April 28th. To bring your school or community group to this performance, please contact Pittsburgh Opera's Wendy Parkulo at 412-281-0912, ext. 213.

In addition, Pittsburgh Opera is hosting [Opera Up Close: A Community Conversation](#) at 2:00PM on Sunday, April 10th. **This special virtual event with community leaders and *Blue*'s librettist and stage director Tazewell Thompson will discuss the opera's major themes—fatherhood, motherhood, religious support, and police perspective, all from the perspective of the Black community.** Participating in this panel discussion will be:

- [Josiah Gilliam](#), Special Initiatives Coordinator for the [City of Pittsburgh](#) and formerly Coordinator and Program Manager for [My Brother's Keeper](#)
- [April Jackson](#) from [Open Up Pittsburgh](#)
- [Minister Dwayne Fulton](#), Minister of Music and Fine Arts at [Mt. Ararat Baptist Church](#)
- *Blue* librettist and stage director [Tazewell Thompson](#)
- Additional panelist(s) to be announced

Audience members will have the opportunity to ask questions of all the panelists. Registration for this powerful conversation is free, and [available online](#).

Fun Facts

1. *Blue* composer Jeanine Tesori is “the most prolific and honored female theatrical composer in history, with five Broadway musicals and [five Tony Award nominations](#)”, including *Twelfth Night* (1999), *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (2002), *Caroline, or Change* (2004), *Shrek the Musical* (2009), and *Fun Home*, for which she won the 2015 Tony Award for Best Original Score Written for the Theatre.
2. Cast members [Briana Elyse Hunter](#) and [Gordon Hawkins](#) are making their Pittsburgh Opera debuts, while [Kenneth Kellogg](#) (*The Summer King—the Josh Gibson Story*), [Aaron Crouch](#) (*Semele*) and Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist [Andrew Turner](#) (*The Magic Flute*, *The Rose Elf*, *In a Grove*) have all previously sung with Pittsburgh Opera.
3. These will be Pittsburgh Opera's first performances at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center.

Cast and Artistic Team: *Blue*

The Father	Kenneth Kellogg
The Mother	Briana Elyse Hunter ⁺
The Son	Aaron Crouch
The Reverend	Gordon Hawkins ⁺
Policeman / Buddy	Andrew Turner [*]
Policeman / Buddy #2	Ernest C. Jackson ⁺
Policeman / Buddy #3	Yazid Gray [*]
Girlfriend #1 / Nurse	Ariana Wehr ⁺
Girlfriend #2	Adrianna Cleveland
Girlfriend #3	Amanda Lynn Bottoms ⁺
Conductor	Glenn Lewis
Stage Director	Tazewell Thompson ⁺

Associate Director	Cindy C. Oxberry ⁺
Assistant Stage Director	Kaley Karis Smith [*]
Scenery Designer	Donald Eastman
Costume designer	Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer	Eric Norbury
Stage Manager	Cindy Knight
Assistant Stage Manager	Philip Gold
Assistant Stage Manager	Hannah Nathan
Chorus Master	Mark Trawka
Associate Coach / Pianist	James Lesniak

⁺ Pittsburgh Opera debut
^{*} Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist

Blue was commissioned by [The Glimmerglass Festival](#) and premiered in July, 2019. The scenery and costumes were originally created for a co-production with The Glimmerglass Festival, [Washington National Opera](#), and [Lyric Opera of Chicago](#).

The story, in brief

The Mother calls her Girlfriends together to her apartment in Harlem to tell them she is expecting a child. Their joy turns to concern when she tells them she is carrying a boy; they warn her that her son will not be welcomed in this country. When her hope and love – for the child she carries and for The Father, a policeman – will not be shaken, her Girlfriends relent, blessing her and the child. The Father’s police officer buddies, on the other hand, are immediately joyful – and a bit jealous – when they learn their fellow officer has fathered a son.

Sixteen years later, The Son, a student artist and activist, frequently finds himself at odds with the law for his involvement with non-violent political protests. The Father confronts The Son, who pushes back, accusing his police officer Father of upholding an oppressive system. Despite The Son’s bitter words, The Father tells him he will always love him and hold him close.

After The Son is shot by a police officer at a protest, the heartbroken Father meets with The Reverend, who attempts to comfort him and encourages him to forgive. The Father, adopting the attitude of The Son, lashes out angrily. As the funeral for The Son approaches, The Girlfriends return to Harlem to support the grief-stricken Mother as she prepares to lay her son to rest.

At the funeral, Father and Mother pray with the congregation, asking God to welcome their son to Heaven. The Father briefly becomes lost in a fog of emotion, guilt, regret, and memory, then finds his way back to the community gathered around him in church.

In an epilogue, we see The Father, The Mother, and The Son, together, in a bittersweet moment around a kitchen table, sharing a meal, as The Son reconciles with his father and announces his plans for further artistic studies and one more peaceful protest.

- from the [Glimmerglass Festival](#)

Ticketing Information

- Single tickets for adults start at \$15; tickets for kids and teens ages 6–18 are half-price. Call 412-456-6666 or visit pittsburghopera.org/tickets.
- Group discounts, including student discounts, are available. For more information about [group ticket services and discounts](#) for groups of six or more people, contact Wendy Parkulo at 412-281-0912, ext. 213 or groups@pittsburghopera.org.
- Pittsburgh Opera has a no-hassle refund policy for all 2021–22 operas so patrons can purchase their tickets with confidence. Whether a patron has contracted COVID, is waiting for a COVID test result, has been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive, or simply has a symptom that could be COVID, etc., Pittsburgh Opera will offer full refunds for any patrons who notify us that they need to cancel their tickets at least one hour prior to their performance start time.

COVID Protocols

Per the [AWAACC's COVID protocols](#), proof of vaccination is required for all patrons including children. No exceptions to the vaccine requirement will be allowed.

Masks are mandatory, and “the only approved masks are N95 & kN95 masks. Individuals who cannot wear a mask are asked not to visit at this time.”

See [the AWAACC's COVID protocols](#) webpage for full details.

Sponsors

- [PNC](#) is the 2021–22 Pittsburgh Opera Season Sponsor.
- [WQED-FM](#) is Pittsburgh Opera’s Media Sponsor.
- [Ambridge Regional Distribution and Manufacturing Center](#) is the Tuesday performance sponsor.

Pittsburgh Opera celebrates its 83rd season in 2021–22. Established by five intrepid women in 1939, Pittsburgh Opera is viewed as one of the most vibrant opera organizations in the U.S., with a rich artistic tradition, internationally-recognized educational programs, an acclaimed artist training program, and a progressive outlook toward the future. Its green initiative culminated in LEED® Silver certification for its Strip District headquarters the Bitz Opera Factory, and its capacity as a true community partner has increased significantly under General Director Christopher Hahn’s leadership.

###