

## TEXTS FOR “GAMECHANGERS”

### A SONG FOR THE HEROES

“Play ball! Get in there and go to town. Bat those Jim Crow fences down. Demonstrate what you can do; prove you’re big-time players, too. Put your heart in every play, for Sunday is your judgement day. Every word and act of yours may either close or open doors. Is the Negro player fit? Can he pitch, field, think, and hit? Has he guts and dignity? And does he use diplomacy? Can he smile and do his stuff when he finds the going rough? To these questions you hold the key. Boys, what will your answer be?”

### I HIT THE BALL ON A LINE

“I hit the ball on a line over the right field wall, and it went out a long way. Ball kept rising actually. I hope you’ll remember that.

Pie Traynor! Jimmie Foxx! Bill Dickey! Gabby Hartnett! Mule Suttles! Gonna have to hear the noise I’m making. Gonna have to listen up someday when I swing that mighty wood; the balls go sailing, flying good into the trees. It ain’t no effort, just a lazy afternoon breeze. Babe Ruth! Lou Gehrig! Tony Lazari! Like a train I’m coming up. Young and strong; won’t be long. Gonna have to answer me someday. Roger Hornsby! Ty Cobb! Bambino!”

## DID YOU SEE JACKIE ROBINSON HIT THAT BALL

“Did you see Jackie Robinson hit that ball? It went zoomin’ across the left field wall. Yeah, boy, yes, yes; Jackie hit that ball. And when he swung his bat the crowd went wild because he knocked that ball a solid mile.”

## SHE SAT DOWN FOR FREEDOM

“She sat down for Freedom! Yes, Freedom! Not seeing what this would lead to, she sat down ‘cause she was simply tired. Tired in body, tired in mind, but not tired in Spirit. Her faith was strong! Did she even know what she started? She must have sensed that it was time to make a change. And little did she know what that change would bring about. Oh Freedom! Oh Freedom over me! Oh, I ain’t weary yet, because there’s no time for me to fret! I’ll not rest ‘til I know all are free. Who is thie Pioneer of Freedom who fought the good fight? Rosa Louise McCauley Parks! Has she died in vain? I think not! For There is a Balm in Gilead for Rosa Parks. She’ll always be an Icon. Mother of Civil Rights! Rosa Parks! She will always be a lasting legacy for now and forevermore.”

## HE CAME TO ALABAMA

He came to Alabama one strong to right a wrong. He led in Alabama thousands strong to right a wrong.

They prayed in Alabama, marching and hoping for freedom and justice for all. They prayed to right a wrong. As they knelt, inclined in single thought, they cried ‘Holy, holy; Oh God, hear our prayer!’ Then came southern law, clothed in justice garb. ‘Get them! Bash their heads in! Strike them as they kneel! Turn on the fire hose! Use the billy club! Let the gun butts pound! Fill the jails to the brim!’ But they stood with heads unbowed, led by a man unafraid, and said: ‘We shall not be moved. Jails cannot hold us; liberty enfolds us. We shall not be moved. With prayer we will go on. Jails cannot hold us; Freedom enfolds us. We shall not be moved. The Lord is on our side. Standing in silence, we fear no violence. We shall not be moved.’ He came to Alabama one strong to right a wrong. He led from Alabama the nation strong to right its wrong.”

## HE HAD A DREAM

“He had a dream and passed it on for those of us in earnest meditation to follow along up the highways, through the avenue, into the hearts and souls of all who will. Because they will that all mankind be free. He ascended into heaven, yet his spirit abides with us. Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, he’s free at last! Alleluia!”

## INTERMISSION

## I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER I AM ASLEEP

“I do not know whether I am asleep or awake. Do I know? If I believe that I am right (and I am right if they believe that they are right), and they are not in the right, might there be what might be? How then can we entertain a hope that they will act differently? We may pretend to go in good faith, but there will be no faith in us. And if I try and I annoy you, what will you do? I wonder. Will they remember that it is true that neither they, that neither you will they marry, will they carry aloud the right to know that even if they love them so, they are alone to live and die. They are alone to sink and swim. They are alone to have what they own, to have no idea but that they are here, to struggle and thirst, to do everything first; because until it is done, there is no other one. My constantly recurring thought and prayer now are that no word or act of mine may lessen the might of this country in the scale of truth and right.”

## MAMA, THERE ARE THINGS I NEVER TOLD YOU

“Mama, there are things I never told you. Too soon, and I spoke too late. Me and my whole generation, we were born too soon and we saw no choice, ‘til a warm night in June when we found our voice, and the

lies we told our mothers turned to shame. And shame to rage. And rage to pride. And pride to hope. And hope will never be silent. If a bullet should enter my brain, let it shatter every closet door!”

## MUSIC

“For almost a year I didn’t know he could have music on death row. When I found out, I sent the tape player and headphones, and the next day he told me, ‘I listened to music, yes, music, all night long.’ He drank music like a thirsty man. He joined the land of the living that night. I felt his joy. I feel it still.”

## WRITER

“You’ve known for a long time that my greatest wish is to be a journalist, and later on a famous writer. When I write I can shake off all my cares. My sorrow disappears; my spirits are revived! A few of my stories are good; much of my diary is vivid and alive. But (and that’s a big question) will I ever be able to write something great? Will I ever become a journalist or a writer?”

## MOVE ON

“‘I’ve nothing to say. Well, nothing that’s not been said.’ ‘Said by you though, George.’ ‘I do not know where to go.’ ‘And nor did I.’ ‘I want to make things that count, things that will be new. What am I to do?’

‘Move on. Stop worrying where you’re going. Move on. If you can know where you’re going, you’ve gone. Just keep moving on. I chose, and my world was shaken. So what? The choice may have been mistaken; the choosing was not. You have to move on. . . . We will always belong together! Anything you do, let it come from you. Then it will be new. Give us more to see.’”

## PRELUDE

“I left behind a golden rose, and left upon unending road, with a left and right I rightly go, further along and long from home. I left my house to find a home, and right upon the journey slow I hear a thunderin’ from hallowed north, and woke my eyes to inner worth. My mind was violent with her words, and tragic still the sparrow bird: she flies away from wretched ground with goldflake buried in the ground. The ground, it held her down. She saw it as a place to drown. Her flight was freedom with a cost. Her wings grew tired, and she grew lost. Her cry was carried by the wind, and in the air she saw no end; though miles away the cry was heard, but death had nearer reached the bird. Farewell, you sparrow bird. I shall heed your story’s word.”

## SOLITAIRE

When night drifts along the streets of the city, and sifts down between the uneven roofs, my mind begins to peek and peer. It plays at ball in odd blue Chinese gardens, and shakes wrought dicecups in Pagan temples amid the broken flutings of white pillars. It dances with purple and yellow crocuses in its hair, and its feet shine as they flutter over drenched grasses. How light and laughing my mind is, when all the good folk have put out their bedroom candles, and the city is still.”

### SONGS FOR THE PEOPLE

“Let me make the songs for the people, songs for the old and young. Songs to stir like a battle cry wherever they are sung. Let me make the songs for the weary, amid life’s fever and fret, till hearts shall relax their tension, and careworn brows forget. Not for the clashing of sabers, for carnage, nor for strife; but songs to thrill the hearts of all with more abundant life. Let me sing for little children, before their footsteps stray, sweet anthems of love and duty to float o’er life’s highway. Our world, so worn and weary, needs music, pure and strong, to hush the jangle and discords of sorrow, pain, and wrong. Music to soothe all its sorrow till war and crime shall cease; and the hearts of all grown tender girdle the world with peace. Let me make the songs for the people . . .”

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Flourishing mezzo-soprano **Grace Allendorf** is known for her “creamy timbre, evenness of color and coloratura agility.” A consummate musician, she is dedicated to performing opera, oratorio, art song, musical theatre, and new music. Grace made her debut with Opera 51 as a member of the chorus in their production of Faust and she performed the role of Dew Fairy in Hansel and Gretel with Longwood Opera. She has shared the stage as a soloist with Concord Community Chorus, Coro Allegro, Andover Choral Society, Metropolitan Wind Symphony, Freisinger Chamber Orchestra, and Spectrum Singers. She was honored to premiere the role of Lilac Fairy in Sleeping Beauty by Francine Trester as a second-year apprentice in the Nahant Music Festival in 2014. Other premieres include works by Charles Tarver, Josh Hummel, and Dominick DiOrio.

Grace has been a core member of Ensemble Lyrae since its formation in 2016. The pianist and three vocalists seek to illuminate musical works often unknown or under-played. They also premiere cutting-edge pieces written specifically for the Ensemble, including works by Vartan Aghababian, Charles Tarver, Brian John, and Eva Kendrick.

Grace holds the position of Associate Director of Community Performances and Partnerships at New England Conservatory, a community service based program designed to connect students with the community. Her role there has reinvigorated her passion for giving back to the community through music. She has performed solo recitals at a number of senior care facilities including Fuller Village, Needham Council on Aging, Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association, Café Emmanuel, and Hale House.

Grace currently serves as a section leader and soloist at First Parish in Milton and as a cantor at St. Richard's Parish in Danvers. She holds a Master's Degree in Vocal Performance from Longy School of Music and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music with a minor in Theatre Arts from Brandeis University. She is a student of Jayne West and has participated in master classes with Ryan Turner, Sharon Daniels, James Maddalena, David Kravitz, Martin Katz, Sondra Kelly, and Sheri Greenawald.

Grace belongs to Beyond Artists, a coalition of artists that pledge a portion of their concert fees to organizations they care about and therefore publicize the nonprofit's work. With every performance she supports Still Kickin, an organization that builds

empathy, encouragement, and economic relief for people in need, or Norwood Circle of Hope, established to support Norwood residents who need assistance due to a catastrophic medical occurrence.

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Soprano SARAH JOYCE COOPER has been hailed for her “meltingly beautiful” (*Opera News*) singing and “alluring” (*Don & Catharine Bryan Cultural Series*) stage presence. This spring, Ms. Cooper looks forward to making her debut with Tri-Cities Opera in Binghamton, NY as a resident artist. She will appear as Clorinda in Rossini’s *La Cenerentola* and as Sally in the new opera *Stone Soup*, by Joe Illick. She will later appear with the Cape Cod Chamber Orchestra in a performance of Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*. In addition to several other solo recitals, Ms. Cooper looks forward to returning to MassOpera to perform in its *Mirror Cabaret* show, featuring scenes from *Little Women* and *Roméo et Juliette*.

Previous performances include **La Charmeuse** in *Thaïs* (Maryland Lyric Opera), **Juliette** in *Roméo et Juliette* (Opera Western Reserve), **Violetta** in *La Traviata* (MassOpera), **Mimì** in *La Bohème* (Opera Theater of Cape Cod/ Boston Opera Collaborative), **Micaëla** in *Carmen* (Prelude to Performance), **Zerlina** in *Don Giovanni* (Boston Opera Collaborative), **Pamina**

in *Die Zauberflöte*, and **Countess** in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Savannah Voice Festival). Ms. Cooper has also appeared as a soloist with the **Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra**, the **Maryland Lyric Opera Orchestra**, and the **Radcliffe Choral Society at Harvard University**. In 2019, she was invited to perform as a soloist with the **Du Bois Orchestra** in the historic **world premiere** of Florence Price's long-lost cantata, *Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight*. Ms. Cooper was also recently invited to join the roster of **Convergence Ensemble**, an organization of established musicians and performers committed to "exceptional quality music experiences for audiences... throughout New England." In 2020, Ms. Cooper performed as a soloist in **A Concert for Equity in the Arts**, a critically-acclaimed, live-streamed benefit concert for the **Sphinx Organization**, hosted by world-renowned bass, Morris Robinson.

As a competition winner, Ms. Cooper earned first place in both the **Coeur d'Alene Symphony Young Artists Competition** and the **Westminster Choir College Voice Scholarship** competition in 2016. In 2018, she earned first place in the **The American Prize Competition** for Opera and Operetta and second place for Art Song. That same year, she made her Carnegie Hall debut as a top prize-winner in the **Talents of the World International Competition**, performing arias

alongside soloists from the Bolshoi Theater and La Scala Opera in the Talents of the World International Festival. Ms. Cooper has also received encouragement awards from the **George London Foundation** and **Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions** and was nominated for a study grant from the **Sarah Tucker Foundation**. Most recently, she was awarded first place in the **2021 International Rocky Mountain Music Festival**, based in Toronto, Canada.

As a premed, Ms. Cooper completed her Bachelor's Degree in French at **Princeton University**, where she first began to develop the foundation for her "mastery of French style" (*Opera News*) while conducting research for her undergraduate thesis on sacred themes in the mélodies, romances, and cantiques of Gabriel Fauré. She earned her Master of Music Degree in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy from **Westminster Choir College**, where she received the Gwynn Moose Cornell Endowed Award, given to the student who shows the most promise for a career in vocal performance.

In addition to performing, Ms. Cooper serves as volunteer Executive Assistant for **Help!ComeHome!**, a 501c3 organization dedicated to meeting the needs of under-served communities throughout the US in Jesus' Name. Ms. Cooper is a regular volunteer with the

organization, offering both her musical and administrative skills to further its mission. In June 2018, she planned, programmed, and performed in **A Nod to Our Neighbors**, a benefit concert and the first major fundraiser for **Help!ComeHome!**

In her free time, Ms. Cooper enjoys gardening, playing cello, and being active outdoors. A former competitive gymnast, she was awarded top prizes at the annual Massachusetts State Championship meet while competing for the Gymnastics Academy of Boston.

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Georgia native **DAON DRISDOM** is a performer, teacher and church music director. Daon is a recent graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music where he completed his masters degree and studied with Carole Haber. Now based in Boston, he works as a freelance singer and teacher in the city and surrounding areas and has served as Minister of Music for the Union Church in Waban.

Praised for his rich tone and dramatic stage presence, his credits include performances of the roles of Spinellocchio from Puccini's Gianni Schicchi and Arbace from Mozart's Idomeneo with NEC Opera. He has also sung scenes from Smetana's *The Bartered Bride (Jeník)*, Mozart's *Idomeneo (Idomeneo)*, Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz (Fritz)* and Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites (Chevalier de la*

*Force*). Most recently, Drisdorn has appeared with MassOpera and as guest performer on NEC's Liederabend recital series.

In previous years Daon has performed in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*Figaro*) with the 2015 Operafestival di Roma summer program in Orvieto, Italy, an appearance with the Augusta Choral Society in Menotti's *Amahl & the Night Visitors* (*King Melchior*), and in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (*Papageno*) with the American Opera & Musical Theatre Institute at Augusta University.

Mr. Drisdorn is a multiple finalist and winner of the Southeast Regional, Georgia State and National Student Auditions of the National Association of the Teachers of Singing. He has appeared in festivals such as The Westobou Festival of Augusta, Georgia and The Bay View Music Festival of Petoskey, Michigan. Drisdorn is the first recipient of the Bill Toole Scholarship at Augusta University for the 2016-2017 academic year and joined the list of singers who received the Lucie C. Ruzicka Award for Musical Excellence upon graduating.

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Hailed for her "joyful gleam of seamlessly seductive tone" by the Boston Music Intelligencer, soprano JENNA RAE LORUSSO is a native of Acton, Massachusetts. Her upcoming performances include

Suor Genovieffe in Greater Worcester Opera's Suor Angelica. In 2019 she performed selections of Rossini's *Il barbiere de Siviglia* and *Semiramide* with Freisinger Chamber Orchestra, as well as the part of soprano soloist in Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with Masterworks Chorale. Previous opera performances include Sandrina in Mozart's *Die Gärtnerin aus Liebe* (*La finta giardiniera*) and Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) at the Town Hall Theater in Middlebury, VT as well as the Queen of the Night as a guest artist in Nahant Music Festival's *The Magic Flute*. She received her Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from Westminster Choir College, and graduated from University of Miami's Frost School of Music with a Master's degree in Voice Performance.

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ARI NIEH, bass-baritone, is a versatile performer whose work ranges from medieval plainsong to 21st century opera. She earned an MM in historical performance at Longy School of Music. Her recent concert solos include Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *Magnificat* with the Byrd Ensemble and Seattle Baroque Orchestra. As a choral artist, she has performed with professional ensembles throughout the

country, including The Thirteen in Washington, DC, and GRAMMY-nominated True Concord Voices and Orchestra in Tucson. She has been a regular chorister at Boston's Church of the Advent and San Francisco's Grace Cathedral.

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Blind since birth, MATTHEW SHIFRIN is passionate about making the world more engaging for disabled people. Frustrated that he couldn't read comics or play video games, Matthew founded Project Daredevil, a start-up that's creating virtual reality experiences for the blind, using 3D sound, and a motion simulating helmet that tricks the vestibular system. Project Daredevil participated in the MassChallenge start-up accelerator, and won the MIT \$15K Creative Arts Competition. Unable to build Lego sets on his own, Matthew created a system of text-based instructions that explains where and how each piece should be placed, and convinced Lego to incorporate his accessible instructions into their new sets. His work with Lego has been featured in The Washington Post, Forbes, Fast Company, Reuters, and can be seen on NBC.

Realizing that Lego bricks were a portable and effective way to convey information to blind people, he created a Lego-based music notation system that lets blind people quickly and easily write down music. While rock-climbing, Matthew was at a disadvantage, since he couldn't see the wall before climbing to plan his moves. So he devised a Lego-based route-mapping system that blind climbers can use to feel a route before they climb it, resulting in better technique and more efficient motion. His rock-climbing system was featured on CBS.

Not seeing any blind people in mainstream podcasting, he started Blind Guy Travels, a podcast published by Radiotopia, chronicling his adventures. The podcast premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, and was Fourth on Spotify's, and 13th on The Atlantic's list of the best podcasts of 2021.

Matthew is a classically-trained countertenor and accordionist, and made his acting debut playing a blind musician in Mark Turtletaub's "Puzzle," which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and is distributed by Sony Pictures.

He completed his Bachelors in contemporary Improvisation at the New England Conservatory in 2021, studying singing with Michael Meraw, and Accordion with Hankus Netsky, earning the Chadwik Medal, the conservatory's highest honor for an undergraduate student. Matthew is continuing his studies at the New England Conservatory pursuing a Master of Music in singing, and hopes to continue building technologies to help disabled people engage with the world around them.

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MARCH STEIGER, soprano, is a fourth year Classical Vocal Performance major from Buxton, Maine. He is currently studying with Dr. Malinda Haslett. During his time at USM, March has appeared in productions with USM's Opera Workshop as The Prince and Armeline (*Cendrillon*, Viardot), Marie (*La Fille du Regiment*), La Périchole (*La Périchole*), Queen of the Night (*Die Zauberflöte*), Adele (*Die Fledermaus*), and Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*). He also has been a soloist with the Portland Symphony Orchestra, the Southern Maine Symphony Orchestra, and USM's Choral Union. March has been a finalist in the Maine Classical NATS competition three years in a

row, as well as being selected to sing in the USM School of Music Honors Recital in 2021 and 2022. In the summer of 2021, he performed in the ensemble of Opera Maine's production of *L'Elisir d'Amore*. March has found his passion in performing works by underrepresented and underperformed composers.

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Recognized nationwide for his artistry in the field of opera and oratorio, RON WILLIAMS continues to gather acclaim for his work onstage and in the concert hall. He has sung leading roles with several opera companies nationally, including San Francisco Spring Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre and Opera San Jose, where he created the role of Edward in the world premiere of Alva Henderson's *The Last Leaf*. In New England, Williams debuted with Boston Lyric Opera in the revival of Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars*, receiving critical acclaim from *The New York Times*. He portrayed nemesis Nick Shadow in the much-heralded production of *The Rake's Progress* with Boston's Opera Laboratory Company at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. *The Boston Globe* praised his performance of Figaro in Opera New England's *The Barber of Seville*. Ron made his debut with Longwood Opera in the title role of Verdi's *Rigoletto*. With Greater Worcester opera, he has sung Escamillo in *Carmen*, Count Almaviva

in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and performed the title role in *Don Giovanni* in last summer. Mr. Williams was a regional finalist in the San Francisco Opera National Auditions. He received the College Foundation Award from the California Music Teachers Association. Ron remains passionately interested in arts education for young audiences and has performed at the National Children's Arts Festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. Mr. Williams maintains a busy concert schedule having performed with Cantata Singers, Chorus North Shore, Symphony Pro Musica, as well as the Dartmouth College Symphony (N.H.) where he sang a concert version of Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Ron took on the role of the biblical narrator in a performance of *King David* by Arthur Honneger with The Masterworks Chorale under the late Alan Lannom. Ron was seen in the one-man opera of Domenico Cimarosa, *Il Maestro di Cappella* with Boston Civic Symphony. He made his debut with Boston Cecilia in Britten's *Cantata Misericordium* performed the role of Christus in J.S. Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, all under the direction of Donald Teeters. Last summer he reprised the title role in the comic opera *Gianni Schicchi* with Opera Susquehanna in Pennsylvania. Last October, Ron performed a

principal role in the MassOpera reading of Freedom Ride, a new opera by Dan Shore.

Ron made his European debut with the Düsseldorf Chamber Orchestra in Germany. His stage debut was in Saint Gallen, Switzerland and has performed on the European stage in several countries including The Netherlands, France, Denmark Austria, Switzerland and Spain.

An artist committed to bringing to the stage the works of twentieth-century American composers, Ron has researched and performed the works of Hale Smith (Mediation in Passage) and Ned Rorem (The Lake of Innesfree). Ron has been involved with the premiere of several works locally including Elmer Gantry, an opera by New England composer Robert Aldridge. For more information please visit

[www.RonSings.com](http://www.RonSings.com)

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TIMOTHY STEELE is an active vocal coach, collaborative pianist, and conductor, and has taught for thirty years on the opera faculty at New England Conservatory. He has conducted for outreach tours with the Boston Lyric Opera and is a former music director for Opera Providence. He has served as assistant conductor/pianist for over 190 productions with twenty-five opera companies, including Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Boston Lyric Opera, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Youth Symphony

Orchestra, Wolf Trap Opera, Central City Opera, and Opera Maine. He assisted with the Pulitzer Prize winning opera MADAME WHITE SNAKE for productions in Boston and Taiwan and the OUROBOROS TRILOGY in 2016, and for three years collaborated with WaterFire-Providence on a unique and popular series of opera evenings. For the last eight years he has been music director at First Parish of Milton-UU and producer of Milton Community Concerts. In Boston he has performed with Emmanuel Music, the Handel and Haydn Society, and the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, among others.