

Frederick Douglass New Jersey State Opera World Premiere poster

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April 1991



Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

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C0438

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Unit Date

April 1991

Language

English .

Abstract

Poster for the World Premiere of the opera Frederick Douglass at the New Jersey State Opera.

Creator

New Jersey State Opera

Extent

1 Linear Feet 1 poster

Physical Location

Map case 22.1

Repository

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

The copyright and related rights status of this collection have not been evaluated (See <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/CNE/1.0/>)

Acquisition Information

Purchased by Lynn Eaton from Ian Brabner Rare Americana in 2020.

Processing Information

Processing and finding aid completed by Meghan Glasbrenner in October 2024.

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Biographical and Historical Information

Frederick Douglass is a three-act opera with music composed by Ulysses Kay and a libretto written by Donald Dorr. Work on the opera began in 1979 after Kay and Dorr received a National Endowment for the Arts grant the previous year. The opera's story focuses on the final year in the life of abolitionist and statesman Frederick Douglass after the marriage to his second wife Helen Pitts Douglass. The opera was completed in 1985, but did not premiere until over 5 years later. The opera's world premiere starred Kevin Maynor as Frederick Douglass and Klara Barlow as Helen Pitts Douglass and took place on April 12, 1991 at Newark Symphony Hall performed by the New Jersey State Opera.

Ulysses S. Kay was born in Tucson, Arizona on January 7, 1917. The nephew of jazz musician King Oliver, Kay studied music both domestically and internationally, spending four years in Rome, Italy (1949-1953) through support from a Fulbright Scholarship, the Rome Prize, and a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship. Known for his neoclassical style symphonic and choral compositions, Kay won multiple awards and recognitions throughout his career, including the third annual George Gershwin Memorial Contest. In 1968 he was appointed distinguished professor at Lehman College of the City University of New York where he taught for 20 years, until his retirement. Kay also wrote five operas, with Frederick Douglass being his last. He passed away on May 20, 1995 at the age of 78 due to complications of Parkinson's disease.

Donald L. Miller was born on June 30, 1923 in Jamaica. An artist and illustrator, Miller is best known for his large painted mural in Washington, D.C.'s Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library which depicts Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other activists and events during the Civil Rights movement. Miller also worked as a cartoonist for The Adakian newspaper, a children's book illustrator, and served as an art professor at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. He passed away on February 7, 1993.

The New Jersey State opera was founded in 1964 as the Opera Theater of Westfield, with Alfredo Silipigni serving as one of the first Artistic Directors. In 1965, the name was changed to the Opera Theatre of New Jersey, and later to the New Jersey State Opera in 1974. The company moved into Newark Symphony Hall in 1968, where it stayed for 30 years before moving into the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in 1998. It moved out of Newark in 2012 relocating to the Clifton-Passaic area of New Jersey.

Scope and Content

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Poster for the New Jersey State Opera World Premiere of the opera Frederick Douglass, directed by Louis Johnson and conducted by Alfredo Silipigni. The poster measures approximately 26.5" x 19" and features a painting by Donald L. Miller depicting a large reproduction of the 1879 portrait of Douglass and two vignettes from the opera. Miller's signature can be seen along the right edge of the image.

Related Materials

The Special Collections Research Center holds other performing arts collections, including theatrical posters, such as the Porgy and Bess poster collection.

The University of South Carolina Music Library holds a vocal score for the opera and Columbia University Libraries holds a copy of the program for the New Jersey State Opera production.

The Library of Congress holds the Frederick Douglass papers.

Keywords

Opera
Posters
Performing arts posters
African Americans
Opera posters
Kay, Ulysses, 1917-1995. Frederick Douglass
Douglass, Frederick, 1818-1895
Kay, Ulysses, 1917-1995
Newark Symphony Hall (Newark, N.J.)

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"Ulysses Kay." 2024. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ulysses_Kay&oldid=1246969105.

Arrangement

This is a single item collection.