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## KENNETH OVERTON

### BARITONE

Kenneth Overton is lauded for blending his opulent baritone with magnetic, varied portrayals that seemingly “emanate from deep within body and soul.” Kenneth Overton’s symphonious baritone voice has sent him around the globe, making him one of the most sought-after opera singers of his generation. In 2020, Kenneth became a GRAMMY AWARD WINNER for Best Choral Performance in the title role of Richard Danielpour’s *The Passion of Yeshua* with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by JoAnn Falletta.

Last season, Mr. Overton joined Austin Symphony as Porgy in *Porgy and Bess*, sang with the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir as the baritone soloist in *The Ordering of Moses*, joined American Lyric Theater for their Opera in Eden workshops in *The Shadow*, returned to the New York Choral Society for their concerts of Bach’s *Magnificat* and Esmail’s *The Love Between Us: A Prayer for Unity*, and joined La Jolla Symphony and Chorus to sing the title role in their concert of *Elijah*. In addition, he joined Lancaster Symphony Orchestra for Mozart’s *Requiem*, Columbia Pro Cantare for their concert of *Messiah*, and Riverside Choral Society for Schubert’s *Mass No. 6* and Mozart’s *Choral Fantasy*. This season, he will début with Asheville Symphony as a soloist in their concert of *Messiah*, return to the Richmond Symphony for their performance of Damien Geter’s *An African American Symphony*, and join GENVAS as a soloist in their salon concert series of *From South Florida with Love*.



Recently, Mr. Overton joined the San Francisco Opera as Suleiman in *Omar*, while covering Abdul/Abe, and as the King’s Herald cover in *Lohengrin*. He also joined Portland Baroque Orchestra for the pastiche *Dinner with Handel* and Opera Montana as Marcello in *La bohème*. In concert he joined the Hartford Chorale for part one of *Messiah* and Bach’s *Magnificat*, Lyric Fest for their *Love Songs Concert*, New Choral Society for *Elijah*, Opera Philadelphia for their *Sounds of America: Price and Bonds* concert, as well as the Resonance Ensemble as a featured soloist in a recital of Black composers’ works, curated by Damien Geter. He curated his own concert for On Site Opera in honor of Juneteenth, on which he also performed, and he joined the National Philharmonic as the baritone soloist for Beethoven’s *Mass in C*.

Moreover, Overton was featured prominently at the Welsh National Opera in two world premieres, leading their production of *Migrations* and performing the role of Duncan in *The Shoemaker*. Overton went on to sing Porgy in *Porgy and Bess* in a co-production with Opera Carolina and North Carolina Opera. Concert engagements included The Washington Chorus performances of Duruflé’s *Requiem* as a soloist and Undine Smith Moore’s *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr* as the narrator; additionally, Overton performed a concert staging of *Porgy and Bess* with the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra in Hamburg, Strauss’ *Daphne* with the American Symphony Orchestra, Bach’s *St. John Passion* with The Dessoff Choirs, Handel’s *Messiah* at the University of Chicago’s Rockefeller Chapel, *A Knee on the Neck* and *Dona Nobis Pacem* with the New York



Choral Society, the African American Music Festival at Pennsylvania State University, and concerts with the Howland Chamber Music Circle and Spartanburg Philharmonic.

2021-2022's operatic engagements included Kenneth's Metropolitan Opera début in the fall of 2021 as Lawyer Frazier in **Porgy and Bess**, a reprisal of the role of Ralph Abernathy in **I Dream** with Opera Carolina and Charlottesville Opera, the Homecoming Soldier in Zach Redler's **The Falling and The Rising** with Opera Carolina, Germont in **La Traviata** for Fort Worth Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera's production of Terence Blanchard's **Champion**. In concert, Overton appeared with the National Philharmonic as a soloist for Mozart's **Requiem** and Hailstork's **A Knee on the Neck**; he performed Nathaniel Dett's **The Ordering of Moses** with the Harlem Chamber Players, Handel's **Messiah** with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, and Mozart's **Requiem** with the National Chorale; he was a soloist in "Deep River: Black Currents in Classical Music" with the American Composer's Orchestra; he sang a solo recital with The Quick Center for the Arts at St. Bonaventure University; performed **George Crumb's American Songbook II** with Chamber Music Northwest; and he sang in the premiere of Damien Geter's **An African American Requiem** with the Oregon Symphony – with subsequent performances at The Kennedy Center with Choral Arts Society of Washington.

Recently, Overton appeared in On Site Opera's **The Road We Came**, an immersive and site-specific experience that explores the composers, musicians, and places that define the rich Black history of New York City through a series of self-guided, musical walking tours. He also sang the title role in **Porgy and Bess** for New Orleans Opera, and he performed on the concerts **A Night of Black Excellence** with Fort Worth Opera and **Nadia Boulanger and Her World** with the Bard Music Festival.

Previously, Kenneth made a triumphant role début as Friar Lawrence in Berlioz's **Roméo et Juliette** with Oregon Bach Festival, performed on the 150th anniversary of Berlioz's death and conducted by the irreverent John Nelson. Critics deemed the production "too beautiful, too musical" not to be performed. While at the festival, he also performed Mozart's **Requiem** and Bach's **Magnificat**. In addition, he returned to San Francisco Opera for **Billy Budd**, performed in **Porgy and Bess** with Harrisburg Symphony, and performed in Union Avenue Opera's 25th Anniversary Gala. In concert, he appeared at Carnegie Hall for Angela Rice's **Thy Will be Done** and Vaughan Williams' **Dona nobis pacem**, Mechem's **Songs of the Slave** with Symphony of the Mountains, and with the Oregon Bach Festival for Richard Danielpour's **Passion of Yeshua**, which he also sang at UCLA's Royce Hall and the Buffalo Philharmonic, and which was recorded for release on Naxos.

Mr. Overton is a champion of new works, having returned to San Francisco Opera in "the most eagerly anticipated new opera of the season": the world premiere of John Adams' **Girls of the Golden West**. He also created the role of Ralph Abernathy in the world premiere of the Rhythm & Blues opera **I Dream** by Douglas Tappin for Opera Grand Rapids, Toledo Opera, and Opera Carolina, and he performed the role of Stephen Kumalo in Kurt Weill's **Lost in the Stars** for Union Avenue Opera.

Previous engagements also include Amonasro in **Aida** with Boheme Opera, a return to the New York City Opera performing the role of Jake Wallace in Puccini's **La fanciulla del West**, and Sharpless in **Madama Butterfly** for Opera Idaho. Additionally, Kenneth thrived in his Hungarian début as the title role in **Porgy and Bess** in the Margaret Island Open Air Theatre's production where he was heralded as one of "America's most renowned opera singers."

Alongside the New England Symphonic Ensemble, Kenneth took Carnegie Hall by storm in his soloist performances of Faure's **Requiem** and the New York premiere of Michael John Trotta's **Seven Last Words**



**of Christ** with MidAmerica Productions. He returned to David Geffen Hall with the National Chorale in Mozart's **Requiem** and **Vesperae solennes de confessore**. He also starred in the significant world premiere of **Upon This Handful of Earth** by Norwegian Composer **Gisle Kverndokk**, commissioned by the New York Opera Society.

Mr. Overton's ever-blossoming career has allowed him to perform with some of the most prestigious opera companies and orchestral organizations in the world. Highlights include his 2017 New York Philharmonic début, as well as his San Francisco Opera début as Lawyer Frazier in **Porgy and Bess** and his return to the company as Sid in **La fanciulla del West**. As a leading baritone, Kenneth has performed with Utah Festival Opera and Musical Theatre, Opera Memphis, Sacramento Opera, Nashville Opera, Connecticut Opera, Chattanooga Symphony and Opera, Houston Ebony Opera Guild, Toledo Opera, Opera Delaware, Shreveport Opera, Opera Tampa, and Opera Carolina. Kenneth has been seen as Germont in **La Traviata**, Michele in **Il tabarro**, Papageno in **Die Zauberflöte**, Sharpless in **Madama Butterfly**, Leporello in **Don Giovanni**, Marcello and Schaunard in **La bohème**, Ping in **Turandot**, Angelotti in **Tosca**, as well as Bello and Sid in **La fanciulla del West**.

Kenneth's interpretation of the title role in **Porgy and Bess** has been proclaimed "breathtaking." He has performed the role more than 100 times at international houses such as the Deutsche Oper Berlin in the critically acclaimed production from South Africa's Cape Town Opera, the Palacio Bellas Artes in Mexico City, and L'Opera Montreal. He triumphed in Tony Award-winning director John Doyle's new staging for the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen and débuted the role at various houses on tour throughout the British Isles. Kenneth has also portrayed Porgy in concert with the Traverse City Symphony, the Springfield Symphony, the National Chorale at David Geffen Hall - Lincoln Center, the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, the Paducah Symphony, the Richmond Symphony, the Sopot Festival in Poland, and the Klangvokal Festival in Dortmund. Kenneth has sung Porgy on stage in the USA at Utah Festival Opera and Musical Theatre, Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh, Opera Memphis, Opera Carolina, and the Lexington Opera Society.

Kenneth is widely recognized for his concert work, having performed as a soloist with Phoenix Symphony, Norwalk Symphony, National Chorale, Harlem Chamber Players, Duluth Superior Symphony, Tacoma Symphony, Annapolis Symphony Orchestra, Yonkers Philharmonic, Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Oratorio Society of New Jersey, Lexington Philharmonic, Bach Choir of Pittsburgh, Mineola Choral Society, Summit Chorale Festival, New York City Opera's Schomberg Series, Sarasota Symphony, and San Antonio Symphony. His concert and oratorio repertoire includes Faure's **Requiem**, Durufle's **Requiem**, Handel's **Messiah**, Verdi's **Requiem**, Mozart's **Requiem**, **Coronation Mass** and **Vesperae solennes de confessore**, Saint-Saëns' **Christmas Oratorio**, Mendelssohn's **Elijah**, Brahms' **Ein deutsches Requiem**, Vaughn Williams' **A Sea Symphony**, Beethoven's **Symphony No. 9**, Schubert's **Mass in A-flat**, Dvorak's **Te Deum**, Bruckner's **Te Deum**, Haydn's **Creation**, and Vaughan Williams' **Five Mystical Songs**. Kenneth is also regularly featured with the American Spiritual Ensemble as a soloist for annual performances in the USA and abroad.

Kenneth's versatile acting and singing abilities have allowed him to continue his passion for musical theatre and new works. He made his operatic Broadway début in Baz Luhrmann's **La bohème**. He triumphantly portrayed Joe in **Showboat** and Judge Turpin in **Sweeney Todd** for the Pensacola Opera, and he excelled in the diverse contemporary works **Corps of Discovery** by Michael Ching and **The Widow's Lantern** by David Ott.



Pride and tradition portray the motif of Kenneth's début solo album [\*Been In De Storm So Long: Songs My Fathers Taught Me\*](#), his homage to the spiritual tradition that has been formative in his artistic life. Pianist Kevin Miller and Kenneth's collaboration embody the historic spirituals from our past and contemporary art songs by African American Composers, giving them a new life of their own. Amidst performing, Kenneth serves as co-founder and artistic director of Opera Noire of New York, a performing arts organization created to empower African American artists to reach their full creative potential in a creative, supportive environment. He hails from Philadelphia.

Current as of September 1, 2025