



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 27, 2020**

Contact: Jennifer Rice

206-450-7054, rice1234@yahoo.com

Press images: <https://seattleopera.smugmug.com/201920-Season/Yardbird/>  
<https://seattleopera.smugmug.com/Events/Q1-2020-Opera-Center-Events/>

Password: "press"

# Seattle Opera Events Throughout Black History Month

**5 Community Events**

**4 Live Seattle JazzED Lobby Performances**

**Seattle Premiere of *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* Feb. 22 – Mar. 7**

**SEATTLE**— Seattle Opera has packed its Black History Month February calendar with live performances, panel discussions, community events, and the highly anticipated Seattle premiere of *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*. *Yardbird* is a contemporary opera by composer Daniel Schnyder and librettist Bridgette A. Wimberly celebrating alto-saxophonist Charlie Parker's contributions to jazz, a Black American art form. On this 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Charlie Parker's birth, the added activities are structured to inform and educate audiences about his prolific yet tumultuous life. The events and opera are all presented as part of Seattle Opera's commitments to showcase new opera and highlight artists of color.

The new music of *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* bridges classical and jazz styles through a flexible operatic tenor with the fluid, improvisational spirit of bebop. There are eight opera performances between February 22 – March 7 and the opera runs 90 minutes without an intermission. Immediately following the Friday and Saturday evening performances, Seattle JazzED will be playing Charlie Parker's music in the McCaw

Hall lobby. Tickets to *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* start at \$35 and are available at [www.seattleopera.org](http://www.seattleopera.org).

Two of the five Black History Month community events are presented with partners KNKX, SIFF and The Royal Room. Event locations and ticket information are listed below. Three of the community events will be held at the Opera Center, next to McCaw Hall. Tickets and reservations for Opera Center events are handled online at [seattleopera.org](http://seattleopera.org), over the phone at 206.389.7676, or in person at the ticket office located at the Opera Center, 363 Mercer Street. Box office hours are 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Monday–Friday.

**Angela Brown & John Keene in Recital      Tuesday, February 4, 7:30pm;      Tickets \$25**  
**Tagney Jones Hall at the Opera Center      <https://www.seattleopera.org/recitals>**

Before taking the stage as Addie in *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*, world-renowned soprano Angela Brown presents a unique recital in Tagney Jones Hall. This concert features musical settings of poetry and prose by American literary legends Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and Mari Evans. Through music, Brown and pianist John Keene will take the audience on an intimate journey through the lives of these three luminaries and her own, describing her relationship with each writer and how they helped to shape her life and singing career.

**Opera Talk: A Bird's Eye View: Telling the Story of Charlie Parker Through Opera      FREE**  
**Tuesday, February 11, 7pm;      <https://www.seattleopera.org/operatalks>**  
**Tagney Jones Hall at the Opera Center**

How did the story of one of jazz's greatest innovators become an opera? The genre once called "America's past and its potential" is a vital contributor to the American classical landscape. Join *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* composer Daniel Schnyder and librettist Bridgette A. Wimberly as they discuss their work and the unique task of blending jazz and opera. Co-moderated by Seattle Opera dramaturg Jonathan Dean and KNKX's Abe Beeson.

**Community Conversation: Black Representation in the Arts      Thurs., February 13, 7pm;      FREE**  
**Tagney Jones Hall at the Opera Center      <https://www.seattleopera.org/communityconversations>**

What happens when audiences see an African American ballerina dance Clara in *The Nutcracker* or a Black opera singer sing Mimi in *La bohème*? How does the storytelling change when Black creators and artistic leaders are the ones making decisions behind the scenes? How can companies help to undo harm, create a more diverse pipeline of talent, and ultimately, enable the decolonization of art forms long-dominated by racism? Join Seattle Opera for a discussion on Black representation in the arts. The conversation will be led by Seattle Opera Scholar in Residence Naomi André, professor at the University of Michigan and author of *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement*. Speakers include Theresa Ruth Howard, formerly of Dance Theatre of Harlem; founder and curator of the Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet, and Bridgette A. Wimberly (award-winning poet, playwright, and librettist of *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*).

**SIFF Film Night: *Bird*      Thursday February 20, 6:30 pm;      Tickets: \$13-14**  
**SIFF's Cinema Uptown, Queen Anne      <https://www.siff.net/year-round-cinema/bird>**

SIFF, KNKX, and Seattle Opera partner around Seattle Opera's upcoming production of *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* to bring this special screening of the Oscar-winning film *Bird*. This biographical film is directed by Clint Eastwood and stars Forest Whitaker as the great saxophone player Charlie "Bird" Parker. It's set

during the 1930s, '40s, and '50s and traces the life of jazz saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker—from his bebop innovations, to his drug problem and legal difficulties. KNKX's Jim Wilke hosts the event with a pre-show discussion.

**Charlie Parker's New York in the '50s**      **Monday, February 24, 7:30pm;**      **Tickets:\$10-\$20**  
**The Royal Room, Columbia City**

<https://www.strangertickets.com/events/104028854/188-sullivan-charlie-parkers-new-york-in-the-50s>

Seattle Opera and the Royal Room proudly present an evening of jazz and poetry celebrating the innovation and virtuosity of Charlie Parker's New York in the 50s. Opera soprano Angela Brown (also performing in Seattle Opera's *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*) delivers *Discography*, a spoken word piece by librettist Bridgette A. Wimberly. Julia Tai conducts the Seattle Modern Orchestra in Wayne Horvitz's new work *188 Sullivan*. The piece pays homage to the meetings between Parker and Edgard Varèse featuring motifs found within Parker's works. It's written for five strings, piano, percussion, electronics, and features guest clarinetist James Falzone. The D'Vonne Lewis Quartet rounds out the evening by performing celebrated favorites by Charlie Parker.

### **About Seattle Opera**

Established in 1963, Seattle Opera is committed to serving the people of the Pacific Northwest with performances of the highest caliber and through innovative educational and engagement programs for all. Each year, more than 95,000 people attend Seattle Opera performances, and more than 400,000 people of all ages are served through school performances, radio broadcasts, and more. By drawing our communities together, and by offering opera's unique fusion of music and drama, we create life-enhancing experiences that speak deeply to people's hearts and minds. Connect with Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and on 98.1 Classical KING FM.

###