

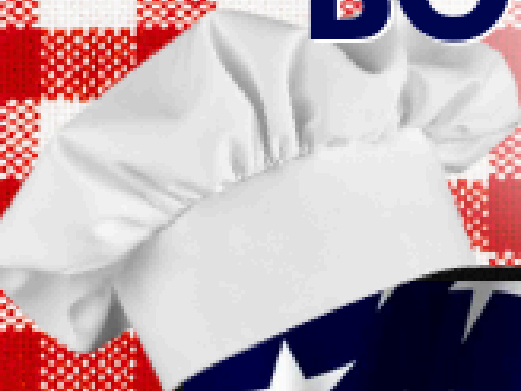
THE COOK-OFF

WORLD PREMIERE

featuring

BON APPÉTIT!

THE JULIA CHILD OPERA





PRESENTS

THE COOK-OFF

Shawn e. Okpebholo, composer

Mark Campbell, librettist

Sung in English and Spanish with English Subtitles

AND

BON APPÉTIT!

A Julia Child Opera

by Lee Hoiby

November 15, 16, 17, 2024

Noah Liff Opera Center Studio

Directed by John Hoomes

Conducted by Dean Williamson

Featuring the Nashville Opera Orchestra

CAST

THE COOK OFF

Kenny Kincaid.....CRAIG IRVIN

Beryl Bennett.....EMILY PULLEY

Ivy Sweet.....AMY OWENS

Kendra Smith.....REHANNA THELWELL

Álvaro Mendez.....JEHU OTERO

BON APPÉTIT

Julia Child.....EMILY PULLEY

Tickets & Information Contact Nashville Opera at 615.832.5242 or visit NashvilleOpera.org

Study Guide Contributors: [Rox Davidson](#), Nashville Opera Intern; [Hannah Marcoe](#), Education Manager; and [Will Shutes](#), Director of Marketing & PR

SYNOPSIS - THE COOK-OFF

The show begins like the beginning of a cable TV cooking competition. The host, Kenny Kincaid, an over the top TV personality, welcomes the audience and introduces Beryl Bennett, a famous critic and author of many cookbooks, as well as his co-host for the evening who has a bit of a drinking problem. They announce that the dish for today's show will be mac'n'cheese, which Kenny (incorrectly) claims was brought to America by Thomas Jefferson. The winner of the show is set to win \$100,000!

The show's three contestants are introduced by Kenny asking them fast questions, getting the show moving. First is Ivy Sweet, a woman who runs a food blog.

Next is Kendra Smith, a woman who runs "Aunt Bebe's Restaurant" and tries to correct Kenny's statement about Thomas Jefferson, but she is brushed off. Last is Álvaro Mendez, a shy man who runs "Sabroso Food Truck". As the contestants prepare their mac'n'cheese they sing to themselves, Kendra and Ivy trying to focus, and Álvaro getting angry at himself because of how he answered Kenny's questions earlier.



AMY OWENS as IVY SWEET

Kenny asks each of the contestants what they would

do with the prize money if they win. Kendra says she would buy things for her restaurant and make a book out of her aunt's recipes. Ivy claims she would donate the reward to her charity and puts on a 'holier than thou' attitude, which Kendra and Álvaro both scoff at. Álvaro says he would buy a restaurant.

Ivy begins to sing about her life growing up. She was born poor and moved away to make a food famous food blog and she will do anything to keep her past a secret. Álvaro then sings in Spanish about his past and about how he

hopes that this competition will show his brothers that he deserves the same respect as them. He sings more about how desperately he wants this restaurant. Kendra sings about her aunt Bebe, who her restaurant is named after, and how if she wins she'll use the money to help preserve her legacy. Who will win the \$100,000?



REHANNA THELWELL as KENDRA SMITH



FUN FACT!

Mac'n'cheese gained popularity during the great depression as an easy and fast meal.

SYNOPSIS - BON APPÉTIT!

The opera begins with well known cooking show host Julia Child introducing her show where she will be baking a chocolate cake. The show starts out very normal, she melts the chocolate and prepares the ingredients. However, things take a bit of a turn when she makes a few mistakes. That doesn't stop her, though. She pushes through and keeps a positive attitude while it seems like the cake is fighting against her.



EMILY PULLEY as BERYL BENNETT
and JULIA CHILD

LEE HOIBY, composer- BON APPÉTIT!

1926-2011



Lee Hoiby was an American composer and pianist who studied at the University of Wisconsin then continued his education at Mills College, and then the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied composition, and while he intended to become a concert pianist, he decided that he would rather pursue composition. His most notable works include the operas "Summer and Smoke" and "The Tempest," as well as a wide array of songs that showcase his gift for melody and text setting.

Throughout his career, Hoiby received numerous accolades, including grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and fellowships from prestigious institutions. A passionate advocate for the arts, Hoiby also taught composition at various universities, influencing a generation of musicians.

His music continues to be celebrated for its emotional depth and accessibility, leaving a lasting legacy in the American classical music scene.



JULIA CHILD, Source: Sony Pictures Classics

SHAWN E. OKPEBHOLO, composer



Shawn E. Okpebholo is a Nigerian-American Composer who has studied at the University of Cincinnati. Okpebholo's works often speak to deeper meanings, many of them relating to the struggle of African-Americans.

His compositions span a wide range of genres, including orchestral, chamber, and vocal music, often incorporating elements from African musical traditions. Okpebholo's works are celebrated for their emotional depth and rhythmic complexity, with notable pieces such as "The Story of the Two Rivers" and "An African American Requiem."

In addition to his work as a composer, Okpebholo is a dedicated educator, teaching at various institutions and actively promoting music by underrepresented composers. He is a professor of music theory and composition at Wheaton College, and has been teaching there since 2010.

His contributions to contemporary classical music have garnered numerous awards and recognition, solidifying his position as a leading voice in the field.

MARK CAMPBELL, librettist

Mark Campbell is an American librettist and writer, renowned for his contributions to contemporary opera. Born in 1963 in New York City, he studied at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and later pursued a career in theatre and music. Campbell is best known for his collaborations with various composers, creating engaging and innovative libretti that bring new narratives to life. His notable works include "Silent Night," which won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Music, and operas like "The Manchurian Candidate" and "Auden's 'The Rake's Progress'."

Beyond opera, Campbell has written extensively for the stage, including musicals and plays, showcasing his versatility as a storyteller. In addition to his writing, he is a passionate advocate for new works and emerging artists, serving as a mentor and educator in the field. Mark Campbell's contributions have significantly enriched the landscape of American opera, making him a prominent figure in the modern music world.



ON OPERATIC VOICES

Every voice is unique, and no singer gets to choose the category in which they sing but must work with the vocal attributes with which they were born. Composers usually assign a voice type to a character based on his/her personality or age. Read these descriptions for examples.

SOPRANO

This is the highest female voice and has a range similar to a violin. In opera, the soprano most often plays the young girl or the heroine (sometimes called the prima donna), since a high bright voice traditionally suggests femininity, virtue, and innocence. The normal range of a soprano is from middle C through two octaves above middle C, sometimes with extra top notes. Most women are sopranos. In *THE COOK-OFF*, Ivy Sweet is played by a soprano

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Also called a mezzo, this is the middle female voice with a range similar to an oboe. A mezzo's

sound is often darker and warmer than a soprano's. In opera, composers generally use a mezzo to portray older women, villainesses, seductive heroines, and sometimes even young boys. Mezzo-sopranos also often serve as the friend or sidekick to the soprano. The mezzo-soprano's normal range is from the A below middle C to the A two octaves above it. In *THE COOK-OFF*, Kenra Smith and Beryl Bennett are played by a mezzo-sopranos.



Nashville Opera's *CARMEN*, 2024



Nashville Opera's *LE BOHEME*, 2022

CONTRALTO

This is the lowest female voice and has a voice similar in range to a clarinet. Contraltos usually sing the roles of older females or special character parts such as witches and old gypsies. The range is two octaves from F below middle C to the top line of the treble clef. A true contralto is very rare - some believe they don't exist at all!

COUNTERTENOR

This is the highest male voice, which was

mainly used in very early opera and oratorio. The voice of a countertenor sounds very much like a mezzo-soprano's voice, and they often sing the same repertoire. Like the contralto, true countertenors are very rare.

TENOR

This is usually the highest male voice in an opera. It is similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color, and acoustical ring. The tenor typically plays the hero or the love interest. His voice ranges from the C below middle C to the above. In *THE COOK-OFF*, Álvaro Mendez is played by a tenor.

BARITONE

This is the middle male voice and is close to a French horn in range and tone color. The baritone usually plays villainous roles or father-figures. The range is from the G an octave and a half below middle C to the G above. In *THE COOK-OFF*, Kenny Kincaid is played by a baritone.

BASS-BARITONE/BASS

This is the lowest male voice and is similar to a trombone or bassoon in range and color. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera. The range spans from roughly the F above middle C to the F an octave and a fifth below.

THE SOUND ANATOMY OF OPERA

There are many different kinds of songs in opera. Performers may sing alone, in couples (duets), trios, or larger groups, and there are also moments when no one sings at all - each composer develops their own preferred combination of these options.



Nashville Opera's *RIGOLETTO*, 2022

OVERTURE

An opera usually begins with an orchestral piece of music called the overture, which functions as an introduction to the opera. Lasting anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes, these opera overtures usually contain important themes from the rest of the production. Before 1800, houselights were not dimmed while the overture played, and audience members continued to talk, drink, and even play cards! This ceased in the 1900's as the overture became a more integral part of an operatic performance. At the end of the overture, the curtain rises, and the story of the opera unfolds through a series of scenes.

ARIA

An aria is a solo moment for an opera singer and is usually accompanied by the orchestra. Italian for “air” or song, an aria stops the plot momentarily, giving each character the opportunity to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. These pieces also provide an opportunity for the singer to demonstrate their vocal and artistic skill. Arias balance memorable melodies that perfectly suit the human voice while still reflecting the drama of the text.

RECITATIVES

Recitatives, a type of singing unique to opera, help propel the action forward. They can be accompanied either by a full orchestra, or, as is often the case with opera written before 1800, by harpsichord or keyboard instrument. Often introducing an aria, the text is delivered quickly and encompasses a very limited melodic range. It has no recognizable melody, and the rhythms follow those of the spoken word.



Nashville Opera's Music Director, DEAN WILLIAMSON

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

The orchestra accompanies the singing and introduces the opera with the overture. Musical and emotional themes often appear in orchestral introductions and conclusions to arias, recitatives, and choruses.

OPERA ETIQUETTE

ALWAYS BE EARLY!

Please arrive early to ensure you can find your seat before the performance begins and before the orchestra tunes. If you are late, you may miss the overture or even the first act!

OPERA IS FOR ALL TO ENJOY!

Opera is full of emotion, passion, human conflict, and discovery. Nashville Opera usually presents operas in their original language and projects supertitles above the stage so the audience can understand every word.

WHAT TO WEAR

Many people think of a night at the opera as a glamorous event and an excuse to bring out the fancy attire. But, it is also acceptable to dress comfortably. A light sweater, jacket, or wrap is suggested because the theater is air-conditioned.

USE THE RESTROOM

Once in the theater it is courteous to remain seated and involved in the production until intermission. Please do not leave the theater unless there is an emergency.

APPLAUSE WELCOME!

There are several opportunities for applause during a performance. Applause should take place when the conductor takes the podium at the very beginning of the performance and following intermission. It is also acceptable to applaud after an overture. You may show your appreciation to the performers by shouting "Bravo!" for a male performer, "Brava" for a female performer, or "Bravi" for an ensemble. At the conclusion of the performance, the singers will take their "curtain call." It is appropriate to continue applauding until all singers have stepped forward to accept their applause.

PLEASE BE COURTEOUS...

...To everyone in the audience and on stage. Opera is a live performance, so any talking, cell-phone use (including texting) or other noise/light disruption takes away from everyone's experience at the opera. Wait until intermission to talk to your neighbor or use electronic devices that may distract others.

NO PHOTOS OR RECORDINGS PERMITTED

For the safety of the actors, no still photography or video recording are permitted during the performance.

