



# Dear Mr. Duncan

A Musical About Dupont Circle's Premiere Singer, Teacher, and Activist

By Composer, Noah Getz and Poet, Dwayne Lawson-Brown

## **Program Notes**

Todd Duncan was a DC-based vocalist who was the first Black vocalist to sing with a major opera company. He was also selected by George Gershwin to be the first Porgy in Porgy and Bess after the composer auditioned many singers for this role. After Porgy and Bess, Duncan continued a successful performing career that included international performances and acting in several feature films.

Duncan was also a highly successful voice teacher whose influence can still be heard in and around Washington, DC. In fact, our vocalists for this production both study with teachers who studied with Todd Duncan. Early in his career, Duncan taught voice at Howard University. He also taught privately from his home studio in Dupont Circle for decades where he trained some of the most gifted singers in the DC metropolitan area.

Todd Duncan was also a strong advocate for equal rights. At great risk to his performing career, Duncan took a stand to require that performances of Porgy and Bess in Washington, DC were integrated years before this became standard policy. Todd Duncan's legacy is one of personal courage, dedication to teaching, and consummate artistry. This program is meant to highlight his contributions and provide the catalyst for learning more about this great Washingtonian.

**Artists on Stage:**

Todd Duncan - Anthony Anderson

Gladys Duncan - Denique Isaac

Narrator - Gary DuBreuil

Poet/Author - Dwayne Lawson-Brown

**Musicians - The World Music Collective**

Saxophone/Composer - Noah Getz

Bansuri - Deepak Ram

Piano - James Fernando

Guitar - Cristian Perez

Bass - Karine Chapdelaine

Drums - Lee Hinkle

Lighting Design: Venus Gulbranson

Stage Manager: Gabrielle Busch

Assistants: Kira Ashton, Jacob Niederman, Zoe Tompkins

Graphic Design: KTD Creative

Keegan Theatre Managing Director: Alexis Hartwick

A special thank you to Randye Jones, our Humanities Scholar for her insights and narrative research support. Randye Jones, "Todd Duncan Biography," *Afrocentric Voices in "Classical" Music*, <https://www.afrovoices.com>. Quote in *Dear Mr. Duncan Reprise* by Dr. Maya Angelou. Used with permission of Caged Bird Legacy, LLC.

Dear Mr. Duncan is made possible by grants from HumanitiesDC, an affiliate of the National Endowment of the Humanities, the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and the generosity of St. Thomas' Parish, the Keegan Theatre, and our donors.