

Independence Eve

An American Opera in Three Scenes

Sidney Marquez Boquiren, Composer

Daniel Neer, Librettist

Project Description

August 12, 2013

Independence Eve is a new chamber opera in three scenes by composer Sidney Marquez Boquiren and librettist Daniel Neer that explores the troubled journey of race relations in America. Comprised of three unrelated scenes, each of which take place on July 3 in an unspecified American city, ***Independence Eve*** focuses on the stories of three black males (baritone), and three white males (tenor), who struggle with identity and acceptance amidst race issues that span one hundred years of the American experience. Taking place on the benign location of a single park bench in three different urban locations, ***Independence Eve*** is a study of black and white America, offering commentary on the intricacies of race relations and the insidious and persistent stain of racism that has remains consistent throughout American history. The characters in each scene are products of their upbringing, and constrained, to varying degrees, by outside influences and ideals that shape their attitudes regarding race, masculinity, education and religion in their respective generations.

Scene Titles: ***Stop and Frisk | Benched | Seventh-Inning Stretch***

Characters:

- Tenor, (white male)
 - Joe, *Stop and Frisk*
 - Max, *Benched*
 - Sam, *Seventh-Inning Stretch*
- Baritone, (black male)
 - Sean, *Stop and Frisk*
 - Phillip, *Benched*
 - Louis, *Seventh-Inning Stretch*

Prelude and music between scenes: ***Independence Eve***, Theme and Variations for Piano,
By Sidney Marquez Boquiren

Additional sound: Transistor Radio Broadcast amalgam from 1963, *Seventh-Inning Stretch*

Duration of Entire work: 70"

Running order:

i.	<i>Independence Eve</i> opening theme	solo piano	5"
ii.	Scene One: <i>Stop and Frisk</i>	tenor, baritone, piano	20"
iii.	Variation one	solo piano	5"
iv.	Scene Two: <i>Benched</i>	tenor, baritone, piano	15"
v.	Variation two	solo piano	5"
vi.	Scene Three: <i>Seventh-Inning Stretch</i>	tenor, baritone, piano	20"

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Scene One	<i>Stop and Frisk</i>	Duration: 20"
Setting:	The afternoon of July 3, 2013. A bench in the park of an American city.	
Characters:	Sean, a black male, Investment Banker, 27 years old Joe, a white male, Investment Banker, 27 years old	
Synopsis:	Joe and Sean have been friends for years. They grew up together in an affluent suburb, went to high school together, attended the same Ivy League school and pledged the same fraternity. As they meet for lunch in the park, Joe expresses his concern for Sean's wellbeing after a recent brush with the police. A few days earlier Sean became a victim of a random search by police, a 'stop and frisk' procedure conducted because of a 'reasonable suspicion'. Sean describes his frustration at Joe for not understanding the impact the event has had on his life, and as both men struggle to find meaning in the incident, their friendship is tested as the conversation turns to aspects of race that have changed Sean's way of looking at the world.	

Scene Two	<i>Benched</i>	Duration: 15"
Setting:	The afternoon of July 3, 2063. A bench near a ballpark in an American city.	
Characters:	Max, an Anglo-Caucasian boy, 10 years old Phillip, a black boy, 10 years old	
Synopsis:	Max and Phillip have finished a game and are waiting to be picked up by their parents. Little League is still an American fixture in the year 2063, but whole a lot else has changed. A global government called 'The Federation' is now the new world order, the Polar Ice cap has melted, citizens are chipped at age 10 for identification purposes, and the public school system has become obsolete, leaving children on their own for a nationwide exam that will determine which of two basic career tracks they are suited. The stakes are very high for Max and Phillip, who struggle to come to grips with the overwhelming pressure to succeed in a world that is increasingly more competitive. Race plays an enormous role in the likely outcome of these two American boys, but like everything else in the future, racism is no longer just a black and white issue.	

Scene Three:	<i>Seventh-Inning Strength</i>	Duration: 20"
Setting:	The afternoon of July 3, 1963. A bench on the street of an American city.	
Characters:	Louis, a Negro Man, Hotel Porter, 47 years old Sam, a Caucasian Man, Policeman, 47 years old	
Synopsis:	Lou, on break from a local four-star hotel where he the chief Porter, is spending his usual lunch break on his favorite shady bench. Accompanied by a small transistor radio, he has tuned into a baseball game, which draws the interest of a Policeman walking the beat, eager to find a bit of shade in the July heat. While both men listen to the game, they share stilted small talk, about baseball, the stifling heat and the frequent race riots occurring in their city. But the veneer of banal conversation soon comes to an abrupt halt when one man expresses his anger, confusion and pain about the changes happening in his community, exposing fear and bewilderment during dawn of the civil rights era.	