



Shari Barrett added 14 new photos to the album: [Lost in the Stars](#).

Yesterday at 1:02am ·

Kurt Weill's Final Musical Masterpiece LOST IN THE STARS Makes its Triumphant Return to Los Angeles. Reviewed by Shari Barrett on 1-28-17

I first heard about Kurt Weill's final musical masterpiece, LOST IN THE STARS, when I was studying his body of work during my senior year at CSUN. It was at a time, such as now, when society was being torn apart by opposing political forces, protests filled the streets, and racial inequality was being challenged in the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination. And I have been waiting since then to see a production of the "musical tragedy" which opened on Broadway in 1949, just one year prior to Weill's death at age 50, at a time when segregation was still rampant in America.

I am thrilled to report my wish came true last weekend at UCLA's Royce Hall when the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, in partnership with CAP UCLA, presented the first Los Angeles performance since the 1950s of LOST IN THE STARS. The all-new staged production of Kurt Weill's powerful, uncompromising social indictment of apartheid-era South Africa, was directed by Anne Bogart, co-artistic director of New York City's famed theatre ensemble SITI Company, and conducted by LACO Music Director Jeffrey Kahane. The cast featured soprano Lauren Michelle, tenor Issachah Savage (the Chorus Leader whose mellifluous presence enraptured the audience) and bass-baritone Justin Hopkins as well as the Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers and members of SITI Company, all of whom are to be commended for their glorious vocalizations and harmonies that raised the music and message up into the stars with musical influences ranging from Broadway and gospel to African American spirituals and blues.

LOST IN THE STARS musically follows the black priest Stephen Kumalo (the absolutely astonishing Justin Hopkins) who travels from his home in rural Ndotsheni to Johannesburg to retrieve his sister Gertrude (energetic dynamo Meloney Collins) who is now known as Linda, a nightclub singer said to be involved in shameful behavior, and to check on his son, Absalom (Samuel Stricklen), who left home to work in the mines nearly two years ago and has not been heard from since. When he arrives in Johannesburg, Stephen is greeted warmly by his white friend Arthur Jarvis (Stephen Duff Webber), much to the dismay of Arthur's father, James (Will Bond), who believes in the separation of the races.

Stephen begins to search for Absalom and learns that his son has fallen in with a bad crowd. Meanwhile, Absalom and his friends plan a robbery, asking him to bring his gun. Although he is reluctant, Absalom sees the scheme as the only way out of an impoverished life in Shanty Town — not only for himself, but also for his lover, Irina (the glorious Lauren Michelle), and their unborn child. Arriving to rob a house they believe to be empty, the young men are surprised by Arthur Jarvis, whom Absalom inadvertently kills when Arthur arrives home unexpectedly and walks in on the robbery in progress.

Absalom and his friends are taken into custody for the crime, and while Absalom's accomplices have agreed among themselves to lie, Absalom insists on telling the truth despite the fact that there is no proof of his involvement and pleading guilty will surely lead to him being put to death.

At the trial, Absalom's friends deny involvement in the robbery and murder while Absalom tells the truth and is sentenced to be hanged. Stephen, disgraced and despairing, resigns his pastorate, against the pleading of his congregation. As he awaits the hour of his son's death, James Jarvis comes to call. He has realized that his grief and Kumalo's grief are the same, both losing their sons. The two fathers forgive each other and then keep vigil together. And surely if these two fathers from completely opposite sides of the tracks can learn to accept each other as equals, it is not too late of the rest of the world to put aside our differences and honor each other as equal human beings — is it not?

Such is the message I walked away with after the performance, and I do hope in this time of great need for unity in the world that more chances to see this brilliant production will be planned in the future. The initial run

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lasted for just one weekend on January 28 and 29 at UCLA's Royce Hall as part of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra's "Lift Every Voice," a partnership with artist and education institutions across Los Angeles to explore and celebrate speaking out against injustice and oppression through the legacies of Kurt Weill, Rabbi Joachim Prinz (who like Weill, was a German-Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany), and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. More at http://cap.ucla.edu/calendar/.../lost_in_the_stars_2017_second

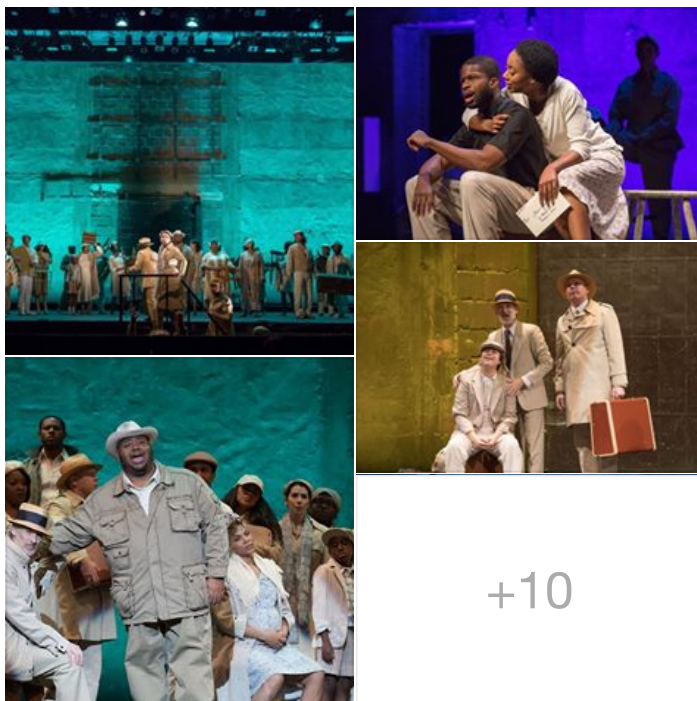
And as we enter Black History Month and honor the "Black Lives Matter" movement, may all our voices be raised in our universal desire for freedom and equality. The time is now to break the cycle of ignorance and hatred so that humanity can prosper. And as long as the arts survive, there is a

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Shari Barrett I have been hearing about LOST IN THE STARS since the late 1960's but there has not been a performance of it in the L.A. area since the 1950's. I am very excited to be attending the performance this Sat, Jan 28 at UCLA Royce Hall with [Greg Abbott](#) when L.A. theatre history will be made. [#LAThr](#) [#musicals](#) [#lostinthestars](#) [#UCLA](#)

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Shari Barrett [Don Barrett](#) - wish you were in L.A. to attend the concert this weekend. Been waiting to see it since you first told me about it in 1967.

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Shari Barrett I know you will appreciate this review [Greg Abbott](#)

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