

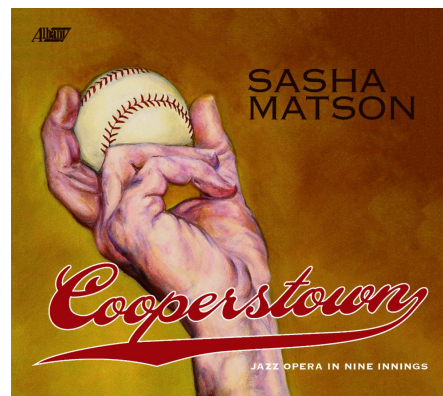
Streamlined *Cooperstown* Hits it Out of the Park A jazz opera in nine innings



Albany Records has announced the December release of *Cooperstown* by **Sasha Matson**. "This is a revised version of a longer opera, and I feel that trimming its dimensions has actually added an enormous focus and potency to the piece and its essence," says Mr. Matson.

Cooperstown utilizes five solo singers and a 1950s-style jazz quintet, and is described as "a jazz opera in nine innings". The full-length work was released by Albany Records in 2015. "Highly recommended to jazz and opera lovers alike", said *Fanfare*; "Well sung and inventively composed, this intriguing blend is a bracingly new mix of genres", said *Stereophile*. "As happy as I was with the original version and in particular the quality of the performers and their interpretation", says Mr. Matson, "over time I came to feel that a revision would strengthen the piece, so I plunged into waters that many composers have navigated before - revising completed work - and in a way it was more daunting than writing the original in the first place!" The newly re-mixed audiophile recording of the one-act edition of the work, first performed by Opera Las Vegas in 2019, has a running time of 79 minutes. *Cooperstown* is available (including libretto) on CD (Troy 1848), and for download and streaming in both standard and hi-resolution audio formats.

Based on A. Bartlett Giamatti's essay, *The Green Fields of the Mind*, Mr. Matson and **librettist Mark Miller** have presented baseball as an art form with the capacity to express the deepest emotional truths about individuals and society, melding elements of the *Othello* story into the modern world of Major League Baseball. Matson's compositional language



summons baseball's own specific musical associations. The musical materials boil down to the rising three-chord "Charge" fanfare still heard in stadiums everywhere, and he even utilizes the quintessential baseball earworm, the sound of the stadium organ.

As for the inclusion of jazz, Matson feels that a jazz quintet is as capable as any large orchestra of realizing the human experience in all its complexity. "It's unorthodox to use jazz in an opera, but from day one this is how I heard it in my head," he says. Added to the stellar instrumentalists on the recording (Jason Rigby, reeds; Russ Johnson, trumpets; Sean Wayland, keyboards; Rich Mollin, bass; Gernot Bernroider, drums), the "luxury casting" (*Fanfare*) includes Daniel Montenegro, Rod Gilfry, Julie Adams, Daniel Favela and Carin Gilfry.

Sasha Matson graduated from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and UCLA, where he received his Ph.D. He has scored music for feature film and other multi-media in addition to own his compositions. Recordings of his work, including 2019's *Tight Lines*, have been released on the AudioQuest, New Albion, Stereophile, and Albany/Troy labels. Matson also writes about audio and music, and is currently a Contributing Editor for *Stereophile* magazine. He has taught at LaGrange College, Long Island University, and The State University of New York. In 2000 he moved with his family to Cooperstown NY. His music is published by Subito Music Corporation.

Mark Miller earned a history degree at Stanford and reported for Reuters and CBS Radio. He began a parallel career in show business at 20th Century-Fox as a writer for director-choreographer Bob Fosse, and co-wrote the screenplay for the Universal feature film *Mr. Baseball*, among other films. He has written 40 books and articles for the *National Geographic Society* and was a columnist for the *San Francisco Examiner*. As a writer for CBS Radio, Mark was nominated for a 2012 Writers Guild of America Award for Outstanding Achievement in Television and Radio Writing.

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Photo of Sasha Matson by Joseph D'Alessio

For more information about Sasha Matson, call 917-751-8228 and visit

kathryningmedia.com and sashamatson.com