

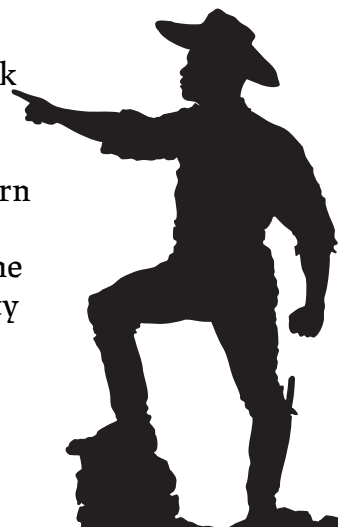
A FOLK OPERA YORK THE EXPLORER

SYNOPSIS

York the Explorer is an American folk opera in two acts by Aaron Nigel Smith with Libretto support from acclaimed poet Dr. Renee Mitchell. This seminal work explores the story of the only Black man to journey alongside Lewis & Clark in the Corps of Discovery Expedition. A vibrant and diverse cast of everyday individuals and historical figures weave together tales and melodies that delve into York's emotional landscape while capturing his experiences of adventure, disappointment, and hope. This poignant opera uniquely marries folk instruments such as the banjo, djembe, fiddle, and guitar with a genre- bending mixture of classical, musical theatre, and soulful vocals to create a rich sonic tapestry that echoes the essence of exploration.

THE PLOT

Portland storyteller, Trenchtown, along with Nia and Shine, gather at Mt. Tabor Park after hearing about the toppling of the local York monument. They help spark a community discussion about York's historical significance through powerful storytelling and song. Those gathered learn about the trials and triumphs that York experienced through interpretations of the journals of Lewis & Clark. The community debates conflicting historical accounts of York's final days and cannot agree on which is true. However, they unite in the belief that York should be properly recognized.



A FOLK OPERA **YORK** THE EXPLORER

MAIN CHARACTERS

- York | Black enslaved man on the Corps of Discovery expedition (bass- baritone)
- Sacagawea | Shoshone Indian woman and guide on the expedition (soprano)
- Shine | Portland youth and social justice advocate (rapper)
- Trenchtown | Old Portland musician and mystic (baritone)
- Nia | Native Portlander and community leader (soprano)

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

- Nature | The voice of Nature (mezzo-soprano)
- Young York | York as a child. (treble)
- Rose | York's mother (mezzo-soprano)
- William Clark | One of the leaders of the expedition. York is his manservant (tenor)
- Young Clark | Clark as a child (treble)
- Meriwether Lewis | Hand picked by Jefferson to carry out Corp of Discovery Expedition (baritone)
- Charles Floyd | The only crewman who dies on the journey.(tenor)
- Onlooker 1 | Middle aged Portlander at the Mt. Tabor park when bust of York is Vandalized (mezzo)

THE SONGS

- York! | Cast
- Childhood | Young York & Young Clark
- Remember Our Love | Rose
- I Am York | York
- On the Journey | Expedition Team
- Freedom Song | Expedition Team
- Big Medicine | York
- Bird Woman | Sacagawea
- Bitterroot Mountain | Expedition Team
- Venison Stew | York
- Good Times | Expedition Team
- If the Ocean is Free | York
- The Vote | Expedition Team
- Can We Shape Tomorrow? | York & Sacagawea
- Toe to Toe | Trenchtown & York
- May Your Legend Soar | Cast