

Media Release

For Immediate Release

Lecture and Recital Celebrate America's First Black Superstar: Sissieretta Jones

Opera Providence presents a lecture and a talk-back about the great Black Diva, Sissieretta Jones of Providence, Rhode Island. Maureen Lee, the foremost scholar on Jones, will discuss how Jones built her international career and navigated the pitfalls of racists and opportunists in 19th-century America. Lee, author of *Sissieretta Jones: "The Greatest Singer of Her Race," 1868-1933*, will excavate Jones' world in Black Vaudeville, classical music, her remarkable ability at self-promotion, and her international acclaim singing for presidents and kings. The talk will take place Friday, April 26, 2013, 5:30pm at The Old Brick School House, 24 Meeting Street in Providence, RI. An exhibit of artifacts related to Jones' singing career will be on display.

On Saturday, April 27 at 2 p.m., vocalist Cheryl Albright will sample songs from Jones' vast and varied repertoire in a recital at the historic Congdon Street Baptist Church, 17 Congdon Street, Providence, RI, where Jones worshipped and sang. Ms. Albright will be accompanied by pianist Rod Luther.

The lecture and recital are made possible through a generous grant from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities. Both events are free and open to the public.



Matilda Sissieretta Joyner Jones of Providence, whose stage name, "Black Patti," likened her to the renowned Spanish-born opera diva Adelina Patti, was a celebrated African American soprano during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Serving as a role model

for other African American stage artists who followed her, Jones became a successful performer despite the obstacles she faced from Jim Crow segregation. Jones went from concert singer to star of her own musical revue company, The Black Patti Troubadours. Critics praised Jones as America's leading African American prima donna, with some deeming her voice "one in a million." Sissieretta Jones, all but forgotten today, but in her own time a tour de force vocalist in high demand, died in near-obscurity and abject poverty at her home on Providence's East Side in 1933. Hers is the story of success driven by talent and ambition and toppled by racism and greed.

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