



Opera Company of Brooklyn

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### Simon Estes

#### Bass-Baritone

Internationally renowned opera star Simon Estes enjoys the ecstatic praise of music lovers around the globe. A prize winner in Moscow's Tchaikovsky competition in 1966, he has since performed with all the major international opera companies including the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala Milan, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Paris Opera, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, San Francisco Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Florence Opera, and the State Operas of Hamburg, Munich and Vienna as well as the Zurich Opera House. In high demand as a recitalist and orchestral soloist, he appears regularly with the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, The Philharmonic Orchestra of London and the Vienna Philharmonic. Among the conductors with whom Mr. Estes has worked are Gerd Albrecht, Leonard Bernstein, Gary Bertini, Myung Whun Chung, James Conlon, Sir Colin Davis, Rafael Fruhbeck de Burgos, Carlo Maria Giulini, James Levine, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Seiji Ozawa, Mstislav Rostropovich, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Sir Georg Solti, Horst Stein, Marcello Viotti and David Zinman.

Of the over one hundred roles in his repertoire, he is most often associated with **King Phillip** in *Don Carlos*, **Wotan** in Wagner's *Ring* cycle, **Amfortas** in *Parsifal*, **King Mark** in *Tristan and Isolde*, the four bass-baritone roles in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, **Escamillo** in *Carmen*, **Porgy** in *Porgy and Bess* and the title roles in *Boris Godunov*, Verdi's *Attila*, Nabucco, and *Macbeth*, the title role in Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*. In this latter role he appeared triumphantly for six successive years at the Bayreuth Festival, his debut there marking the first appearance of any black male artists at this shrine to Richard Wagner. Mr. Estes' recording of *The Flying Dutchman*, with Woldemar Nelsson conducting the Bayreuth Festival Orchestra and Chorus, is available on the Philips Classics label.

Aside from his landmark appearances at Bayreuth, many other historic musical events have marked Mr. Estes' career. In June and November of 1989, he sang at the White House for President Bush. In past years, he gave a command performance for President Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House, appeared at the inaugural concert of the Kennedy Center as soloist in William Schuman's *A Free Song*, which was attended by Richard Nixon. Mr. Estes holds the unique honor of having been the only singer to sing for both the 25<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations. He sang for the opening of the Olympic Games in Munich, Germany. In July 1986, he performed in New York with the Boston Pops as part of the Statue of Liberty centennial celebration. He performed in the United States premiere of Shostakovich's *14th Symphony* with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra and created the part of **Uncle Albert** in the world premiere of Gunter Schuller's *The Visitation*. In 1977, he sang the title role in one of the first modern productions of Verdi's rarely performed first opera, *Oberto*, in Bologna; in 1979, he played the **Pharaoh** in the historic revival

of Rossini's *Moses* at La Scala; and, in 1985, he was the Metropolitan Opera's first **Porgy**.

Among his recording credits, Mr. Estes counts works on the Auvidis, Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, Deutsche Schallplatten, EMI, Philips Classics and Sony Classical labels. He has recorded in Bayreuth Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* which was also filmed and televised by Unitel and the centennial production of *Parsifal* with James Levine conducting the Orchestra and Chorus of the Bayreuth Festival. Other recordings include Bizet's *Carmen* with Seiji Ozawa and Jessye Norman, Highlights from *Porgy and Bess*, and a collection of *Broadway's*.

*Greatest Hits* with Willie Anthony Waters conducting; Verdi's *Requiem* and Mozart's *Requiem* as well as Beethoven's *Ninth*, all conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini. With Sir Colin Davis he has recorded Handel's *Messiah*, the Fauré *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and *Samson and Dalila* from Saint-Saens; with the Vienna Philharmonic and Lorin Maazel Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* and Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* with Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting. His last recording of *Spirituals* with Donald Ryan as accompanist and arranger has been released on the Deutsche Schallplatten label and in the recording of Berthold Goldschmidt's opera *Beatrice Cenci* - on Sony Classical - Simon Estes has portrayed the role of **Cenci**.

In January of 1990 Simon Estes sang for the inauguration of the first black governor of the United States, Governor Wilder of the State of Virginia. In June of 1990 Simon Estes sang for Mr. Nelson Mandela at the Service of the Riverside Church in New York City and for the July 4th celebration he sang with the National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mstislav Rostropovich at the Nations Capitol. In August of 1990 Simon Estes was in Oslo and sang for the Conference of The Anatomy of Hate under the patronage of the Norwegian Nobel Peace Prize Committee and The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. Some notable figures that were present in Oslo were former President Jimmy Carter, former president from France Francois Mitterrand, former president from Czechoslovakia Vaclav Havel, Nelson Mandela, Elie Wiesel and many other important artists and literary people. In June of 1993 Simon Estes sang for Hillary Clinton in Washington D.C. at a luncheon honoring the First Lady. In the fall of 1994 he sang for Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu in The Cathedral of St. John The Divine in New York. Mr. Estes sang two times for the pope, John Paul II, in the Vatican in Rome. Presidents of the U.S.A. for whom Mr. Estes has sung are; Johnson, Nixon, two times for George Bush Sr., Carter, and the second inauguration festivities for President Clinton. Other countries Presidents Mr. Estes has performed for are; Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Switzerland, and South Africa as well as Royalty from; Monaco, England, Sweden, Norway, Romania, and Spain.

In the past seasons Simon Estes performed at the State Opera in Vienna, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Teatro Real in Madrid, the Washington Opera, at Carnegie Hall in New York, the Los Angeles Opera, Théâtre Capitole de Toulouse, Gran Teatre Del Liceu in Barcelona and the International May Festival in Wiesbaden. He appeared in concerts and recitals in Bern, Durban, Graz, Helsinki, Paris, Prague, Lucerne, Düsseldorf, Munich, Granada, Santander, Santa

Cruz de Tenerife, Valencia, Zurich, Cincinnati, Detroit, New York, San Diego, Sao Paulo, Tokyo, with the OK Mozart International Festival in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, with Festival Carinthian Summer and Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival and the Festival Castell de Peralada.

Other notable artists Mr. Estes has performed with are; Grace Bumbry, Monserrat Caballe, Jose Carreras, Placido Domingo, Mirella Freni, Nicolai Ghiaurov, Birgit Nilsson, Jessye Norman, Luciano Pavarotti, Leontyne Price, Joan Sutherland, Shirley Verrett, Harry Belafonte, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles, John Denver, Audrey Hepburn, Whitney Houston, Danny Kaye, Barry Manilow, Gregory Peck, Sir Peter Ustinov and famous trumpeter Wynton Marsalis.

His many engagements in season 2001/2002 included concerts and recitals in Essen, Graz, Zurich, Santander, Baltimore MD, Murcia, Pamplona, Ubeda, Mason City, Waverly and Avignon. He added a new role to his repertoire at the Gran Teatre Del Liceu by singing the title role of Saint-Saëns' **Henry VIII** and at the Hamburg State Opera he portrayed the title role in *The Flying Dutchman*.

In season 2002/2003 Simon Estes sang at the Brucknerfest in Linz the role of **Amfortas** in a concert version of *Parsifal*. He portrayed the role of **Philip** in *Don Carlos* at the Lithuanian National Theatre in Vilnius and in a concert version of *La forza Del destino* he performed the role of **Padre Guardiano** at Carnegie Hall in New York. At Teatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro he made his debut singing the role of **Father Laurence** in Berlioz' *Roméo et Juliette*. Among other engagements Simon Estes performed concerts in Lucerne, Tulsa/Oklahoma, Des Moines/Iowa, Dortmund and Zurich and could be heard in a Spiritual-Recital at the Hamburg State Opera.

In the season 2003/2004 he performed concerts in Zurich, Waterloo/Iowa, Las Vegas, Chicago, Minneapolis, Washington/D.C., New York and recitals in Lerida, Cartagena, Seville and/Switzerland. At the Konzerthaus Dortmund he sings the role of **Wotan** in *Die Walküre*. At the Semperoper Dresden/Germany he made his debut with a Spiritual recital and at a gala performance of *Flying Dutchman* he portrays the title role in The National Theater Mannheim.

In season 2004/2005 Simon Estes performed among other concerts and recitals in Ames, Iowa; Boston, Massachusetts; Jacksonville and Fort Meyers, Florida; Toledo and Murcia, Spain; Eisenach, Germany and Cape Town, South Africa. In Switzerland he appeared in an Opera Gala at the International Music Week in Grechen. In November 2004 he participated in a concert at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation and was presented with the Puccini Foundation's Baccarat Award in recognition of his achievements in the arts.

A native of Centerville, Iowa, Simon Estes first sang at the age of eight in the city's Second Baptist Church. While working his way through the University of Iowa as a pre-med and psychology student, he became the first black member of the University's Old Gold Singers. As a member of this group Mr. Estes came to the attention of faculty member Charles Kellis, his first and only teacher (Mr. Estes continues to study with Mr. Kellis today). After entering the Juilliard School of Music Mr. Estes went to

Europe with a grant from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation and with funds raised for him by the New York Community Trust and the NAACP. He made his operatic debut with the Deutsche Oper in Berlin as **Ramfis** in *Aida*.

Known throughout the world for his opera, concert, and recital performances, as well as for his recordings and appearances in television shows including the Tonight Show and the Today Show, Simon Estes still finds time to share his love and knowledge of music with students from elementary school through college. He teaches at Iowa State University in Ames in Iowa and at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, and in master classes across the country he attempts to teach not only music, but artistic and personal values as well. His love and concern for youth is also manifested in the four scholarship organizations he has created: *The Simon Estes Educational Foundation* in Tulsa, *The Simon Estes Scholarship Fund* at the University of Iowa, *The Simon and Westella H. Estes Scholarship Fund* at Centerville Community College, and *The Simon Estes Iowa Arts Scholarship Fund*. In 1993 he has established *The Simon Estes International Foundation for Children* with the purpose to financially assist underprivileged and needy children as far as their education and health is concerned. In Cape Town he initiated a school for underprivileged children that got named after him *Simon Estes Music High School*.

Other tributes given his name are; The Simon Estes Amphitheater in Des Moines, Iowa; A House Resolution "115" by the State Legislature of Iowa; The Simon Estes Auditorium at Centerville High School, Centerville, Iowa; and The Simon Estes "Buck" Rose with proceeds going to his foundations.

Mr. Estes' first degree was a Bachelor of Music from the University of Iowa. In the summer of 1989, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Siena College, N.Y., in the spring of 1991 a Doctor of Music Degree from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and in spring of 1994 an Honorary Doctorate from The University of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. In July, 1996, he received from the Governor of Iowa *The Iowan Award*, the State's highest honor that has been given only thirteen times since its inception more than 40 years ago. In the spring of 1997 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Iowa State University in Ames and in spring of 1998 from Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. In 1999 The College of Medicine at University of Iowa designated Simon Estes as advocate of health and education for children and youth.

Mr. Estes' autobiography entitled "Simon Estes In His Own Voice" was published in 1999 and includes a CD.

For the year 2006/2007 Mr. Estes has been invited to sing in Carnegie Hall, Orchestra Hall in Chicago, JFK Music Center in Washington D.C., Denver Colorado, Germany, Switzerland, South Africa, South America, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Moscow, Florida, New Jersey, Mississippi and other various cities in the U.S.A. and around the world. Mr. Estes will also be on tour with the Yale Alumni Chorus in South Africa. In October 2007, Professor Estes sang for the Inauguration of Harvard University's first female President, President Faust.

Dr. Estes will hold master classes at Harvard University, Metropolitan State College in Denver, Russian Music Society in Moscow and at The International Opera House in Hamburg, Germany.

In 2007/2008 Dr. Estes gave a number of master classes in Leipzig, Germany, and also performed at the Eisenach Castle with the Wartburg College Choir. Dr. Estes also performed in Boston Symphony Hall Verdi's Requiem with the Boston University Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Professor, Ann Howard Jones. With the Boston Chamber Orchestra Mr. Estes performed in New York City's Town Hall. During Black History Month, Dr. Estes performed and participated in a lecture honoring the late Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday and Anniversary of Dr. King's assassination.

In response to the tragic tornado and flooding of Iowa in the spring of 2008, Mr. Estes performed a benefit concert with the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Conductor Joseph Giunta in which \$38,000 was raised and Dr. Estes presented a check to the citizens of Parkersburg, Iowa. In September, 2008 Mr. Estes will be performing another benefit concert at Wartburg College along with the choir of Wartburg College to assist Waverly, Iowa's seven churches and citizens that were devastated by flooding.

Professor Estes will continue his teaching at Boston University, Iowa State University and Wartburg College along with a number of singing performances and master classes.

Recent Awards presented to Dr. Estes are the Distinguished Iowa Citizen Award and the prestigious Alumni Award of Iowa State University.