

MARCHAND KNIGHT: EXPLICIT QUEERNESS IN OPERA

TABLE 1 Operas with Explicitly Queer Characters								
Year of Premiere	Title	Composer	Librettist	Based on	Queer Characters	Fach	Type of Representation	Place of premiere
1-1937	<i>Lulu</i>	Alban Berg	Berg/Wedekind	Frank Wedekind's two Lulu plays about femme fatale Lulu.	Gräfin Geschwitz	dramatic mezzo	Lesbian	Zurich, Switzerland
2-1970	<i>Young Caesar</i>	Lou Harrison	Robert Gordon	Sexual relationship of Emperor Julius Caesar and Bithynian King Nicodemus IV. Conceived as a puppet show opera.	Young Caesar	tenor	Gay men	Pasadena (California), United States
					King Nicodemus	baritone		
3-1970	<i>The Knot Garden</i>	Michael Tippett	Michael Tippett	Original libretto about an affair between a gay white man and a bisexual Black man. Influenced by Shakespeare's <i>The Tempest</i> .	Mel	lyric bass-baritone (Black)	Gay men; Bisexual men; BIPOC	London, England
					Dov	lyric tenor		
4-1973	<i>Death in Venice</i>	Benjamin Britten	Myfanwy Piper	Based on Tomas Mann's novella <i>Death in Venice</i> about an uptight writer (von Aschenbach) who takes one (and only one) vacation to Venice and there falls in love with a 14-year-old boy (Tadzio) and then dies of cholera.	Gustav von Aschenbach	tenor	Gay men	Aldeburgh, England
					Traveller/ Elderly Fop/ Gondolier/ Hotel Manager/ Barber/ Leader of the Palyers/ Voice of Dionysis	baritone		
					Tadzio	dancer		
5-1983	<i>A Quiet Place</i>	Leonard Bernstein	Stephen Wadsworth	After their mother's death, siblings Junior and Dede return home [to where?] with the French-Canadian lover they've shared.	François	tenor	Gay men; Polyamory	Houston (Texas), United States
					Junior	baritone		
				Dede is not explicitly defined as queer but marries her brother's ex-boyfriend and the three continue to live together	Dede	soprano		
6-1995	<i>Harvey Milk</i>	Stewart Wallace	Michael Korie	The life and assassination of gay activist Harvey Milk	Harvey Milk	baritone	Gay men	Houston (Texas), United States
					Scott Smith	tenor		
7-1996	<i>Les Enfants Terribles</i>	Philip Glass	Philip Glass	The 1929 book <i>Les Enfants Terribles</i> by Jean Cocteau (also plays Agathe – Dargelos is not really in love with Paul, but Agathe is)	Paul	bass baritone		Zug, Switzerland
					*Dargelos	mezzo		
8-1997	<i>Iphis</i>	Elena Kats-Chernin's	Richard Toop	Based on Ovid's <i>Metamorphosis</i> . Iphis, born a girl, is raised as a boy by her/his father and when he/she grows up, is presented with a bride, Ianthe. They fall in love and have to grapple with issues of gender and sexuality.	Iphis	soprano	Lesbian; Gender-expansive	Sydney, Australia
					Ianthe	soprano		
9-1998	<i>Matricide: The Musical</i>	Elena Kats-Chernin	Kathleen Mary Fallon	Based on the true story of two teenage girls who were in a romantic relationship and killed one of the girl's mothers for trying to keep them apart in New Zealand in 1954. The opera is set in prison and told in flashbacks.	*for 6 sopranos: Chora, Impassionata, and chorus of mothers and daughters	sopranos	Lesbian	Melbourne, Australia
10-1998	<i>Patience and Sarah</i>	Paula M. Kimper	Wendy Persons	Alma Routsong's historical novel <i>Patience and Sarah</i> (1969, under the pen name Isabelle Miller) about a woman farmer and a society lady who fall in love and have to leave their disapproving families to be together.	Patience	soprano	Lesbian	Manhattan (New York), United States
					Sarah/Sam	mezzo		
					Parson Daniel Peel	tenor		
11-2004	<i>Angels in America</i>	Peter Eötvös	Mari Mezei	Play by Tony Kushner, premiered in 1993, set during the 1980s AIDS Crisis and featuring McCarthy-era lawyer Roy Cohn who died of AIDS.	Louis Ironson	tenor	Gay men	Paris, France
					Prior Walter	lyric baritone		
					Roy Cohn	bass-baritone		
					Joe Pitt	baritone		
12-2005	<i>The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant</i>	Gerald Barry	Denis Calandra	Based on a play (made into a film) by Rainer Werner Fassbinder about the implosion of a lesbian affair. Features all women characters.	Petra	soprano	Lesbian	Dublin, Ireland (concert version) London, England (fully staged)

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13-2008	<i>Three Decembers</i>	Jake Heggie	Gene Scheer	Unpublished play by Terence McNally (<i>Some Christmas Letters</i>) about a family's struggles with queerness and alcoholism. Set over 3 Decembers in 1986, 1996, and 2006.	Charlie	baritone	Gay men	Houston (Texas), United States
14-2010	<i>Before Night Falls</i>	Jorge Martín	Jorge Martín and Dolores M. Koch	Cuban poet Reinaldo Arenas's memoir	Reinaldo Arenas	baritone	Gay men; BIPOC	Fort Worth (Texas), United States
					Lázaro	tenor		
15-2011	<i>Two Boys</i>	Nico Muhly	Craig Lucas	True story of internet addiction, cyber manipulation, and attempted teen murder	Brian, 16	tenor	Gay boys	London, England
					Jake, (idealized version/avatar), 15	baritone		
					Real Jake, 13	treble		
16-2013	<i>Oscar</i>	Theodore Morrison	Theodore Morrison	The life and trial(s) of Oscar Wilde, using Wilde's writings as inspiration and parts of the libretto	Oscar Wilde	counter tenor	Gay men	Santa Fe (New Mexico), United States
					Walt Whitman	baritone		
					Bosie	dancer		
17-2013	<i>Champion</i> (opera in jazz)	Terence Blanchard	Michael Cristofer	The life of African American boxer Emile Griffith	Emile Griffith	bass	Gay men; Queer culture; BIPOC	St. Louis (Missouri), United States
					Young Emile Griffith	bass-baritone		
					Little Emile	boy soprano		
					Kathy Hagan	mezzo		
18-2013	<i>When the Sun Comes Out</i>	Leslie Uyeda	Rachel Rose	Story of protest for 2SLGBTQIA+ rights set in a fictional land	Solana	coloratura soprano	Lesbian	Vancouver (British Columbia), Canada
					Lilah	mezzo		
19-2013	<i>Paul's Case</i>	Gregory Spears	Kathryn Walat	Based on Willa Cather's 1905 story <i>Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament</i> about a teenager who runs from his dull life in Philadelphia to New York.	Paul	tenor	Gay men	Arlington (Virginia), United States
					Yale Boy	tenor		
20-2014	<i>27</i>	Ricky Ian Gordon	Royce Vavrek	The relationship of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas	Gertrude Stein	mezzo	Lesbian	St. Louis (Missouri), United States
					Alice B. Toklas	soprano		
21-2014	<i>As One</i>	Laura Kaminsky	Mark Campbell	Loosely based on the life of Kimberly Reed, the film maker who also worked on the projections for the piece.	Hannah Younger (formerly Hannah Before)	baritone	Gender-expansive	Brooklyn (New York), United States
					Hannah Older (formerly Hannah After)	mezzo		
22-2014	<i>Brokeback Mountain</i>	Charles Wuorinen	Annie Proulx	Proulx's 1997 novel <i>Brokeback Mountain</i> about gay cowboys	Ennis Del Mar	bass-baritone	Gay men	Madrid, Spain
					Jack Twist	tenor		
23-2015	<i>Sweets by Kate</i>	Griffin Candey			Elizabeth		Lesbian	Bloomington-Normal (Illinois), United States
					Kate			
24-2015	<i>Not in My Town</i>	Michael W. Ross	Michael W. Ross	The murder of gay teen Matthew Shephard	Matthew	tenor	Gay men; Lesbian	Boca Raton (Florida), United States
					Romaine	soprano		
25-2015	<i>Heartbreak Express</i>	George Lam	John Clum	Four superfans wait to meet Dolly Parton. Inspired by the documentary <i>For the Love of Dolly</i> by Tai Uhlmann.	Don	bass	Gay men	Greenwich Village (New York), United States
					Travis	tenor		
26-2015	<i>Crossing</i>	Matthew Aucoin		Walt Whitman's <i>Memoranda During the War</i> (1875)	Walt Whitman	baritone	Gay men	Cambridge (Massachusetts), United States
					John Wormley	tenor		
27-2016	<i>Fellow Travelers</i>	Gregory Spears	Greg Pierce	Thomas Mallon's 2007 novel, <i>Fellow Travelers</i> about the Lavender Scare of the 1950s	Timothy Laughlin	tenor	Gay men	Cincinnati (Ohio), United States
					Hawkins Fuller	baritone		

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				accused due to his close relationship with Roy Cohn	Senator Joseph McCarthy	baritone		
28-2016	<i>Pleasure</i>	Mark Simpson	Melanie Challenger	Original story(?)	Matthew	tenor	Gay men ; possibly lesbian ; drag	Leeds, England
					Nathan	baritone		
					Anna Fewmore	baritone		
				*woman who works in a gay bar – sexual orientation unconfirmed	*Val	soprano		
29-2016	<i>Les Feluettes</i>	Kevin March	Michel Marc Bouchard	1987 play <i>Lilies</i> by Michel Marc Bouchard about a love triangle between 3 boys at a Catholic boarding school.	Young Simon Doucet	baritone	Gay boys; Gay men	Montréal (Québec), Canada
					Present Day Simon Doucet			
					Conte Vallier de Tilly	tenor		
					Young Jean Bilodeau	tenor		
					Present Day Bishop Jean Bilodeau	tenor		
					*Lydie-Anne de Rozier (drag role)	counter tenor		
					*Contesse (drag role)	baritone		
30-2016	<i>Considering Matthew Shepard</i> (oratorio)	Craig Hella Johnson	Various; Lesléa Newman	Poems by Hildegard von Bingen, Lesléa Newman, Michael Dennis Browne, and Rumi; excerpts of Shepard's journals; interviews and texts by his parents Judy and Dennis Shepard; newspaper articles; and additional texts by Johnson and Michael Dennis Browne	Matthew Shepard	high baritone (or possibly low tenor) or the part can be split and sung by baritone(s) and tenor(s)	Gay men	Austin (Texas), United States
31-2017	<i>The Scarlett Professor</i>	Eric Sawyer	Harley Erdman	The arrest of Professor Arvin during the Lavender Scare (biography by Barry Werth)	Newton Arvin	tenor	Gay men	Nothampton (Massachusetts), United States
					Ned Spofford	baritone		
					Truman Capote	counter tenor		
32-2017	Three Way	Robert Paterson	David Cote	Three one act operas exploring different experiences of gender and sexuality. Most characters can be interpreted in numerous ways – not much history is given to allow directors/actors/audiences to ascribe their own meanings.			Queer culture	Nashville (Tennessee), United States
	• <i>The Companion</i>			A repairman comes the home of a woman who has a masculine android as a companion.	Maya	soprano		
	• <i>Safe Word</i>			A businessman visits a professional dominatrix.	Client/Client-as-Polly	bass-baritone		
	• <i>Masquerade</i>			4 couples go to a sensualist party.	Kyle	counter tenor		
					Tyler	mezzo		
33-2017	<i>Edward II</i>	Andrea Scartazzini	Thomas Jonigk	Relationship of King Edward II and Piers Gaveston	Edward	baritone	Gay men	Berlin, Germany
					Piers de Gaveston	tenor		
					(Redemptive) Angel	baritone		
34-2018	<i>Lessons in Love and Violence</i>	George Benjamin	Martin Crimp	Relationship of King Edward II and Piers Gaveston	King	baritone	Gay men	London, England
					Gaveston/ Stranger	baritone		
					Boy/ Young King	tenor		
35-2018	<i>Six. Twenty. Outrageous: Three Gertrude Stein Plays in the Shape of an Opera</i>	Daniel Thomas Davis	Adam Frank	Based on 3 of Stein's early plays with the characters being written as Stein, Toklas, and a cousin.	Gertrude Stein	mezzo	Lesbian; Gender-expansive	New York (New York), United States
					Alice B. Toklas	tenor		
36-2018	<i>Romeo's Passion</i>	Catherine Milliken	Robert Lehmeier	Fictional story about a son coming out as gay in South Africa.	Son	tenor	Gay men; bisexual men	Johannesburg, South Africa
					Young Man	tenor		

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					Father	tenor		
37-2019	<i>Fire Shut Up in My Bones</i>	Terence Blanchard	Kasi Lemmons	Charles M. Blow, <i>Fire Shut Up in My Bones</i> (memoir about a childhood sexual assault, 2014)	Chester	baritone	Gay men	St. Louis (Missouri), United States
38-2019	The Stonewall Operas:			Four mini-operas created in celebration of the 50 th anniversary of the Stonewall riots.			Queer Culture	New York (New York), United States
	• <i>Outside</i>	Bryan Blaskie	Seth Christenfeld	Set on 28 June 1969, a young man in another gay bar struggles with how to live as his true self and whether or not to go outside and join the Stonewall protests.	Mark	bass		
					Kenny	countertenor		
					Joan	contralto		
					Bartender	bass-baritone		
	• <i>The Pomada Inn</i>	Brian Cavanagh-Strong	Ben Bonnema	Set in the present, Igor and Alek, in Kiev, want to visit a bathhouse but worry about a police raid while in New York, Tara and Holly live freely.	Igor	bass or bass-baritones		
					Alek	tenor		
					Holly	soprano		
					Tara	mezzo		
	• <i>The Community</i>	Kevin Cummines	Shoshana Greenberg	Set in 2419 and the only surviving artifact from the 20 th century is a book on the Stonewall riots. A comedy based on misinterpretation of the one remaining historical artifact.	NONE SPECIFIED – a group is celebrating the anniversary of Stonewall	Roles are: High Priestess (mezzo); Members of the Community (soprano, countertenor, baritone)		
	• <i>Nightlife</i>	TJ Rubin	Deepali Gupta	Set on 28 June 1969 and tells the story of 4 queer jazz musicians.	Chick	contralto		
					Hep Cat	baritone		
					Punk	tenor		
					Daddy-O	bass-baritone		
39-2019	<i>Stonewall</i>	Iain Bell	Mark Campbell	The Stonewall Riots of 1969	Maggie	mezzo	Lesbian; Gay men; Gender-expansive; General queer culture	Manhattan (New York), United States
					Carlos	baritone		
					Renata	tenor		
					Valerie	baritone		
					Sarah	mezzo (trans woman)		
					Edward	baritone		
					Andy	tenor		
					Leah	soprano		
				*Gay for pay dancer	*Troy	Bass-baritone		
40-2019	<i>Orlando</i>	Olga Neuwirth	Catherine Filloux	Based on Virginia Woolf's 1928 political novel <i>Orlando</i> , in which a poet travels in time and wakes up as a woman.	Orlando	mezzo-soprano	Gender-expansive	Vienna, Austria
					Mx. Bond	transgender vocalist		
41-2019	<i>Les Bienveillantes</i>	Hector 2-spr	Händl Klaus	2006 novel by Jonathan Littell, <i>The Kindly Ones</i> , historical fiction about a gay SS officer (Max) in WW2 Germany.	Max Aue	lyric tenor	Gay men	Antwerp, Belgium
					Lorena "Hick" Hickok	high soprano		
42-2019	<i>Good Country</i>	Keith Allegretti	Cecilia Raker	The true story of Charley Parkhurst, a trans man who drove a stagecoach during the US goldrush	Charley Parkhurst	tenor or alto/mezzo (trans masc)	Gender expansive	Austin, Texas
					Barmaid	soprano		
43-2019	<i>The Impossible She</i>	Daniel Thomas Davis	Daniel Thomas Davis	The relationship of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and reporter Lorena Hickok. Libretto based on letters and poems written by Roosevelt and Hickok and also on Blance Wiesen Cook's biography of Roosevelt	Eleanor Roosevelt	soprano	Lesbian	Manhattan (New York), United States
					Lorena "Hick" Hickok	high soprano		

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44-2021	<i>James (Book of Ruth)</i> *dramatic oratorio			Inspired by the life of Ruth Coker Burks who became a healthcare worker and HIV/AIDS advocate in Arkansas in the late-80s and 90s and the biblical story of Ruth and Naomi, which has queer undertones. Tells the story of James, a HIV positive man, who loses his partner to AIDS.	James	baritone	Gay men; Lesbian coded	Recorded in Austin (Texas), Unites States – premiered by Broadcast
				*queer ally with queer roots	*Ruth	mezzo		
45-2022	<i>Emily & Sue</i> (pop opera)	Dana Kaufman	Aiden K. Feltkamp	The letters of Emily Dickinson and Susan Gilbert	Emily Dickinson	soprano	Lesbian	Amherst (Massachusetts), United States
46-2022	<i>Nighttown</i>	Benjamin Wenzelberg	Benjamin Wenzelberg	Based on James Joyce's Ulysses and Homer's the Odyssey	Bell* Cohen	Any voice type (trans singer)	Gender expansive	Lowell (Massachusetts), United States
47-2023	<i>The Life and Death(s) of Alan Turing</i>	Justine F. Chen	David Simpatico	The life of Alan Turing, a British WWII computer scientist who broke Nazi Germany's U-boat code and was later arrested for gross indecency for being in a queer relationship.	Alan Turing		Gay men	Chicago (Illinois), United States
					Christopher Morcom			
					Arnold Murray			
48-2023	<i>Pomegranate</i>	Kye Marshall	Amanda Hale	Parallel lesbian love stories set in Pompeii and in Toronto in the 1980s after the bathhouse raids.	Cassia/Cass	soprano	Lesbian; Queer culture	Toronto (Ontario), Canada
					Suli/Suzie	mezzo		
					Cult Priestess/Jules	soprano		
49-2023	<i>Lily Elbe</i>	Tobias Picker	Aryeah Lev Stollman	The life of Lily Elbe, a Danish trans woman, one of the first to undergo gender affirming surgery	Lili Elbe and Lile Before (Historically known as Einar Wegener, pre-transition)	baritone	Gender expansive ; Lesbian	St. Gallen, Switzerland
					Gerda Wegener, Wife of Lili Before	soprano		
50-2023	Alexina B.	Raquel Garcia-Tomás	Irène Gayraud	The memoires of Alexina/Abel Barbin (1838-1868), an intersex person who lived in France.	Alexina B./Abel	mezzo	Intersex; Lesbian	Barcelona, Spain
					Sara	soprano		
					The Policeman (pants role)	soprano		
					The Doctor (?)	countertenor		
51-2023	<i>What the Spirits Show</i>	Silen Wellington	Walken Schweigert	Original story of a teen coming to terms with their identity through shapeshifting	Calamus	soprano	Gender expansive	Washington (D.C.), United States
					Silvan	mezzo		
52-2023	<i>Strella</i>	Michalis Paraskakis	Alexandra K*	The 2009 film Strella about an older ex-convict Yorgos who has an affair with Strella, a young trans sex worker. Based on the Oedipus myth.	Strella	baritone or mezzo (trans woman)	Trans women; Pansexuality; Drag	Athens, Greece
					Mary	mezzo or bass baritone (trans woman)		
					Vilma	baritone or mezzo (trans woman)		
					Yorgos	bass baritone		
					Drag Performer	Baritone (sings an art song)		