

# SANDRA SEATON

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## EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Michigan State University	M.A. in English-Creative Writing	1989
University of Illinois	B.A. in English	1971

## ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Michigan State University College of Law	Writer in Residence	2010-11
Central Michigan University	Professor (English Department)	08/90-04/04

## UPCOMING AND RECENT WORK

SALLY-A solo play by Sandra Seaton - March 18, 2023  
Southern Writers Festival - Alabama Shakespeare Festival - Montgomery, Alabama

THE PASSION OF MARY CARDWELL DAWSON-- Jan. 20 - 22, 2023 - Play with  
Music by Sandra Seaton-New Expanded Version-original music by Carlos Simon  
Starring Mezzo Soprano Denyce Graves at the Kennedy Center-Washington, D.C.

DREAMLAND: TULSA 1921: Commissioned work for Turtle Creek Chorale  
Music: Marques L.A. Garrett - Libretto: Sandra Seaton  
July 9, 2022 | Carnegie Hall | New York City  
Premiere-Meyerson Symphony Center | Dallas, Texas- July 2, 2022 | July 3, 2022 |  
NOMINATED: For the 2023 Pulitzer Prize

THE PASSION OF MARY CARDWELL DAWSON- New Commissioned Expanded Version  
for Glimmerglass Festival: August 16-17, 2022 with Denyce Graves. Original music by Carlos  
Simon

THE PASSION OF MARY CARDWELL DAWSON-August 2021-Premiere, Glimmerglass  
Festival-Commissioned Original Version with Mezzo-Soprano Denyce Graves

SALLY-A solo play by Sandra Seaton  
Aspen Theatre Festival-Aspen, Colorado; September 2022  
AWARDEE: Solo Flights Project Advancement Fund Grant  
<https://theatreaspen.org/2022/09/19/inaugural-theatre-aspen-solo-flights-project-advancement-fund-recipients-announced/>

NIGHT TRIP: Chamber Opera-Washington National Opera, Kennedy Center.  
1/10/20 Composer Carlos Simon-Libretto Sandra Seaton  
Additional Performances: Portland Opera 4/16-5/31/2021; Opera Next Gen – 12/11/2021

FIRST BLUEBIRD IN THE MORNING: Commission for LA Opera  
<https://www.laopera.org/performances/upcoming-digital-performances/the-first-bluebird-in-the-morning/>

Music: Carlos Simon; Libretto Sandra Seaton-Premiere-September, 2021; Opera America Movie Night: March 1, 2023.

SHADE: OPERA AMERICA PODCAST WITH SANDRA SEATON  
<https://www.operaamerica.org/industry-resources/2021/202111/shade-a-conversation-about-race-culture-and-identity-in-opera/>

FROM THE DIARY OF SALLY HEMINGS-Glimmerglass Festival 2020  
Composer-William Bolcom; Librettist-Sandra Seaton  
<https://bit.ly/33QonZ0>,

LIBRETTISTS ON LIBRETTI -Dramatist Guild Opera Committee librettists webinar, August 10, 2021, moderated by Deborah Brevoort with Mark Campbell, Stephanie Fleischmann, David Henry Hwang, E.M. Lewis, and Sandra Seaton

## **SELECTED PERFORMANCES OF WORK AS A LIBRETTIST**

### ***FROM THE DIARY OF SALLY HEMINGS***

A song cycle. The work recreates the thoughts and feelings of Sally Hemings throughout her long relationship with Thomas Jefferson by means of 18 fictional diary entries. Text (libretto) by Sandra Seaton, music composed by William Bolcom.

Soprano Alyson Cambridge, Glimmerglass Festival, Glimmerglass Glimpse, full performance, 8/20.

Soprano Alyson Cambridge, Victory Hall Opera, Charlottesville, VA, 5/25/19.

Excerpts performed by Alyson Cambridge, Victory Hall Opera, Charlottesville, VA, 5/30/18 & 5/31/18.

Soprano Joelle Lamarre, MSU School of Music, National Conference on 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century Song Cycles, Cook Recital Hall, East Lansing, MI, 04/18.

Alyson Cambridge & Michael Fennelly, Church of the Intercession, The Crypt Sessions, New York, NY, 11/15/17.

Alyson Cambridge & pianist Justina Lee, Washington Performing Arts, Kennedy Center, Washington, DC, 1/20/16.

Mezzo-soprano Givonna Joseph, Creole Opera, New Orleans, LA, 5/3/16.

Soprano Marti Newland, Christ and St. Stephen's Church, New York, NY, 11/3/13.

Alyson Cambridge & Lydia Brown, Carnegie Hall, New York, NY, 02/2010.

Mezzo-soprano Florence Quivar, Rialto Performing Arts Center, Atlanta, GA, 2/23/02.

Florence Quivar, The Vocal Arts Society, Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C., 2/19/02.

Florence Quivar, Lydia Mendelssohn Theater, University Musical Society, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 2/13/02 & 2/17/02.

Florence Quivar at the Lied Center, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2/5/02.

Florence Quivar at the Herbst Theatre, San Francisco Performances, San Francisco, CA, 4/16/01.

Mezzo-soprano Florence Quivar & pianist J.J. Pena at Coolidge Auditorium, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 3/16/01 (Premiere).

Other Selected Media: *From the Diary of Sally Hemings*

*New York Times* live interview and vocal performance with Alyson Cambridge (138,000 views), New York, NY, 11/15/17: <https://bit.ly/2s3hH65>.

Video of performance by Marti Newland, Christ and St. Stephen's Church, New York, NY, 11/3/13: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifOF8LTYa\\_4&list=PL2g0VePW\\_8NQ\\_lxJ\\_xwvCEkaJyZcnR6oQ&index=10&t=28s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifOF8LTYa_4&list=PL2g0VePW_8NQ_lxJ_xwvCEkaJyZcnR6oQ&index=10&t=28s).

### ***KING: A REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.***

A spoken word piece by Sandra Seaton, accompanied by spirituals.

Sandra Seaton with Met tenor George Shirley and pianist Stanley Waldon, Gerald R. Ford Museum, Grand Rapids, MI, 02/15. <https://geraldrfordfoundation.org/king-reflection-life-dr-martin-luther-king-jr/>

Sandra Seaton with Earl Nelson Singers, Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, Black History Month Celebration, 2/29/12.

Sandra Seaton accompanied by three youth choirs, Wharton Center, East Lansing, MI, 2005.

### ***VEGETARIAN WEDDING***

A song cycle. Text (libretto) by Sandra Seaton, music composed by Erik Santos (Electronic Music Studio, University of Michigan).

Soprano Patricia Green, East Lansing, MI, 07/14.

### ***OGDEN AVENUE***

A work-in-progress: Musical, book and lyrics by Sandra Seaton, composer to be announced. A musical about a high school that is 40% African American and 60% Polish/Serb/Czech.

Directed by Alison Dobbins, book and lyrics by Sandra Seaton, Renegade Theatre Festival, Lansing, MI, 8/19/16 & 8/20/16.

## **SELECTED PERFORMANCES OF WORK AS A PLAYWRIGHT**

### ***CHICAGO TRILOGY***

Three one-act plays, “A Chance Meeting”, “The Lookout”, and “Black for Dinner”, based on short stories by the African American Chicago writer Cyrus Colter.

Directed by Tim Rhoze, featuring George Shirley, Evanston Literary Festival, Evanston, IL, 05/17.

Directed by Mardra Thomas, featuring George Shirley, Atlanta Black Theatre Festival, Ray Charles Performing Arts Center, Atlanta, GA, 10/15.

### ***SALLY***

A solo play about Sally Hemings.

Produced as a multi-character play, directed by Robert Gainer, Elaine Langone Center, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA, 2012.

Performed by Zabryna Guevara, directed by Langdon Brown, New York State Writers Institute, Albany, NY, 02/04/03 (Premiere).

A theatre course offering and book project at Michigan State University was developed based on SALLY: A SOLO PLAY titled “Introduction to Projection Design,” this course was taught as THEATRE 419 in Fall 2017 and will be taught as THEATRE 219 in Spring 2019.

### ***ESTATE SALE***

A play about a young woman’s journey back home to arrange for an estate sale for her late father. Directed by Sandra Seaton, Renegade Theatre Festival, Lansing, MI, 08/14 (Premiere).

### ***MUSIC HISTORY***

A play about the aspirations and values of American college students in the 60s who join the Civil Rights struggle in the south.

Directed by John Lepard, music director Erik Santos, Arena Theatre, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 2011.

### ***A CHANCE MEETING***

A meeting between two former employees of a wealthy family with very different attitudes about the past. Starring George Shirley, Arthur Miller Theatre, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 05/09.

### ***THE WILL***

Two sons return from the Civil War expecting to be treated as full citizens.

Directed by Andy Callis, with music direction, original music and sound effects by Erik Santos. Central Michigan University, University Events Series, Plachta Auditorium, 2013.

### ***THE WILL (CONT.)***

Directed by Robert Graham Small with original music and sound effects by Erik Santos (Electronic Music Studio, University of Michigan), Idlewild, Michigan, 2008 (Premiere).

### ***THE BRIDGE PARTY***

A play by Sandra Seaton, with piano rags by William Bolcom.

Arena Theatre, East Lansing, MI, 1/27 – 1/30, 2000, with Equity cast members Adilah Barnes and Amentha Dymally.

Columbia College, Chicago/New Studio Theater, Chicago, IL, 3/23/90. Staged readings of play (two performances), directed by Paul Carter Harrison.

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 4/30/98. Directed by Prof. Glenda Dickerson. Cast included Ruby Dee, Michele Shay, Adilah Barnes, Kim Staunton and other Equity actors.

Woodie King Productions, New Federal Theater, New York, NY, 1/24/98. Staged reading. Directed by C. C. Antoinette.

### **SELECTED REVIEWS & PUBLICATIONS ABOUT MY WORK**

- ***The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson* by Sandra Seaton**
- [Joseph A. Heissan JR.](#)
- [Theatre Journal](#)
- [Johns Hopkins University Press](#)
- [Volume 74, Number 1, March 2022](#)
- pp. 100-102
- [10.1353/tj.2022.0015](https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.2022.0015)

NIGHT TRIP

Monday, January 13th in the Washington Post:

<https://wapo.st/38iAPA7>

Monday, January 13th in A Beast in A Jungle

<https://bit.ly/389uuHR>

and

Saturday January 11th in the Washington Classical Review:

<https://bit.ly/2NyOmvQ>

- André, Naomi. Black Opera: History Power and Engagement. University of Illinois Press, 2018. See Chapter 3, "Haunted Legacies: Interracial Secrets: *From the Diary of Sally Hemings*," on the collaboration between composer William Bolcom and librettist Sandra Seaton.
- Lessner, Joanne Sydney. "Alyson Cambridge & Michael Fennelly: *From the Diary of Sally Hemings*." *Opera News*, February 2018, Vol. 82, No. 8.
- Hall, Susan. "Alyson Cambridge Sings at The Crypt: William Bolcom's Song Cycle on Sally Hemings." *Berkshire Fine Arts*, November 16, 2017. Available: [http://www.berkshirefinearts.com/11-16-2017\\_alysan-cambridge-sings-at-the-crypt.htm](http://www.berkshirefinearts.com/11-16-2017_alysan-cambridge-sings-at-the-crypt.htm).
- Manheim, James. "Alyson Cambridge/Lydia Brown *From the Diary of Sally Hemings*: AllMusic Review." AllMusic online. No date. Available: <https://www.allmusic.com/album/from-the-diary-of-sally-hemings-mw0001986421>.
- Midgett, Anne. "Alyson Cambridge Offers Ambitious but Flawed Recital." *Washington Post*, January 21, 2016. Available: <http://wapo.st/11B78S3>.
- Young, Patricia. African American Women Playwrights Confront Violence: A Critical Study of Nine Dramatists. Chapter on Sandra Seaton. McFarland Publishing, 2012.
- Rosenblum, Joshua. "Opera News Album Review: From the Diary of Sally Hemings." *Opera News*. August 1, 2010. Available: [https://music.cmich.edu/about\\_the\\_school/news/news.php?id=63](https://music.cmich.edu/about_the_school/news/news.php?id=63).
- Di Carlo, Tony Scotto. "The First African American First Lady." *Albany Student Press*. February 10, 2003.
- Broun, Ronald. "Blackwell & Quivar: Sung with Feeling." *Washington Post*. February 21, 2002.
- Headlee, Celeste. "From the Diary of Sally Hemings." WDET-FM. *Morning Edition*, NPR. February 15, 2002. Interview with Sandra Seaton.
- Horsley, Paul. "Song Cycle Explores Presidential Tryst." *The Kansas City Star*. February 7, 2002.
- Blankenship, Bill. "Singers to Pay Homage to American Composers." *The Capital Journal*. February 5, 2002.
- Lewman, David. "Sandra Seaton: Her First Libretto." *University of Illinois Arts and Letters Magazine*. Fall 2002
- Humphries Barker, Dedria. "Civility in the Writing of Sandra Seaton." *Muses* (Michigan State University College of Arts and Letters). Fall 2001
- Serinus, Jason. *Opera News On-line*. July 2001.
- Rowe, Georgia. "Diaries Give Voice to Hemings' Story." *TimeOut*. April 9, 2001.
- Potter, Christopher. "A Bid for Respect." *Ann Arbor News*. May 1, 1998.

## **SELECTED PUBLICATIONS**

Routledge Companion to African American Theatre and Performance, December 2018. Book Chapter—"Shuffle Along and Ethnic Humor - A Family Story", pp. 95-101.

The Dramatist Magazine: The History Issue. September/October 2016. "Using My Play The Will to Teach History", pp. 37-39.

The Dramatist Magazine: The Ethics of Ethnic. May/June 2016. Shuffle Along and Ethnic Humor: "The Proper Push", pp. 45-50.

The Bridge Party. Revised Edition. East Lansing, Michigan: East End Press, 2016.

Music History. East Lansing, Michigan: East End Press, 2015.

The Will. East Lansing, Michigan: East End Press, 2015.

The Dramatist Magazine, March/April 2013, "Adapting Work for the Stage", pp. 22-23.

Modernism Magazine, Fall 2011, "Betty Price and George Nelson: Spreading The Word About Modern Design, pp. 38-45.

Eleven Eleven Magazine, a Journal of Literature and Art, Issue 7, 2009. "Do You Like Philip Roth?" pp. 21-26.

Hal Leonard—"From The Diary of Sally Hemings" Libretto.

From the Diary of Sally Hemings. Michigan Quarterly Review. Fall 2001. Introduction by William Bolcom.

"Sally Hemings at the Herbst Theatre." Stagebill, Program Notes. April 2001.

"Sally Hemings in Performance." Stagebill, Program Notes. March 2001.

"A Chorus of Voices" (excerpts from The Bridge Party and from "How I Came to Write The Bridge Party"), The Hedgebrook Journal, August, 1999.

The Bridge Party. Strange Fruit: An Anthology of Plays on Lynching by American Women. Ed. Kathy Perkins and Judith Stephens. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. (new and revised version of full-length play [February, 1998])

"Nightsong." Obsidian II: Black Literature in Review (Winter, 1989).

"Black Women in Theater and Film: An Interview with Adilah Barnes," Shooting Star, (Fall, 1994).

"Reflections on the Legacy of Thurgood Marshall," Phi Delta Kappa Newsletter, 4 (April, 1993).

"A Raisin in The Sun: A Study in Afro-American Culture," Midwest Miscellany XX (1992).

## **WRITER IN RESIDENCES, HONORS, AWARDS, & CONSULTANTSHIPS**

(Note: Residencies are awarded based on a competition for a stay at a writers' colony; writer in residence is an invited stay to be a part of campus life.)

2023 Pulitzer Prize Nominee in Music: DREAMLAND: TULSA 1921

2023 Pulitzer Prize Nominee in Drama: DREAMLAND: TULSA 1921

Awardee: Solo Flights Project Advancement Fund Grant for SALLY: A SOLO PLAY  
<https://theatreaspen.org/2022/09/19/inaugural-theatre-aspen-solo-flights-project-advancement-fund-recipients-announced/>

Bellagio Residency, Waiting List, 2023.

Residency, Ragdale Colony, Lake Forest, IL, June-July 2023.

Residency, Ragdale Colony, Lake Forest, IL, January 7-February 1, 2019.

Writer in Residence, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA, 2012.

Writer in Residence, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY, 2008

Writer in Residence, University of Colorado-Denver, 2008

Writer in Residence, Cranbrook Schools, February 2003.

Visiting Writer, Writers Institute at SUNY Albany, Albany, NY, February, 2003.

Residency, Ragdale Writers' Colony, Lake Forest, IL, September-October, 2002.

Residency, Yaddo Writers' Colony, Saratoga Springs, NY, October-November, 2002.

Writer in Residence, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, August, 2002.

Writer in Residence, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Duties: conducting playwriting workshops, delivering lecture, meeting with students. Ann Arbor, MI, April, 1998.

Writer in Residence, University of Illinois-Springfield; "Bridging the Gaps"; Dramatic Reading, Reception and book-signing. Springfield, IL, November 17-18, 1998.

Residency, Dorset Writers Colony, Dorset, VT, March-April, 1998.

Residency, Hedgebrook Writer's Colony, Whidbey Island, WA, December, 1996; May 1-14, 1997; and July 8-25, 1997.

Consultant for Library of Congress for Olivette Miller session, American Culture Association/Popular Culture Association. Las Vegas, NV. March, 1996.



Consultant for Library of Congress on acquisition of Ollie Harrington drawings. Berlin, Germany, May, 1995.

Kellogg Foundation Research Grant, June 1994-June, 1995.

Theodore Ward Playwriting Prize for New Works by African-American Playwrights awarded to The Bridge Party in a nation-wide competition sponsored by Columbia College, Chicago. 1989.

### **SYMPOSIA IN CONJUNCTION WITH MY WORK**

“Dramatization and Context – A Symposium and Roundtable.” Panel discussion with playwright, director, and experts in legal and cultural studies, discussing the play “Music History” and the dramatization of problematic societal and legal issues. Michigan State University Museum, 11/12/10.

“‘The Will’ Weekend at Idlewild: Classical Connections to African American Culture.” Performance of “The Will” and “mini-conference” on African Americans in classical music and opera with discussion by panelists Aaron Dworkin, Celeste Headlee, Desmond Neysmith, Erik Santos, and George Shirley. Idlewild, MI, 5/31/08 – 06/01/08.

“Sandra Seaton Discusses From the Diary of Sally Hemings,” Literary Chamber Series, Universal Musical Society. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. 2/5/02.

"A Symposium on Gender, Race and the American Theatre." An event held in conjunction with Michigan State University Theatre Department's performances of "The Bridge Party." Included panel featuring Wayne Shirley, Jean-Claude van Itallie, and Robin Hough on "The Musical Milieu of The Bridge Party: The Cultural Dynamics of African American Music in the Forties." East Lansing, MI, 1/27/00.

### **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Black Theatre Network  
Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature  
Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI)  
Dramatists Guild of America

