

## **THREE WAY**

**A TRIO OF COMIC ONE-ACT OPERAS ABOUT CRAVING & CONNECTION,  
MUSIC BY ROBERT PATERSON, LIBRETTO BY DAVID COTE -  
NEW YORK PREMIERE AT BAM FISHER (FISHMAN SPACE)  
JUNE 15-18, 2017**



*Three Way* - Samuel Levine, Danielle Pastin and Wes Mason in Act I, *The Companion* ([download](#)); Eliza Bonet in Act II, *Safe Word* ([download](#)); photos by Anthony Popolo (Links also below)

**“A postmodern opera that encapsulates the complexity and depth of evolving identity and sexuality, and a postmodern opera that is both elegant and accessible”**

**– *Schmopera* at World Premiere, January 2017**

**“Effortlessly funny, clever and deeply resonant”**

**– *Opera News* (Act I, *The Companion*)**

***Three Way***, a trio of comic one-act operas for eight singers and chamber orchestra by Robert Paterson, with libretto by David Cote, has its New York premiere at BAM Fisher (Fishman Space) with a four-performance engagement [June 15-18, 2017](#). Co-produced by Nashville Opera and American Opera Projects, the work had its world premiere January 27-29 in Nashville.

The three acts of *Three Way* explore the possible future—and the eternal questions—of love, sex, and need. *The Companion* is about Maya and her live-in lover Joe, a biomorphic android. *Safe Word* explores an encounter between a dominatrix and her businessman client that goes places

no one expects. *Masquerade* dramatizes a party at a mansion in which four couples don masks and shed their outer selves. Praising the work's world premiere, *The Tennessean* called it "an intriguing treatise on power, passion and human connection. Paterson's music is quite mesmerizing...rich and vibrant."

The New York premiere engagement of *Three Way* features the same cast as the Nashville production: sopranos Danielle Pastin and Courtney Ruckman, mezzo-sopranos Eliza Bonet and Melisa Bonetti, countertenor Jordan Rutter, tenor Samuel Levine, baritone Wes Mason, and bass Matthew Treviño. John Hoomes, Nashville Opera CEO & Artistic Director, is the stage director; Dean Williamson is music director and conductor; and Amy Tate Williams is the chorusmaster and accompanist. American Modern Ensemble, the acclaimed contemporary group of which Robert Paterson is artistic director, joins the production as the orchestra. The June 17 performance will feature a pre-show talk with John Hoomes and the creative team, emceed by psychotherapist Ian Kerner titled "Robots, Role-Play, and Swingers – Sex in the Modern Era."

The world premiere of *Three Way* January 27-29 at Nashville Opera elicited full houses and standing ovations at each performance. "Rarely do we find a postmodern opera that builds in time for audiences to belly laugh, a postmodern opera that encapsulates the complexity and depth of evolving identity and sexuality, and a postmodern opera that is both elegant and accessible," said *Schmopera*. "In *Three Way*...we find a postmodern opera with all of those things, simultaneously. This production levels the audience's playing field in a sophisticated way: pairing common, yet updated, operatic tropes with relevant, topical humor and relatable music."

**Nashville Opera production – watch excerpts from:**

"What Did I Do Today?" from Act I, *The Companion*: <https://youtu.be/wk3quJ8xji0>

"Pain and Release" from Act II, *Safe Word*: <https://youtu.be/Dh2QNWDXyc0>

"Not My Night" from Act III, *Masquerade*: <https://youtu.be/SsdRX-7Jamo>

Robert Paterson's music has been performed by ensembles including the Louisville Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Albany Symphony, American Composers Orchestra, New York New Music Ensemble, California EAR Unit, and Ensemble Aleph in Paris. David Cote is a playwright and librettist as well as theater editor of *Time Out New York*. (See bios below.)

*What I want is a man.  
Not just any man: the perfect man.  
Who will be here, ready and happy,  
At the end of every day.  
You may find it alarming  
But Prince Charming  
Is just an upgrade away.*  
—from Act I: *The Companion*

**“A bright and magnificent score”**

*The Companion* and *Safe Word* have been seen in workshop and semi-staged concert performances presented by American Opera Projects and Fort Worth Opera’s Frontiers showcase program. Reviewing *The Companion*, Steven Jude Tietjen of *Opera News* said, “Composer Robert Paterson and librettist David Cote have created an effortlessly funny, clever and deeply resonant opera, in which the music and the story fuel one another to create an entertaining and meaningful theatrical experience. ... Paterson amplifies the humor and heartache of Cote’s libretto with a bright and magnificent score.” And the web magazine *I Care If You Listen* said of *The Companion*, “Paterson’s score showcased an excellent musical vocabulary and flowed beautifully.” (See more critical acclaim below.)

*Make them wait.  
Anticipation builds desire.  
Make them wait.  
Impatience is a kind of torture, but so delicious too.  
This is my office, my web, my stage.  
Where I entertain.  
And they never complain.*  
—from Act II: *Safe Word*

**Arias from *Three Way* and New York Premiere of Song Cycle *In Real Life* – April 27, 2017**

*Three Way* is the second collaboration between Robert Paterson and David Cote. *In Real Life*, their song cycle about online dating, has its New York premiere at Merkin Hall on [April 27, 2017](#), at a concert by American Modern Ensemble, with soprano Marnie Breckenridge as the soloist. The program, titled *Voice of America*, will also feature five arias from *Three Way*, performed by members of the Nashville and New York cast, along with works by Robert Maggio and Luna Pearl Woolf.

Paterson’s first opera, *The Whole Truth*, with librettist Mark Campbell, premiered in January 2016 at Dixon Place, New York City.

*Some of us believe fences should come down.  
Social attitudes have evolved.  
Gender barriers dissolved.  
...  
It’s a Masquerade, where identities fade.  
Disguises in place of familiar faces.  
Erasing our safety but also our fear.  
Because anyone might be anybody here.*  
—from Act III: *Masquerade*

**What characterizes *Three Way* as an opera?**

In a discussion with Paterson and Cote, the following themes arose as defining characteristics of their work:

- It was written from the ground up – original material, not an adaptation of an existing novel, movie or news/historical event.
- It is a comic opera – and as Paterson says, “There are not many of those being written these days!”
- *Three Way* is a work that is squarely within the opera tradition. They describe it as “foregrounding narrative, character, and conflict, not using avant-garde or deconstructive gimmicks – and there are 12 arias! The music is rich and full of timbral variety; it is highly melodic, yet often chromatic, full of witty lyrics and orchestral flourishes, and designed to engage the ear as much as mind and heart.”

### **The theme of sex**

When Paterson and Cote decided to collaborate, they chose a universal subject: sex. As Paterson says: “Opera is about big experiences and, ultimately, what it means to be human. The history of opera is full of sexuality driving the plot: whether via jealousy, lust, violation, shame, or revenge.” *Three Way* is a triptych that addresses this theme through three different aspects: futurism, fetishism, and post-gender, post-monogamous lifestyles.

The subject lent itself to exploring basic human questions, such as how and whether sex evolves, how technology will change sexual activity, and the meaning of gender. Paterson’s vocal writing explores a historically operatic tradition: the re-gendering of roles and voices. For example, in the third act, *Masquerade*, the similarly dressed, androgynous, “postgender” couple Kyle and Tyler are sung by a countertenor and a mezzo, respectively. These vocal types were chosen so that the two can “meet each other halfway,” blending ranges for humorous and provocative effect.

Coincidentally, as they were writing *Three Way*, the movies *Her*, *Fifty Shades of Gray* and *Ex Machina* were released, as well as Showtime’s *Polyamory* – signaling a wider cultural interest in portraying possibilities in the future of sex. There’s also been a dramatic rise in the visibility and depiction of trans people in film, TV, theater, and opera.

Each of the acts has a twist—and each leaves the door open for whatever may come next.

### **Critical Acclaim for *The Companion*, 2014 Workshop Performance**

“Cote’s libretto was hysterical and was brought to life by a brilliant cast.... Paterson’s score showcased an excellent musical vocabulary and flowed beautifully....”

—*I Care If You Listen*, May 22, 2014

“...much of the triumph was in the punchy, not-a-moment-wasted aspect of its time allotment, creating a rhythm that held the audience transfixed. And with the American Modern Ensemble onstage, performing Paterson’s humorous, succinctly edited composition under the baton of Tyson Deaton, a special energy reverberated between singers and musicians....”

—*Seen and Heard International*, May 28, 2014

“In *The Companion*, composer Robert Paterson and librettist David Cote have created an effortlessly funny, clever and deeply resonant opera, in which the music and the story fuel one another to create an entertaining and meaningful theatrical experience. ... Paterson amplifies the humor and heartache of Cote's libretto with a bright and magnificent score, replete with deadpan musical retorts and soaring melodies straight out of Bellini, Puccini or Strauss.”

—*Opera News*, July 2014

**Robert Paterson's** music is acclaimed for its elegance, wit, structural integrity, and a wonderful sense of color. Paterson was awarded Composer of The Year from the Classical Recording Foundation, at Carnegie's Weill Hall in 2011. His music has been on the Grammy® ballot yearly, and his music was named “Best of 2012” on National Public Radio. In addition to the *Three Way* premieres, his season's highlights include premieres of *Shine* for the American Brass Quintet, *Moon Music* for the Claremont Trio (both of which are on new recordings), and *Graffiti Canons* for the Volti choir of San Francisco. His works have been performed by the Louisville Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Austin Symphony, Vermont Symphony, among others. Paterson gives master classes at universities, including the Curtis Institute of Music, Aspen Music Festival, New York University, and the Cleveland Institute of Music. Paterson is the Artistic Director of the American Modern Ensemble and resides in NYC with his wife Victoria, first violinist in *Sunset Boulevard* on Broadway, and their son Dylan. For more information, visit [www.robertpaterson.com](http://www.robertpaterson.com).

**David Cote** is a playwright, librettist and journalist based in New York. Opera libretti include *The Scarlet Ibis* and *Fade* (Stefan Weisman); the Black Lives Matter piece for baritone and orchestra *Invitation to a Die-In* and the comic opera *We've Got Our Eye on You* (Nkeiru Okoye). David's song cycle with Robert Paterson, *In Real Life*, will have its New York premiere in April 2017. His choral works with Paterson, *Did You Hear?* and *Snow Day*, were sung by Musica Sacra, conducted by Kent Tritle and released on *Eternal Reflections* (American Modern Recordings). Plays include *Otherland* (O'Neill National Playwrights Conference finalist) and *Fear of Art*. David is theater editor and chief drama critic of *Time Out New York* and a contributing critic on NY1's *On Stage*. His reporting and reviews have appeared in *American Theatre*, *Opera News*, *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*. Fellowships: The MacDowell Colony. He lives in Manhattan with his wife, audiobook narrator Katherine Kellgren.

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**Download high-resolution photos:**

*Three Way* – Samuel Levine, Danielle Pastin and Wes Mason in Act I, *The Companion*, photo by Anthony Popolo:

[http://www.wadacommunications.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Companion-Act-I-of-Three-Way-photo-by-Anthony-Popolo-MR-32538843940\\_2815f5b4be\\_k.jpg](http://www.wadacommunications.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Companion-Act-I-of-Three-Way-photo-by-Anthony-Popolo-MR-32538843940_2815f5b4be_k.jpg)

*Three Way* – Eliza Bonet in Act II, *Safe Word*, photo by Anthony Popolo:

[http://www.wadacommunications.com/wp-content/uploads/Eliza-Bonet-in-Safe-Word-Act-II-of-Three-Way-photo-by-Anthony-Popolo-MR-32765348372\\_807681ae60\\_k.jpg](http://www.wadacommunications.com/wp-content/uploads/Eliza-Bonet-in-Safe-Word-Act-II-of-Three-Way-photo-by-Anthony-Popolo-MR-32765348372_807681ae60_k.jpg)

**Thursday, June 15, 2017, at 7:30 pm (Opening Night Celebration)**

**Friday, June 16, 2017, at 7:30 pm (with post-show talk with the artists)**

**Saturday, June 17, 2017, at 7:30 pm (with pre-show talk, “Robots, Role-Play, and Swingers – Sex in the Modern Era,” by psychotherapist Ian Kerner)**

**Sunday, June 18, 2017, at 2:00 pm**

**BAM Fisher (Fishman Space), Brooklyn, NY**

**[www.bam.org/threeway](http://www.bam.org/threeway)**

***THREE WAY – A Trio of Comic Operas About Craving and Connection***

**By Robert Paterson, libretto by David Cote**

**John Hoopes, Stage Director, Nashville Opera CEO & Artistic Director**

**Dean Williamson, Music Director and Conductor**

**Amy Tate Williams, Chorusmaster/Accompanist**

**American Modern Ensemble**

***The Companion***

**Danielle Pastin, Soprano (Maya)**

**Samuel Levine, Tenor (Joe)**

**Wes Mason, Baritone (Dax)**

***Safe Word***

**Eliza Bonet, Mezzo-soprano (Domme)**

**Matthew Treviño, Bass (The Client)**

***Masquerade***

**Danielle Pastin, Soprano (Connie)**

**Courtney Ruckman, Soprano (Jessie)**

**Eliza Bonet, Mezzo-soprano (Jillian Debridge)**

**Melisa Bonetti, Mezzo-soprano (Tyler)**

**Jordan Rutter, Countertenor (Kyle)**

**Samuel Levine, Tenor (Marcus)**

**Wes Mason, Baritone (Larry)**

**Matthew Treviño, Bass (Bruce Debridge)**

**Tickets**

**Full price tickets start at \$45 reserved seating; \$30 age 30 and under (with I.D.); \$500 Opening Night VIP Event**

**[www.bam.org/threeway](http://www.bam.org/threeway)**

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**More information about *Three Way*:**

**On Robert Paterson’s website: [www.threewayopera.com](http://www.threewayopera.com)**

**On American Opera Projects website: [www.aopopera.org/threeway/](http://www.aopopera.org/threeway/)**

*March 30, 2017*