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[Link to sample music from "Some Favored Nook"](#)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FirstWorks Presents New England Premiere of Providence Composer
Eric Nathan's "Some Favored Nook" Chamber Opera**

Dramatic song cycle inspired by historic correspondence between poet Emily Dickinson and abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson features renowned new music soloists Jessica Rivera, Andrew Garland and Molly Morkoski

Providence, RI – **FirstWorks**, a Rhode Island non-profit dedicated to building community through world-class arts announces the New England premiere of "Some Favored Nook," a song cycle featuring an original composition by Providence-based composer Eric Nathan. The work is based on the historic 24-year correspondence between poet Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson; an essayist, abolitionist, women's rights advocate, Colonel of the first black regiment during the Civil War, and who notably was instrumental in publishing the first collection of Dickinson's poetry after her death. FirstWorks welcomes audiences to enjoy Eric Nathan's "Some Favored Nook" on March 3, 2019 at 2:00 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church at 1 Benevolent Street, Providence. This **FirstWorks Frontier Series** program is part of the organization's milestone 15th season of presenting world and regional premieres of significant works by renowned international and local artists. Tickets are on sale now at the FirstWorks box office online at first-works.org or by calling 401-421-4281.

Resonant with themes of love, death, women's rights and civil rights – issues that are as relevant in today's deeply divided world as they were in Dickinson's time, "Some Favored Nook" places Dickinson's writings in the context of the time period, with focus on her private struggle as a female poet in a patriarchal society, and Higginson's struggles for the abolition of slavery.

A 2013 Rome Prize Fellow and a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow, Nathan has been commissioned by leading institutions including the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Tanglewood Music Center, and Aspen Music Festival. The libretto for "Some Favored Nook" is drawn from texts by Dickinson and Higginson adapted and arranged by renowned librettist Mark Campbell, whose opera "Silent Night" was awarded the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music. Featuring the simple combination of a soprano, baritone and piano, Nathan and Campbell's musical work allows the audience to hear Dickinson and Higginson's message in an entirely new way. Nathan's composition shares the program with other prominent American vocal works exploring the concept of bravery.

"FirstWorks is thrilled to highlight Providence composer Eric Nathan's 'Some Favored Nook' as part of our landmark 15th year," said Kathleen Pletcher, FirstWorks Executive Artistic Director. "The thoughtful layering of works by other composers onto Nathan's original composition, which was born out of a deep respect for the relationship between Dickinson and Higginson, promises an inspirational performance that can connect us to the still-relevant social issues of their turbulent time."

Nathan has curated the concert program to feature three additional compositions which pay homage to the time period of Dickinson and Higginson's remarkable correspondence. The concert opens with nineteenth-century composer Amy Beach's song "I Shall Be Brave," performed by baritone Andrew

Garland and top new music pianist Molly Morkoski. A contemporary of Dickinson, Beach faced struggles as a female composer, and only recently has her music seen a renaissance marked by her 150th anniversary in 2017 and a prominent New York Times article about her life. Garland, Assistant Professor of Music at UC Boulder and a long-standing former vocal instructor at Brown University, also gives voice to Samuel Barber's "Three Songs, Op. 10." To conclude the first half of the concert program, Grammy Award winning soprano Jessica Rivera joins Morkoski to present Aaron Copland's iconic "Twelve Poems by Emily Dickinson." Rivera is a highly sought-after vocalist who has collaborated with many of today's most celebrated composers, including John Adams, Osvaldo Golijov, Gabriela Lena Frank, Jonathan Leshnoff, Rhode Island's own Nico Muhly, and Paola Prestini. Notable appearances include Boston's Celebrity Series, Carnegie Hall, and the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra.

The second half of the concert program is devoted to the New England premiere of Nathan and Campbell's 45-minute work, "Some Favored Nook," performed by the full trio of Rivera, Garland and Morkoski. The work marked its world premiere in Dallas, Texas in January 2019, with a performance TheaterJones performing arts news hailed as "a work that deserves to be heard again and again... Nathan provided a captivately rich setting of these texts, with an impressive command of simple, economic, and ultimately breathtaking strategies."

"After learning of Dickinson and Higginson's historic correspondence and relationship, and then reading through letters and poems Dickinson sent to Higginson as well as his own writings from this same time period, including the diaries from his 'Army Life in a Black Regiment' (as his letters to Dickinson are lost), I knew that this was a story that needed to be told through music," recounts Nathan. "I began assembling the texts while on a Rome Prize Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome, and then composed the majority of 'Some Favored

Nook' while living in residence at Copland House, composer Aaron Copland's former home. While living there, I kept Copland's iconic 'Twelve Poems by Emily Dickinson' nearby by on the piano for spiritual support, and as such there are homages to Copland scattered throughout my work."

The "Some Favored Nook" concert concludes a residency anchored at Brown University, where Nathan currently serves as David S. Josephson Assistant Professor of Music. The residency includes a free lecture by Nathan on the topic of setting text to music taking place on Friday, March 1 at 5:00 p.m. at the John Hay Library at 20 Prospect Street, Providence. Original Emily Dickinson manuscripts and Amy Beach scores will be on display, and a reception will follow the talk. In addition to the support of Providence arts organization FirstWorks, the residency is made possible, in part, with the support of the Marshall Woods Lectureship Foundation of Fine Arts, and the Brown University Department of Music.

Tickets to Eric Nathan's "Some Favored Nook" are available at first-works.org or call 401-421-4281. Ticket prices are \$25 adults, \$20 seniors, \$10 students. [For more information and tickets visit: http://first-works.org/events/some-favored-nook/](http://first-works.org/events/some-favored-nook/)

About FirstWorks

FirstWorks is a non-profit based in Providence, Rhode Island whose purpose is to build the cultural, educational and economic vitality of its community by engaging audiences with world-class performing arts and education programs. Since 2004, FirstWorks festivals, performances and programs have attracted more than 500,000 participants. The FirstWorks Arts Learning Program reaches more than 4,000 students from public and charter schools across Rhode Island with transformative, arts-based learning experiences. FirstWorks is Founding Partner for PVDfest, collaborating with the City of Providence to produce an international arts celebration held each June that in 2018 drew 100,000 visitors to Providence to experience music, art and spectacular performances. Visit first-works.org to learn more.

About Eric Nathan

Eric Nathan's (b. 1983) music has been called "as diverse as it is arresting" with a "constant vein of ingenuity and expressive depth" (San Francisco Chronicle), "thoughtful and inventive" (The New Yorker), and as moving "with bracing intensity and impeccable logic" (Boston Classical Review).

A 2013 Rome Prize Fellow and 2014 Guggenheim Fellow, Nathan has been commissioned by leading ensembles and institutions including the New York Philharmonic, Tanglewood Music Center, Aspen Music Festival, Boston Musica Viva, and The New York Virtuoso Singers. The Boston Symphony Orchestra commissioned both Nathan's chamber work, "Why Old Places Matter" (2014) for the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, and his orchestral work, "the space of a door" (2016), that Andris Nelsons and the BSO premiered in November 2016 to critical acclaim. Of the orchestral premiere, one reviewer wrote, "All I know is Saturday's concert ranks up there as one of the most memorable and pleasurable performances I have ever attended [...] Nathan's new work, "The Space of a Door," more than held its own and stood out as one of the best new classical compositions I have heard in years" (MassLive).

Nathan's works have also been presented nationally and internationally at the New York Philharmonic's 2014 and 2016 Biennials, Louvre Museum, the 2012 and 2013 World Music Days, and at the festivals of Aldeburgh, Aspen, Cabrillo, Domaine Forget, MATA, Ravina Steans Institute, Tanglewood and Yellow Barn. Composer portrait concerts of Nathan's music have been presented by the Berlin Philharmonic's Scharoun Ensemble Berlin at the American Academy in Rome, by the Hudson Valley Music Club, and at the Tenri Cultural Institute (New York).

Nathan's music has additionally been performed by orchestras including the National Symphony Orchestra, Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, Omaha Symphony Chamber Orchestra, and Daejeon Philharmonic Orchestra. Chamber ensembles have performed Nathan's work, such as International Contemporary Ensemble, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, JACK Quartet, American Brass Quintet and A Far Cry. In addition, Nathan's music has been performed by sopranos Dawn Upshaw, Lucy Shelton and Tony Arnold, violinist Jennifer Koh, and pianist Gloria Cheng.

Nathan served as Composer-in-Residence at the 2013 Chelsea Music Festival (New York) and 2013 Chamber Music Campania (Italy). He received his doctorate from Cornell and holds degrees from Yale (B.A.) and Indiana University (M.M.). Nathan served as Visiting Assistant Professor at Williams College in 2014-15, and is currently David S. Josephson Assistant Professor of Music in Composition-Theory at the Brown University Department of Music. He also serves as a guest artist faculty member at Yellow Barn's Young Artists Program.

Listings Information:

WHO: FirstWorks presents "Some Favored Nook"

WHAT: A vocal-piano concert that pays homage to poet Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson's 24-year correspondence, featuring original material from Providence composer Eric Nathan.

WHEN: Sunday, March 3 at 2:00 p.m.

WHERE: First Unitarian Church, 1 Benevolent Street, Providence

TICKETS: \$25 adults / \$20 seniors / \$10 students

For more information and tickets visit: <http://first-works.org/events/some-favored-nook/>

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