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**THREE WAY**

**A TRIO OF COMIC ONE-ACT OPERAS ABOUT CRAVING & CONNECTION  
BY ROBERT PATERSON, LIBRETTO BY DAVID COTE**

**WORLD PREMIERE: NASHVILLE OPERA, JANUARY 27-29, 2017  
NEW YORK PREMIERE: BAM FISHER, JUNE 15-18, 2017**



*Robert Paterson & David Cote; Danielle Pastin, Matthew Treviño, and Eliza Bonet in Masquerade*

**“Effortlessly funny, clever and deeply resonant” – *Opera News (The Companion)***

*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**

***Three Way*** is a trio of comic one-act operas for eight singers and chamber orchestra by Robert Paterson, with libretto by David Cote, that explores 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.

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.)

**"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*

**World premiere engagement: Nashville Opera, January 27-29, 2017**

Co-produced by Nashville Opera and American Opera Projects, *Three Way* will have its world premiere presentation at Nashville Opera: three performances at the James K. Polk Theatre (TPAC) January 27, 28, and 29, 2017. The cast features 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.

**New York premiere engagement: BAM Fisher, June 15-18, 2017**

The New York premiere of *Three Way* will be presented with four performances of the Nashville/AOP production June 15, 16, 17, and 18, 2017, at BAM Fisher, Brooklyn Academy of Music's newest space. American Modern Ensemble, the acclaimed contemporary group of which Robert Paterson is artistic director, will join the production as the orchestra.

*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*

**Watch an excerpt of *The Companion* in semi-staged**

**performance:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNxpkc5QvFY>

**Listen to arias from *The Companion* and *Safe Word* on the *American Opera Projects* page for *Three Way*:** <http://www.aopopera.org/threeway/index.html>

*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](#), performed by American Modern Ensemble. Paterson's first opera, *The Whole Truth*, with librettist Mark Campbell, premiered in January 2016 at Dixon Place, New York City.

**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 surrealist or multimedia aspects – 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. “Opera is about big experiences,” says Paterson, “and, ultimately, about 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***

“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, also the music director of the American Modern Ensemble, 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, 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 monodrama *Invitation to a Die-In* and *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. For more information, visit [www.davidcote.com](http://www.davidcote.com).

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[January 27, 28, 29, 2017](#)

**James K. Polk Theater, TPAC, Nashville, TN  
Nashville Opera**

**June 15, 16, 17, 18, 2017\***

**BAM Fisher, Brooklyn, NY**

**\*These performances feature American Modern Ensemble**

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

John Hoomes, Stage Director, Nashville Opera CEO & Artistic Director

Dean Williamson, Music Director and Conductor

Amy Tate Williams, Chorusmaster/Accompanist

*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)

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

**On Robert Paterson's website:** <http://robertpaterson.com/three-way>

**On American Opera Projects website:** <http://www.aopopera.org/threeway/index.html>

*January 10, 2017*