



Janinah Burnett

Raised in jazz music, Janinah Burnett is the daughter of legendary jazz drummer Carl Burnett and writer/educator/artist Imani Constance. As a child, Janinah was surrounded by Horace Silver, Freddie Hubbard, Eddie Harris, Nancy Wilson, George Cables, Billy Higgins, and many others who inspired her early musical beginnings. This innovative and exceptionally artistic beginning led to a myriad of musical activities throughout Janinah's formative years. While in school at the Hamilton Music Academy in Los Angeles, Janinah won the solo vocal jazz competition at Cal State Fullerton, propelling her desire to serve her artistic muse and study vocal jazz music at Spelman College. Never wishing to be limited to any one genre, Janinah was clear she wanted to be able use her voice to sing all styles.

During her time at Spelman, Janinah continued her jazz studies and was a member of the Spelman College Jazz Ensemble and the Glee Club. Janinah participated in a host of private events and engagements including singing for Margaret Thatcher, several performances with the Atlanta Symphony, singing with the great Ray Charles, and at a private birthday party celebration for Oprah Winfrey at the home of Maya Angelou. However, she was intrigued and inspired by her classmates who excelled in classical music styles, most specifically Art Song, Spirituals, and Opera. Her classmates' excellence, inspiration from role models of color who excelled in the field of classical music, and many singing and performance opportunities allowed Janinah to well acquaint herself with varying classical music styles.

Janinah continued her music studies at the Eastman School of Music where she received a Masters Degree in Vocal Performance and Literature. While there, she studied with accomplished musicians who guided and instructed her immensely. Each summer while at Eastman, Janinah studied Italian at the Centro Studi Di Italiani in Urbania as a participant in the Oberlin in Italy program. In the program she not only learned Italian but had many study and performance opportunities in opera. Her second year in Urbania, Janinah learned and performed the role of Violetta in *La Traviata* with orchestra in two large opera houses.

Another major role Janinah learned and performed at Eastman was the role of Mimì in *La Bohème*. Directly following those performances and upon graduation from Eastman, Janinah joined the cast of Baz Lurhmann's *La Bohème on Broadway* as Mimì.



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Several exciting events occurred as a result of this show including her performances on the Tony Awards, performances at esteemed events for Prada and Tiffany's, and her win of the LA Theater Alliance's Ovation Award, to name a few. Janinah was even featured in the National Enquirer!

Directly after the whirlwind that was *La Bohème on Broadway*, Janinah joined an International tour of Porgy and Bess as Clara and Bess. On this tour she sang in several major opera houses in Austria, Japan, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Denmark.

Upon returning to the US, Janinah sang the following leading roles: Violetta in *La Traviata*, Donna Anna and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Margru in *Amistad*, Marguerite in *Faust*, Leïla in *Les Pecheurs de Perles*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Suzanna in *Le Nozze Di Figaro*, Mimì in *La Bohème*, and many others in over 25 international and domestic cities.

Janinah's brilliant technique and exceptional character interpretations led her to join the roster of the Metropolitan Opera Company for their productions of *Carmen*, *La Bohème*, *Parsifal*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *La Rondine*, *The Enchanted Island*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Elektra*, and *Manon*. Janinah made her MET debut as Bianca in *La Rondine* and spent eight seasons singing at the MET. During this time, Janinah performed with the likes of Plácido Domingo, Susan Graham, Paul Groves, Angela Georgiu, Roberto Alagna, Dwayne Croft, Samuel Ramey, Jonas Kaufmann, Ramón Vargus, and many others. Also during this time, Janinah sang the role of Lucy in *Treemonisha* with Grace Bumbry and Willard White. She also sang Leïla in John Adams' *I was Looking at the Ceiling and Suddenly Saw the Sky*, both productions were performed at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris which were huge successes featuring people of color and dealing with controversial socio-political themes.

Building a career as a successful, consistently working artist, Janinah was called upon for many world premiers. The first being Three Mo' Divas, sister group to Three Mo' Tenors, in which she worked with the virtuosic pianist/producer/arranger Joseph Joubert. Janinah originated the role of "Diva" and enjoyed performing genres that inspired and influenced her, including jazz and R&B. This foray into theater was more intimate and called for dancing and acting different from opera, a challenge Janinah rose to meet.



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Her subsequent world premier presentation was starring as “Harriet Tubman” in Nkeiru Okoye’s opera *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed that Road to Freedom* presented by American Opera Projects.

Additionally, Janinah recreated the role of “Lolo, the VooDoo Queen” in Harlem Renaissance composer Harry Lawrence Freeman's revival of *VooDoo* to much acclaim, earning her a glowing The New York Times review and feature. Janinah was also featured on the cover of the Arts Section of The Washington Post.

Janinah is in high demand and while continuing to do concerts and opera, returned to Broadway, where her professional career began. She was a closing cast member of *Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway in which made appearances as “Carlotta Giudicelli” and “the Innkeeper’s Wife”. While working in *Phantom*, Janinah did a host of other engagements including making her NY Philharmonic debut as the soprano soloist in Adolphus Hailstork's brilliant oratorio *Done Made My Vow*, sang Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1912* with the Toledo Symphony, performed a concert tour of Russia with various Philharmonic orchestras led by Maestro Willie Waters, made her Carnegie Hall debut with the inimitable wind ensemble Imani Winds, presented several concerts of music from *Love the Color of Your Butterfly* and made her network television debut as a bank manager on the CBS show *FBI* to name a few of her engagements. Janinah is also a featured soloist on the very first recording of Margaret Bonds' *Credo* and *Simon Bore the Cross* with Malcolm J. Merriweather and the Dessoff Choirs. Released on the label Avie Records, this hugely relevant project features the music of Margaret Bonds and the text of W.E.B. DuBois and Langston Hughes. The musical score is edited by the scholar Rollo Dilworth.

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, Janinah produced a balcony concert series in which she sang songs to her neighbors on her balcony as a contribution to the wellbeing of the collective. Additionally, Janinah released her debut album entitled *Love the Color of your Butterfly*, on her own label Clazz Records. *Love the Color of Your Butterfly* is an exciting journey through classical, jazz, and popular music idioms. A collaboration with some of the world’s finest jazz musicians including: Christian Sands, Sullivan Fortner, Ben Williams, Casey Benjamin, and Terreon Gully, *Love the Color of Your Butterfly* is featured, in the Financial Times, Downbeat Magazine, Broadway World, The Classical Voice, OperaWire, and is available anywhere music is sold. Additionally, Janinah produced a virtual performance of her own writings juxtaposed with photography, art songs, freedom songs, and spirituals entitled *I, Too Sing America: A Lament for the Fallen* for students at