

Distinguished Lecturers in Music Theory Series

**“Poetry in Motion”: Aida Overton Walker and
Heterot(r)opic Black Reinvention****Dr. Marcus Pyle**Franco Professor of the Humanities
Assistant Professor of Musicology

Davidson College

Tuesday, March 28th, 2023

12:45 PM

103 Music Practice Building

Free and Open to the Public

**Lecture Abstract**

How do people, portrayed as femmes fatales, assert agency within structures (narrative, musical, Page 2 of 2 social, and otherwise) that are hellbent on their erasure and normalization. The prior two chapters developed a theoretical framework that shows how the materiality of the femme fatale seeks and asserts agency. I have also discussed the rhetorical deployment or manifestation of a vocalic strategic essentialism — one that deconstructs presence/absence, inside/outside. If the preceding two chapters outline strategies of survival employed by the characters within operas, this chapter will demonstrate the ways that those characters become avatars for the lived experiences of “real” persons. I will address the effects and affects of adopting the avatar of the femme fatale as a mode of social and political critique. My present argument, and indeed the arguments in this project broadly, stem from a foundation of corporeal queer theory—the notion that bodily materiality and the way one uses one’s body can be a bridge toward freedom.

Bio

Dr. Marcus R. Pyle is currently the distinguished inaugural Franco Professor of the Humanities and Assistant Professor of Musicology at Davidson College. He holds degrees from Juilliard, Royal Academy of Music, Dartmouth, and NYU. He is also the Artistic Director of the Davidson Concert Series, sponsored by WDAV, and President of the American Musicological Society, Southeast. Prior to Davidson he held positions at Tufts University and MIT. His research focuses on depictions of femmes fatales in opera, Black female subjectivity, voice studies, French modernism, the fictionality of characters, Nina Simone, and music and espionage. His recent scholarship has been published in *19th-Century Music* and in the *Journal of Popular Music Studies*. In support of his research and outreach, he was a recipient of the NYU Dean’s Dissertation Fellowship award and the Howard Mayer Brown Fellowship from the American Musicological Society. He is guest editor of *Opera Quarterly*, serves on the editorial board of *Musicology Now*, and is editor for Oxford’s *Grove Dictionary of Music* for topics 1900-present. He is also an Opera Scholar for the Aspen Music Festival and founder of ChamberWorks Music Institute.

Dr. Pyle will also guest teach the following course on Monday, March 27th:

History of Opera

10:20–11:10 AM

245 Music Building

If you are interested in observing, please contact Dr. Marcie Ray at raym@msu.edu