

**November 20, 2017 - For Immediate Release**

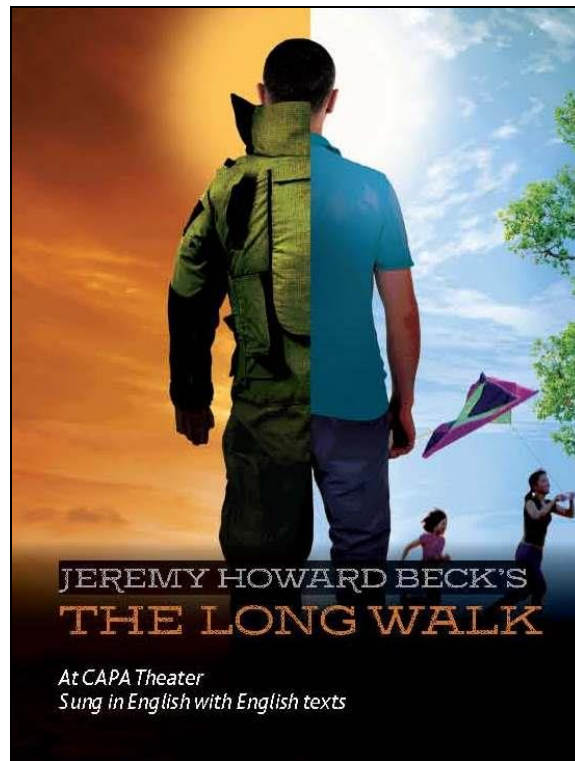
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**Pittsburgh Opera presents The Long Walk**

*A memoir of war and its aftermath*

<b>What:</b>	<b>The Long Walk</b>
<b>Where:</b>	Pittsburgh CAPA School Theater, Downtown Pittsburgh
<b>When:</b>	Saturday, January 20, 2018 - 8:00 PM Tuesday, January 23, 2018 - 7:00 PM Friday, January 26, 2018 - 7:30 PM Sunday, January 28, 2018 - 2:00 PM
<b>Run Time:</b>	2 hours and 30 minutes, including one intermission
<b>Language:</b>	Sung in English with English texts projected above the stage
<b>Tickets:</b>	Single tickets start at \$50 for all performances. Group Discounts available. Call 412-456-6666 for more information or visit <a href="http://pittsburghopera.org/tickets">pittsburghopera.org/tickets</a> .
<b>Media Events</b>	<i>Please contact <a href="mailto:ccox@pittsburghopera.org">ccox@pittsburghopera.org</a> for reservations</i>  Photo Call (1/8/2018, 12:30 PM) – location TBA  Full Dress Rehearsal (1/18, 6:30 – 9:30 PM) – Pgh. CAPA School Theater
<b>Related Events</b>  <i>See pages 6-9 of this release.</i>	Film Series screening: <i>The Hurt Locker</i> (1/4/2018)  Mt. Lebanon Library event (1/5)  January Brown Bag concert (1/6)  Opera Up Close (1/11) at Soldiers & Sailors Museum & Memorial  WQED Preview (1/13 & 1/19)

<b>Related Events (continued)</b>	Meet the Creators (1/20)
	Brian Castner book signing (1/21)
	Pre-opera talks (1/23, 1/26, 1/28)
	Meet the Artists (1/23)
	Audio Commentary (1/23)



## Pittsburgh, PA...

Pittsburgh Opera brings a gripping, contemporary American opera to the CAPA School Theater in [Jeremy Howard Beck's The Long Walk](#). With a libretto by [Stephanie Fleischmann](#), **The Long Walk** is based on the book **The Long Walk: A Story of War and the Life that Follows** by [Brian Castner](#).

The opera is a deeply personal exploration of a soldier's return from Iraq where he served as an officer in an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit and his battle with what he calls "the Crazy" as he tries to reintegrate into his family life.

'The long walk' is the term for when a bomb disposal expert puts on their bomb suit and walks, alone, towards an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) which they must disarm. As Castner explains [in an interview](#), "It is an extremely lonely experience; no one can help you." However, 'the long walk' also refers to the struggle to re-integrate back into one's own

life upon returning to the United States, a struggle which Castner shares with brutal honesty.

For additional background, [view American Lyric Theater's YouTube video](#) featuring interviews with Beck, Fleischmann, and Castner.

Commissioned by [American Lyric Theater](#) in 2012, the opera was developed under the auspices of the Composer Librettist Development Program, and premiered at [Opera Saratoga](#) in 2015. The [Times Union](#) called it “a daring operatic depiction of war’s aftermath”; [another reviewer](#) said it “hits on all that makes us human.”

Pittsburgh Opera is proud to be the first performing arts organization to bring **The Long Walk** to Pittsburgh. Tickets are [available online](#).

*Commission Underwriting and Developmental Support for **The Long Walk** has been provided by OPERA America/The Opera Fund, The MAP Fund, The New York State Council on the Arts, and The ASCAP Foundation. Commissioned by American Lyric Theater, Lawrence Edelson, Producing Artistic Director. World Premiere: Opera Saratoga, July 10, 2015.*

## Interesting facts about **The Long Walk**

1. This marks only the third set of performances of the opera **The Long Walk**. Besides its world premiere in Saratoga, New York in 2015, Opera Utah performed it in Salt Lake City in March and April, 2017.
2. [Ben Taylor](#), the Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist who will be singing the role of Brian Castner, is used to exercising his vocal cords. But for this role, his preparations have also included running multiple miles a day, because scenes in the opera require him to sing while jogging.
3. For the ninth year in a row, Pittsburgh Opera is proud to partner with [Carnegie Mellon University's School of Drama](#) to create custom sets for these performances.

## The story, in brief

### Act I

A figure runs along the Niagara River in Buffalo, New York. It is Brian Castner, a former Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Captain in the U.S. Air Force. As he runs, he is haunted by memories of Iraq. Brian’s wife, Jessie, recalls her grandmother’s prophecy: even if her husband returns from combat, the war will no doubt kill him at home.

At dinner with his family, Brian is besieged by another memory of Iraq, imagining that soldiers are invading the Castner family kitchen. Brian's son Martin asks his father to read him a bedtime story. Later that night, Brian wakes in terror, and Jessie urges him to get help.

The next morning, Brian struggles to get the kids ready for school. Longing to escape the challenges of the everyday, Brian flashes back to his EOD training prior to his service in Iraq, and the brotherhood he found there, "the Brotherhood of the Crab."

That afternoon, at their son's seventh birthday party, Jessie urges Brian to try to be present for the sake of the children. Brian struggles to connect with what's happening all around him, and to remember minute details of his family's past, and fails. He retreats to the garage, where he attempts to arm the family minivan in order to keep his boys safe on their way to school. His son Martin finds him there. Brian takes off, attempting to outrun "the Crazy," but is assaulted by a barrage of memories of Iraq, culminating in the moment he came close to shooting a cluster of keening Iraqi women.

When the memories fade away, he finds himself back at home, staring into the mirror. He mounts the stairs and then sits, rifle in hands, guarding his sleeping boys.

## **Act II**

Jessie appeals to Brian to seek help, giving him an ultimatum of sorts. Brian descends into another horrific memory of Iraq, one of which persuaded him to go home. Brian visits a shrink at the VA, who gives him a diagnosis.

Later, at the funeral of a fallen EOD man, Jessie mourns the loss of the man she married. Back at home, the boys sing about their father. The Shrink asks Brian: Why is the war still in your house? At a yoga class for veterans, Brian, faced with yet another Iraq memory, manages to remain in the present.

Some time later, Jessie and the boys are playing before Brian's return from a trip. He panics at the airport and phones Jessie, who talks him down. Brian asks her to remind him of details of the family life he's forgotten. They connect over their shared past. The Shrink tells Brian he's making progress.

Brian accompanies his son to the Mite Hockey championship. Seeing his son suiting up, he breaks down, flashing back to the memory of one of his "brothers" suiting up to take the Long Walk. He then has another flashback: the men in their Humvee returning from a mission before dawn. A pigeon lands on the Humvee. Back in Buffalo, Brian runs along the Niagara River, through memories of war and present moments of peace, past his EOD brothers, towards his wife and children, and on, into the future.

- *Written by [Utah Opera](#)*

For more information, plus videos, musical samples, and cast biographies, visit [pittsburghopera.org/LongWalk](http://pittsburghopera.org/LongWalk).

## Tickets and Group Discounts

- Tickets to all performances of **The Long Walk** start at \$50
- All performances are at the Pittsburgh CAPA Theater, 111 9th St, in downtown Pittsburgh
- To purchase tickets, call 412-456-6666, visit the Theatre Square Box Office, or buy online at <https://opera.culturaldistrict.org/production/51808/the-long-walk>
- Group discounts are available. For discounted group tickets (6 or more), contact Regina Connolly at 412-281-0912, x 213

## Sponsors

- [PNC](#) is the 2017-18 Pittsburgh Opera Season Sponsor
- [WQED-FM](#) is Pittsburgh Opera's Media Sponsor
- Tuesday performance sponsor: [Ambridge Regional Distribution and Manufacturing Center](#)
- These performances are supported by the [Alice M. Ditson Fund](#) of Columbia University

## Cast and Artistic Team

Brian	<a href="#">Benjamin Taylor</a> *
Jessie	<a href="#">Leah de Gruyl</a> *
Castleman	<a href="#">Martin Bakari</a>
Ricky	<a href="#">Eric Ferring</a> *
Aunt Sarah/Shrink/Iraqi	<a href="#">Shannon Jennings</a> *
Yogini/Iraqi	<a href="#">Ashley Fabian</a> *
Perneatha	Adrianna Cleveland <sup>+</sup>
Jeff	<a href="#">Thomas Shivone</a>
Virgil	Simon Nigam <sup>+</sup>
Martin	Harrison Salvi <sup>+</sup>
Samuel	River Beckas <sup>+</sup>
Conductor	<a href="#">Glenn Lewis</a>
Stage Director	<a href="#">Frances Rabalais</a> *
Set Designer	Kathryn Fetrow
Lighting Designer	Tlàloc Lopez-Watermann
Wig Master	Nicole Pagano
Stage Manager	Cindy Knight
Asst Lighting Designer/Master Electrician	Todd Nonn
Costume Coordinator	Jason Bray

\* Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist

+ Pittsburgh Opera debut

## Related Events for The Long Walk

### Film Series screening: **The Hurt Locker**

Thursday, January 4, 2018 7:00 PM

Location: Melwood Screening Room, Pittsburgh Filmmakers , 477 Melwood Avenue

The Pittsburgh Opera Film Series is in partnership with Pittsburgh Filmmakers. Pittsburgh Opera subscribers receive priority access to our popular Film Series events, which are open to the public and held on selected dates during the season. Pittsburgh Opera and Pittsburgh Filmmakers collaborate to choose films that pair with the current season's operas.

Our film pairing for **The Long Walk** is **The Hurt Locker**. Staff Sgt. William James (Jeremy Renner), Sgt. J.T. Sanborn (Anthony Mackie) and Specialist Owen Eldridge (Brian Geraghty) are members of a bomb-disposal unit in Baghdad. As their tour of duty enters its final weeks, the men face a set of increasingly hazardous situations, any of which could end their lives in an explosive instant.

The event is free but space is limited. RSVP by Wednesday, January 3rd at 4:00 PM to Sue Solito, 412-281-0912. See <http://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/film-series-the-hurt-locker> for details.

### **Mt. Lebanon Library event**

Friday, January 5, 2018 7:00 - 8:00 PM

Location: Mt. Lebanon Public Library, 16 Castle Shannon Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15228

You're invited to a special evening celebrating the upcoming Pittsburgh premiere of **The Long Walk**.

Join us at the [Mt. Lebanon Public Library](#) for a musical preview and lively discussion about the opera's story and what it takes to bring it to life on stage. Speakers will include stage director Frances Rabalais, Pittsburgh Opera Director of Administration & Artistic Operations Bill Powers, and representatives from Pittsburgh Opera's cast and music staff.

The event is free and open to the public. Additional information to follow. See <http://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/the-long-walk-mt.-lebanon-library-event> for details.

## January Brown Bag concert

Saturday, January 6, Noon - 1:00 PM

George R. White Opera Studio, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, [2425 Liberty Avenue](#)

Pittsburgh Opera's free January Brown Bag concert is our first of 2018. The program includes some of our Resident Artists' favorite selections. The concert is free and open to everyone. Bring a friend and bring a lunch! Meet the Resident Artists afterward at an informal reception.

Doors open at 11:30 AM. Handicapped parking is available by reservation. For more information: 412-281-0912 or <http://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/january-brown-bag-concert2>

## Opera Up Close: The Long Walk

Thursday, January 11, 2018 7:00 - 8:00 PM

Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum, 4141 Fifth Avenue

You're invited to a special evening celebrating the upcoming Pittsburgh premiere of **The Long Walk**. Join us at [Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum](#) for a musical preview, lively discussion about the opera's story and music, and insights from an actual Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) veteran. Speakers will include:

- [Jeremy Howard Beck](#), composer of **The Long Walk**
- [Frances Rabalais](#), stage director of **The Long Walk**
- [Christopher Hahn](#), General Director of Pittsburgh Opera
- One or more cast members
- [Robert Sehnert](#), Board member of the [EOD Warrior Foundation](#), which serves the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) community by providing financial assistance and support to active-duty and veteran wounded, injured or ill EOD warriors, families of our wounded and fallen EOD warriors, and by maintaining the EOD Memorial

The event is free and open to the public. Additional information to follow.

For more information visit <http://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/opera-up-close-the-long-walk>

## The Long Walk - Previews on WQED-FM 89.3 and WQED.ORG

Saturday, January 13, 12:30 PM - 1:00 PM and

Friday, January 19, 7:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Hosted by WQED, and broadcast over the airwaves on WQED-FM 89.3 as well as the WQED website, **The Long Walk Preview** gives listeners an engaging introduction to the singers, music, and story of the opera. For more information:

<http://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/wqed-preview-the-long-walk>



## **Meet the Creators**

Saturday, January 20, 2018 7:00 PM

Location: Pittsburgh CAPA School Theater

Join us on opening night for an unforgettable pre-show event when you can meet the creators of **The Long Walk**.

Pittsburgh Opera is pleased to host composer [Jeremy Howard Beck](#), librettist [Stephanie Fleischmann](#), and [Brian Castner](#), the author of the book [The Long Walk: A Story of War and the Life that Follows](#), upon which the opera is based.

Pittsburgh Opera General Director Christopher Hahn will emcee a lively and engaging 30-minute talk with this power trio starting at 7:00 PM. Free to all Saturday ticketholders, no reservations necessary.

## **Brian Castner book signing**

Sunday, January 21, 2018 2:00PM

Location: Classic Lines bookstore, 5825 Forbes Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

[Brian Castner](#), the author of the book [The Long Walk: A Story of War and the Life that Follows](#), will make a special in-store appearance at Classic Lines bookstore in Squirrel Hill. The autobiographical book, which was the inspiration for the opera [The Long Walk](#), tells of Castner's return from Iraq, where he served as an officer in an Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit, and his battle with what he calls "the Crazy" as he tries to reintegrate into his family life.

Castner will read from his book, answer questions, and sign copies.

This event is free. No reservations necessary.

## **Pre-opera Talks for The Long Walk**

One hour prior to the Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday performances

Pittsburgh CAPA School Black Box Theater

Ticketholders are invited to attend a free Pre-Opera Talk one hour before the Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday performances' curtain in the Black Box Theater of the Pittsburgh CAPA School Theater. Learn about the composer, the story, and other interesting information about the opera!

Pre-Opera Talks are free to all ticketholders at these performances.



**Audio Description: The Long Walk**

Tuesday, January 23, 7:00 PM

Pittsburgh CAPA Theater

Ticketholders with visual impairments are invited to use Pittsburgh Opera's Audio Description service at our Tuesday performances. Trained volunteers describe the scenery, costumes, and stage action. The listeners hear these descriptions via assistive listening devices. Those wishing to use Audio Description should reserve seats to the Tuesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> performance by contacting Regina Connolly at 412-281-0912, ext. 213 or [groups@pittsburghopera.org](mailto:groups@pittsburghopera.org). Braille and large-print programs are also available.

**Meet the Artists of The Long Walk**

Tuesday, January 23

Immediately following the performance, in the Black Box Theater

Ticketholders for the Tuesday, January 23 performance of **The Long Walk** are invited to gather in the CAPA Black Box Theater immediately following the performance when [General Director Christopher Hahn](#) interviews the stars of the opera. This event is free to all Tuesday performance ticketholders.

***COMING UP NEXT for Pittsburgh Opera:***

**The world premiere of Douglas J. Cuomo's [Ashes & Snow](#), February 17 – 25, 2018**

Pittsburgh Opera celebrates its 79th season in 2017-18. Established by five intrepid women in 1939, Pittsburgh Opera is viewed as one of the most vibrant opera organizations in the U.S., with a rich artistic tradition, outstanding educational programs, an acclaimed artist training program, and a progressive outlook toward the future. Its green initiative culminated in LEED® Silver certification for its Strip District headquarters, and its capacity as a true community partner has increased significantly under General Director Christopher Hahn's leadership.

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