

For Immediate Release

RICKY IAN GORDON'S "SEEING THROUGH: A CHRONICLE OF SEX, DRUGS, AND OPERA" ARRIVES IN PAPERBACK JULY 22, 2025

***An unflinchingly honest and exhilarating memoir from
one of America's leading opera composers***



"The noted composer and doyen of modern opera writes, brilliantly, of the many obstacles life has thrown in his path... A superb memoir that reveals the pleasures—but far more, the pains—of the creative life." — *Kirkus Reviews*

NEW YORK, NY (JUNE 23, 2025) – On the heels of the premiere of his newest opera, *This House*, at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, renowned composer Ricky Ian Gordon's candid and compelling memoir "Seeing Through: A Chronicle of Sex, Drugs, and Opera" will be released in paperback from Picador on July 22, 2025. The memoir has garnered widespread critical praise since its hardcover publication by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in July 2024. *The New York Times* described it as "mesmerizing" and as "unfiltered as a Pall Mall."

"Seeing Through" is a wrenching, uproarious, and unflinchingly honest memoir that chronicles the life of one of today's most celebrated opera composers. Gordon writes with remarkable candor about his tumultuous journey from a chaotic childhood on Long Island through his rise as a leading voice in contemporary American opera and musical theater.

The memoir captures Gordon's early experiences with drugs, unsettling sexual encounters, his irrevocable love affair with music, and his struggles with addiction and abuse. Most poignantly, it offers a stark meditation on living through the devastation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in New York, including the heartbreaking loss of his beloved partner Jeffrey.

Gordon draws back the curtain on his artistic collaborations and creative process, detailing the creation of his celebrated compositions, including *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Intimate*

Apparel, Orpheus and Euridice, among many others. The book stands as a testament to artmaking as a form of survival and an exhilarating celebration of opera itself—radical, expectation-defying, and pulsing with emotion and possibility.

Booklist wrote: "This is a big book, both literally and figuratively, full of big emotions and bigger tragedies, shameful secrets and bodily obsessions as well as the thrill of creativity, the sadness of ordinary life, and all the other moments in-between." While *OperaWire* said: "Gordon's book isn't just a memoir; it's a guide. It offers insights and encouragement to anyone involved in creative work, showing that the struggles behind the scenes are often as significant as the final product, whether that product is a human (Gordon) or made for the opera stage. Gordon wrote a powerful book full of intricate details about his life, with stories that will break your heart and lift your spirits."

Gordon's latest opera, *This House*, with a libretto by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage—with whom he collaborated on his opera *Intimate Apparel*—and her daughter Ruby Aiyo Gerber, premiered earlier this summer and has also garnered critical acclaim. The opera follows the Walker family in their multi-generational Harlem brownstone, which the family has lived in since the 1920s, and explores the ghostly voices, painful memories, and hidden truths the house holds. Gordon's music reflects the evolving time periods of the Walkers, with the style shifting to mirror the characters and eras. Blending classical, musical theater, jazz, and ragtime, the *Associated Press* noted: "Ricky Ian Gordon's lush score brings to vivid life a libretto by Lynn Nottage and her daughter Ruby Aiyo Gerber, weaving impacts of the Civil War, Great Migration, Black Power movement, AIDS crisis, and gentrification."

"‘This House’ is a triumph at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. The company's 45th world premiere is a masterpiece. It has a dazzling score by Ricky Ian Gordon and a spellbinding libretto by Lynn Nottage and Ruby Aiyo Gerber, Nottage's daughter," wrote the Higher Education Channel. The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* also praised Gordon's work, writing: "Wrapping the Walkers' legacy in music is composer Ricky Ian Gordon... his exceptional score adds gravitas to the tragic circumstances unfolding under the roof of a Harlem brownstone." *This House* runs through [Sunday, June 29](#), at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

ABOUT RICKY IAN GORDON

Ricky Ian Gordon is a New York-based composer and writer whose works have been regarded as “caviar for a world gorging on pizza” (*The New York Times*) and have been performed at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and all over the USA and Europe. As a leading writer of vocal music that spans art song, opera, and musical theater. Gordon's songs have been performed and recorded by such renowned singers as Renée Fleming, Dawn Upshaw, Nathan Gunn, Nicole Cabell, the late Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, and Frederica Von Stade.

His operas include *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* (New York City Opera/Yiddish Folksbiene, lib. Michael Korie); *Intimate Apparel* (Metropolitan Opera/Lincoln Center Theater, lib. Lynn Nottage); *Ellen West* (Beth Morrison Projects, Opera Saratoga, lib. Frank Bidart); *The House Without a Christmas Tree* (Houston Grand Opera), *27* (Opera Theatre of St Louis, lib. Royce Vavrek); *Morning Star* (Cincinnati Opera, lib. William Hoffman); *A Coffin in Egypt* (Houston Grand Opera, lib. Leonard Foglia); *Rappahannock County* (Virginia Opera, lib. Mark Campbell); *Green Sneakers* (Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival and Lincoln Center, lib. Ricky Ian Gordon); *The Grapes of Wrath* (Minnesota Opera, lib. Michael Korie); *The Tibetan Book of The Dead* (Houston Grand Opera, lib. Jean Claude Van Itallie); and *Orpheus and Euridice* (Lincoln Center, lib. Ricky Ian Gordon, Obie Award). Musicals include *Sycamore Trees* (Signature Theatre, playwright Nina Mankin, Helen Hayes Award); *My Life with Albertine* (Playwrights Horizons, playwright Richard Nelson, AT&T Award, Gilman and Gonzalez-Falla Music Theater Foundation Award); and *Dream True* (Vineyard Theatre, playwright Tina Landau, Richard Rodgers Award).

As a teacher, Gordon has taught both master classes and composition classes in colleges and universities throughout the country, including Yale, NYU, Northwestern, Juilliard, Manhattan School of Music, and more. His honors include an Obie Award, the Stephen Sondheim Award, the 2003 Alumni Merit Award for exceptional achievement and leadership from Carnegie Mellon University, a Shen Family Foundation Award, the Gilman and Gonzalez-Falla Theater Foundation Award, the Constance Klinsky Award, and many awards from ASCAP.

Gordon's memoir, "Seeing Through: A Chronicle of Sex, Drugs and Opera" has just been and is available as an audiobook as well. "[A] mesmerizing new memoir...As unfiltered as a Pall Mall...I am glad to have so thoroughly enjoyed "Seeing Through" Alexandra Jacobs, *The New York Times*.

Publication Details

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