

ELENA RUEHR TOUSSAINT BEFORE THE SPIRITS
Madison Smartt Bell and Elizabeth Spires, libretto
Stephen Salters, baritone

OPERA UNLIMITED
GIL ROSE, CONDUCTOR

Elena Ruehr's chamber opera *Toussaint Before the Spirits* received its premiere by Opera Unlimited in Boston in 2003. The libretto, by Madison Smartt Bell and Elizabeth Spires, is based on sections of Bell's novels *All Souls' Rising* and *Master of the Crossroads*. Toussaint L'Ouverture led the people of Haiti in a successful revolt against the French, making it the first free black republic in the New World. Toussaint was captured by the French, and the opera examines the final hours before his death in a French prison in 1803. He summons the spirits of Vaudun, and debates the decisions that have led him to this place with the spirit of his godson, Moyse, who believes that Toussaint's willingness to deal the French at various points in his career was a betrayal of the revolution.



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"Baritone Stephen Salters is powerful vocal and dramatic presence as Toussaint, and he appropriately dominates the opera. The remaining soloists, tenors Ramone Diggs and William Hite and soprano Alison Buchanan sing with dramatic energy and pure, strong tone. Gil Rose conducts the chamber orchestra in a vigorous and committed performance."