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## Our American Cousin



Leading man Alan Schneider, as the actor Harry Hawk.

[\*Our American Cousin\*](#) tells the story of the assassination of President Lincoln from the point of view of the actors presenting the comedy of the same name at Ford's Theater. The opera is the collaborative invention of composer Eric Sawyer and librettist John Shoptaw, whose libretto is freely imagined within the framework of the documented historical event and adapted plot of the original Broadway comedy. Its three acts comprise the backstage events prior to the play, the play itself, and the rupture of the stage drama by the assassination and its immediate aftermath. Lead roles fall to Laura Keene, manager and star actress of the theater company, and Harry Hawk, the American cousin of the play.

The program in Hertz Hall will give a broad overview of the opera, representing portions of the backstage intrigue, the play's comic high jinks, and the chaos and accusations following the assassination. The performance will include a chorus of theater audience - made up of veterans, war widows, freed slaves, nurses, businessmen - as well as the asides and commentary of Abraham and Mary Lincoln as they watch the play, and the maneuverings of the assassin John Wilkes Booth as he prepares to usurp the onstage drama with his own theatrics.



Janna Baty, as Laura Keene, and Drew Poling, as actor Ned Emerson.

Four stellar young vocalists from the recent Massachusetts concert production of the work will be on hand - Janna Baty, Alan Schneider, Angela Gooch, and Drew Poling - covering eight roles among them. Thomas Busse will lead the chorus of theatergoers, and the scenes will be accompanied on piano by the composer.

This concert is free and open to the public. It will begin at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 23, 2007, in Hertz Hall.

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