

Dizzy Gillespie – Charlie Parker’s Yardbird

(Indianapolis Opera, 2025; Seattle Opera, 2020)

“Each singer [gave] stellar vocal and dramatic performances.” – **Tom Alvarez**,
TomAlvarez.studio (Indianapolis Opera)

“The cast, which included a number of Seattle Opera debuts, was consistently strong, both vocally and dramatically. All of the leading roles require considerable athleticism, and each of these outstanding singers delivered impressively... Baritone Jorell Williams played the part of Parker’s best friend Dizzy Gillespie, with whom Parker created bebop. The ‘Bebop-Freedom’ duet, ‘You are the beep, I am the bop’, in which the two envision the as-yet uncreated bebop sound, was a highlight of the evening, its ‘message to the people’ one that remains relevant. ‘Freedom!’ Williams performed with convincing dramatic comedic skill and great vocal strength; one would have liked to hear more of his mellifluous voice.” – **Bachtrack (Seattle Opera)**

“As Parker’s contemporary and friend Dizzy Gillespie, Jorell Williams steals the show with his easy charm and stunning vocals that cut through the music that often overpowers the voices of other cast members. During an overpopulated and conflict-burdened funeral scene that otherwise leaves one unmoved, Williams’ ‘Farewell’ is beautifully delivered and draws one back into the gravity of the scene.” – **The Seattle Times**

“‘Bebop’s Gonna Change the World,’ for example, sung with Gillespie (played with charming confidence by Jorell Williams), is positively breezy” – **Northwest Music Scene**

“The vocal performances were all excellent...Baritone Jorell Williams did a great job as Parker’s friend and collaborator Dizzy Gillespie; the pair’s duet ‘Message to the People’ is a delightful tribute to bebop and Black power.” – **Seattle Gay News**

“Jorell Williams plays trumpet legend Dizzy Gillespie so masterfully it seems the part that was written for him. The energy Williams brings on stage is electric. The chemistry between Stewart and Williams is magnetic and elevates Stewart’s already apt performance. Their duet ‘Bebop’s Gonna Change the World’ came closest to audibly honoring Charlie Parker’s contribution to the genre. Jorell brought the cool, and the music followed him. This debut performance at the Seattle Opera is no doubt the first of *many*.” – **Culture Catch**

“The Seattle cast copes well with the material provided.”
– **Opera Today**