

Dr. Josiah Blackwell – 10 Days in a Madhouse

(Tapestry Opera/Canadian Opera Company/Luminato Festival, 2026)

"As Blackwell, Williams is appropriately sinister, a smooth-talking con man with access to unthinkable power over the women in his care. He's so good that on opening night, it was almost difficult to applaud the gifted singer – he is utterly convincing in the role, his baritone voice just the right shade of menacing as he forces Bly to waltz with him. 'To soothe her nerves' – or so he says." – **The Globe and Mail**

"Baritone Jorell Williams was the epitome of the wolf in sheep's clothing in his portrayal of a saccharinely sinister psychiatrist. He judiciously and deftly used straight-toned, quiet pitches in contrast to a rich, hearty vibrato to bring an extremely eerie quality to this role, crafting the kind of antagonist that we love to hate." – **Broadway World Toronto**

"Williams' portrayal of Dr. Blackwell felt intentionally clinical, embodying the emotional distance and institutional authority that the opera seeks to critique." – **Ludwig Van Toronto**

"Dr. Josiah Blackwell (Jorell Williams—very fine) is imposing, calm and convinced that every woman there is mad and needs to be confined. No excuse from a patient softens him from his rigid assessment. When he encounters Nellie, there is a hint of sexual innuendo when he comments that she is young and pretty—another thing that makes one heartsick for the women trapped in that place for no reason." – **The Slotkin Letter**

"The relationship between Mireille Asselin's Nellie and Jorell Williams's Dr Blackwell is the backbone of the drama and it's quite subtle. Blackwell isn't evil but he's pretty much devoid of imagination and repeats words and actions over and over despite Nellie's best efforts. To him, she is female and mad. Nothing she says or does can penetrate his sense of omnipotence, to her increasing frustration...Williams was convincing and coped very well with a fairly high baritone role." – **Bachtrack**

"Williams as Blackwell is disturbing in his understated physical performance that cannot help but betray a lust for the women under his care. This unsettling physical presence is made even more so when he shifts from a deep, resonant baritone to a piercing falsetto." – **Next Magazine**

"Baritone Jorell Williams as Dr. Blackwell, the only male voice in the cast, offered a nice contrast and sang with cool detachment totally suited to his character." – **Opera Canada**

"As Doctor Josiah Blackwell, Jorell Williams was astonishing. Playing his part of a male doctor who has little-to-no understanding of the female psyche with a cool, calm, collected confidence of every mediocre man who's tried to tell a woman how to do her job. Given, in my opinion, the hardest vocal lines in the show, we get to hear every extent of Williams's massive range. Every note well placed, every consonant crisp, and every intention clear. I don't know if we're supposed to hate the man, or just be supremely frustrated by him, but I was definitely a pleasing mixture of both." – **Schmopera**

"Baritone Jorell Williams sang Dr. Blackwell, stage manners sly and understated, his firm command of parlando, unwavering. In a performance rich in demonstrable authority flashed with smoldering menace, the gifted American singer-actor charmed and alarmed in near equal measure, his rich rolling stylings vibrant and mellow. And dramatically unnerving." – **Opera To Go**

"The firm-voiced baritone Jorell Williams is resolute in his performance as the opera's chief antagonist, Dr. Josiah Blackwell, whose motivations seem slightly sinister." – **Go Head Semi**