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WTJX to Air Opera “Champion”, the Story of Boxer and St. Thomas Native Emile Griffith

The Life of Emile Griffith on Screen

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The image captures a poignant scene from the opera "Champion," showcasing the intensity and drama of the production. By. KAREN ALMOND/MET OPERA

WTJX-TV Channel 12 is set to present the opera “Champion”, an evocative narrative penned by six-time Grammy Award-winning composer Terence Blanchard, which premiered at the Met earlier this year. The broadcast will bring the poignant tale of Emile Griffith, a St. Thomas native and boxer, into the homes of viewers this Sunday.

“Champion” delves into the complexities of Griffith’s life, from his beginnings as a hatmaker to rising through the ranks to become a world boxing champion. The opera addresses the pivotal and

tragic event where Griffith, a closeted bisexual, fatally injured his homophobic opponent in a match, a moment that is etched in the annals of sports history.

The production features bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green as the younger Griffith, navigating the world of prizefighting and personal struggle, while bass-baritone Eric Owens delivers a haunting performance as the older Griffith, tormented by memories and specters from his past. The cast also includes soprano Latonia Moore as Emelda Griffith, the estranged mother, and mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe as bar owner Kathy Hagan.

Under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the opera showcases Blanchard's second Met premiere and sees the collaborative reunion of director James Robinson and choreographer Camille A. Brown.

"Champion" is scheduled to premiere on WTJX-TV, Channel 12, on Sunday, November 5 at 2:30 p.m. Viewers in the U.S. Virgin Islands can access the broadcast through various platforms, including Viya Cable, the Dish Network, and traditional antennas. Furthermore, the opera will be available on the free WTJX app for Apple and Android devices, and on the PBS Video app, which supports streaming on multiple devices including Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast, and VIZIO.

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