

**Sylvan continued from page twenty-seven**

have also been widely praised.

The baritone has worked with extensively with orchestras and chamber ensembles from around the world. Among them have been the London Sinfonietta, the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Boston Symphony, Japan's

NHK, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Germany's NDR, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Ensemble Sequentia, and Boston's Emmanuel Music.

But the graduate of the Manhattan School of Music is also known for his commit-

ment to vocal recital. With long-time collaborative pianist David Breitman, Sylvan has given close to 200 such intimate performances in cities such as New York, London, San Francisco, Washington, and Boston. His debut recital album, *Beloved That Pilgrimage* – a program of America music by Barber, Copland and Chanler – was nominated for a Grammy for

Best Classical Vocal Performance.

Sylvan's schedule in 2000 is a busy one. In January, he premiered *World Wheel* with the Boston Cantata Singers. In February, he will sing his first *Beethoven 9th* with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra under Bruno Weil, when he will also premiere the Martín song cycle. He makes the New York debut of

the composition at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall on May 5.

*Sanford Sylvan performs at the Middlebury College Center for the Arts in Middlebury on March 2, and at the UVM Recital Hall in Burlington on Saturday, March 4. The Burlington performance is a benefit for Vermont CARES. ▼*

**Lincoln continued from page nineteen**

Washington insiders knew exactly what kind of relationship Old Buck had with "Nancy" King. Of course, who wants to embrace the weak, ineffectual Buchanan as our first gay Chief Executive? Most historians would like to forget he was Chief Executive at all.

**What of it?**

Kramer's motives are understandable. In his speech (as excerpted in a later *Advocate* commentary), he points out that it could be proven that Lincoln was gay; this "essential truth" could "radically alter how gay people are accepted in this country..."

But his view of history, of the role of the historian, is

flawed. In an article in the April issue of *Salon*, he is quoted as saying, "So much of the history that is shoveled into the world is bullshit – we really have to invent our own."

He's right: most of the history shoveled into the world right now is bullshit – because people invent their own. With postmodern rhetoric preaching the impossibility of ever knowing the past with any kind of certainty, history has become an adjunct of fiction. This invites historians and writers to impose themselves on their narrative – to lead the evidence rather than allow themselves to be led by it.

There's nothing wrong with posing a provocative question, provided you answer it honestly... even if it isn't the answer you would prefer. To distort a person's life story to make a political point is disrespectful to the subject, and ultimately damaging to the very cause you hold dear. A history based on lies is worse than no history at all.

Civil War historiography is

a prime example of this. The *Gone With the Wind*, moonlight-and-magnolias vision of the plantation South that dominated the regional take on history from 1865 to the 1960s was one of the underpinnings of segregation.

After the gains of the civil rights movement, there was a cabal of African-American historians distorting history the other way, to build a cultural history they could be proud of. It's human and understandable, but it isn't truth.

Kramer's argument misses the point. True acceptance will come not because the gay community can suddenly use Lincoln as a poster-boy.

Acceptance will come only when all Americans live by the principles he set: with malice towards none, with charity for all. ▼

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