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NYU Tisch, the Brooklyn Museum, and American Opera Projects to present 11 Mini-Operas based on Judy Chicago's iconic feminist artwork *The Dinner Party*

The Dinner Party Operas

Short operas inspired by Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*

A collaboration between NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, American Opera Projects, and the Brooklyn Museum

Wednesday, May 23 | 7:30 PM - Program A

GMTWP Black Box Theatre, NYU Tisch

715 Broadway, 2nd Floor, NY, NY 10003

Sunday, May 27 | 2:00 PM - Program B

Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Auditorium at the Brooklyn Museum

200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11238

February 28, 2017

NEW YORK, NY - *The Dinner Party Operas*, a showcase of eleven original mini-operas inspired by Judy Chicago's iconic feminist installation *The Dinner Party*, a multi-media work housed in the Brooklyn Museum, will be presented this May in New York City by the NYU Tisch Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program (GMTWP), the Brooklyn Museum, the NYU Tisch Department of Design for Stage & Film and American Opera Projects (AOP). Six of the operas will be performed on Wednesday, May 23 at 7:30 p.m. at NYU Tisch's GMTWP Black Box Theatre, located in Manhattan at 715 Broadway, between Washington and Waverly places, on the second floor. The remaining five operas will be performed on Sunday, May 27 at 2:00 p.m. at the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Auditorium at the Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11238. Each under 15-minutes long, the operas were written and composed by students in the NYU Tisch GMTWP Opera Lab and will be performed by professional opera singers with piano accompaniment. *The Dinner Party Operas* is free with advance registration (May 23) or museum admission (May 27) and open to the public. To reserve tickets for the May 23 performance at NYU, email tisch.ipa@nyu.edu. Complete info at www.aopopera.org.

The Dinner Party Operas is the most recent production of Tisch GMTWP's Opera Lab program, through which students write, compose, develop, and design original operas performed by professional opera singers. Opera Lab was started in 2015 by GMTWP professor **Randall Eng** with Design Dept. professor **Sam Helfrich**, and is open to both students and alumni. In previous years, the program's mini-operas

were created on the subjects of Brooklyn's historic Fort Greene Park and New York City's International House, which houses and supports international students and entrepreneurs from around the world.

The Dinner Party, an important icon of 1970s feminist art and a milestone in twentieth-century art, is presented as the centerpiece around which the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art is organized. The Dinner Party comprises a massive ceremonial banquet, arranged on a triangular table with a total of thirty-nine place settings, each commemorating an important woman from history. The settings consist of embroidered runners, gold chalices and utensils, and china-painted porcelain plates with raised central motifs that are based on vulvar and butterfly forms and rendered in styles appropriate to the individual women being honored. The names of another 999 women are inscribed in gold on the white tile floor below the triangular table. This permanent installation is enhanced by rotating Herstory Gallery exhibitions relating to the 1,038 women honored at the table. The pharaoh Hatshepsut; the medieval nun, composer, scientist, and prophetess Hildegard von Bingen; and writer Emily Dickinson are just three of the famous women from Judy Chicago's art installation who serve as muses for this year's operas.

"The Dinner Party contains a multitude of stories, and was created in part to encourage viewers to investigate those stories," said Eng. "In these operas, the students have done exactly that, as they transform the visual and historic into music and theatre. Some of the operas celebrate moments in the lives of specific women, while others confront the work as a whole, and it's been a joy to see the range of operatic responses—from comic farce to meditative reflection to heightened tragedy to impassioned critique."

In addition to Profs. Eng and Helfrich, NYU Tisch's GMTWP Opera Lab is led by Music Directors Mila Henry and James Lowe, who will provide piano accompaniment for the performances. Stage directors and designers from the NYU Tisch Graduate Department of Design for Stage and Film will stage the works in Program A under the guidance of Prof. Helfrich. Luke Leonard will direct the Program B operas.

The Dinner Party Operas includes the following works:

PROGRAM A:

Singers: Kathryn Krasovec, Yoojin Lee, Jordan Rutter, and Nathaniel Sullivan

Piano / Music Director: Mila Henry

Stage Directors: Diane Machin, Pauls Macs, and India Marie Paul

Set Designers: Ethan Brown and Zoe Hurwitz

Lighting Designers: Michael Cunningham, Bailey Rosa, and Rachel Fae Szymanski

Master: Emily Dickinson reckons with the life of her poetry in the aftermath of her death. Music by Jacinth Greywoode and libretto by Deepali Gupta.

Petronilla: A usual day in the home of Lady Alice and Petronilla is perfectly normal... aside from the magic and mayhem that strolls through the door. Music by Kent Jeong-Eun Kim and libretto by Zach Childers.

A Drop in the Ocean: Christine de Pizan, the first woman to earn a living wage as a writer, interviews for her first job after the death of her husband. Music by Bryan Blaskie and libretto by Christine Claudel Filimonova.

Ár n-Athair: A pirate and an accused witch become unexpected allies when they are both imprisoned by the powerful Cotton Mather. Music by Benedict Braxton-Smith and libretto by Nick Stephens.

An Unbroken Line: Egypt, 1458 BC: the pharaoh Hatshepsut, in the twilight of her reign, is beset by palace intrigue orchestrated by her sister and carried out by her heir. Music by Spencer Robelen and libretto by Seth Christenfeld.

Avery and Ainsley: Avery and Ainsley communicate or not in the junkyard. Music by Jonathan Fadner and libretto by Scott R. Ritter.

PROGRAM B:

Singers: Keith Browning, Alexa Jarvis, Nicole Mitchell, and Amelia Watkins

Piano / Music Director: James Lowe

Stage Director: Luke Leonard

Waiting for the Rain: Built from the legacy of Hildegard von Bingen, a medieval nun, composer, scientist, and prophetess, “Waiting For the Rain” delves into the crucial interior conflict of choice: God, or Man? Music by Kevin Cummines and libretto by Clara Luthas.

President Joan (Or the Unexpected Virtue of Sandwiches): A retelling of the myth of Pope Joan, set in the farce that is modern U.S. politics. Music by Boram Han and libretto by Cal Silberstein.

Theodora: Alanna is a young professional stuck in a dead-end job surrounded by misogynistic co-workers. Will a birthday present from her roommate Justin and a mysterious 6th century apparition help her discover a way out? Music by Minhui Lee and libretto by Benji Goldsmith.

Judith and Holofernes: Biblical heroine, Judith, has a great responsibility on her shoulders; slaughter the infamous General Holofernes. Music by Mehmet Salih Yildirim and libretto by Lily Dwoskin.

Women’s Work: An artist is forced to reckon with her white privilege after a black friend confronts her over her work – which proceeds to come to life. Music by Benji Goldsmith and libretto by Seth Christenfeld.

The Dinner Party Operas is produced with support from NYU Tisch Institute of Performing Arts. AOP's participation is made possible through a multi-year award from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, an OPERA America Innovation Grant, funded by the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in Partnership with the City Council and NY State Assemblymember Walter T. Mosley; District 57.

About the NYU Tisch School of the Arts

For over 50 years, the NYU Tisch School of the Arts has drawn on the vast artistic and cultural resources of New York City and New York University to create an extraordinary training ground for the individual artist and scholar of the arts. Today, students learn their craft in a spirited, risk-taking environment that combines the professional training of a conservatory with the liberal arts education of a premier global university with campuses in New York, Abu Dhabi, Shanghai, and 11 academic centers around the world. Learn more at www.tisch.nyu.edu.

About American Opera Projects

Currently celebrating its 30th anniversary, American Opera Projects (AOP) is at the forefront of the contemporary opera movement through its commissioning, developing, and producing of opera and music theatre projects, community engagement, and training programs for student and emerging composers and librettists including partnerships with NYU Tisch and Hunter College and its in-house, two-year fellowship program, Composers & the Voice, currently in its ninth season. www.aopopera.org

About the Brooklyn Museum

The Brooklyn Museum presents important art in eye-opening ways, and has long been at the forefront of engagement with underserved and younger audiences, from its widely popular Target First Saturdays program and creative reinstallations of its permanent collection, to its pioneering online presence and inventive use of technology in reimagining the visitor experience. A driving force behind the massive growth and energy of the Borough of Brooklyn and of its diverse cultural community, the Brooklyn Museum annually welcomes more than half a million visitors who represent one of New York's most diverse museum-going audiences.

With roots dating back to 1823, the Brooklyn Museum is one of the oldest and largest museums in the United States, with a collection representing nearly every culture, ranging from some of the most important ancient Egyptian works in the nation; to the arts of the Pacific Islands, Asia, Africa, and the Islamic world; to American and European art; to international contemporary work. The Brooklyn Museum is home to the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, the only facility of its kind in the country. For more information, visit www.brooklynmuseum.org



Judy Chicago (American, born 1939). *The Dinner Party*, 1974–79. Ceramic, porcelain, textile, 576 × 576 in. (1463 × 1463 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation, 2002.10. © Judy Chicago. (Photo: Donald Woodman) www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/dinner_party

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION



Keith Browning (tenor) has been lauded for his “well-trained and versatile voice” (*Opera-Világ*) for his portrayal of Nathan in *Georgia Bottoms: A Comic Opera of the Modern South* where he made his international debut Budapest, Hungary. This season, he will be making his role debut as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* with Heartbeat Opera. He has performed various contemporary operas including *Sweets by Kate* by Griffin Candey in which he was praised for his “natural comedic timing and hearty voice” (*Opera Wire*). He debuted with American Opera Projects and NYU's Graduate Music

Theatre Writing Program in two half hour one-act operas in the Spring of 2017. Recent appearances include the orchestral premiere of Evan Mack's *Roscoe* with the Albany Symphony Orchestra featuring Deborah Voigt and the World Premiere performance of Gregory Vajda's *Georgia Bottoms: A Comic Opera of the Modern South* with the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra in Huntsville, Alabama. He performed in works by Wang Ji, Randall Eng, and Michelle DiBucci for Opera America's New Works Showcase in January 2017 at the celebrated Town Hall Theatre in Times Square. 2015 appearances include the Young Artist Program at Opera Company of Middlebury where he participated in their production of *Turandot*. He has also appeared in various operas with Ash Lawn Opera, the Oratorio Society of Charlottesville, Seagle Music Colony, and Brevard Music Center including *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Candide*, *La Boheme*, and *Albert Herring*. Mr. Browning received his training at Stetson University in DeLand, FL and University of Maryland, College Park.



RANDALL ENG's music lies at the intersection of opera, music-theatre, and jazz. His opera *Florida* (libretto by Donna Di Novelli) premiered at UrbanArias in Washington D.C. in April 2018, directed by Kevin Newbury. Their opera *Before the Night Sky* is in development at AOP and was presented by Opera America at Town Hall in 2017. Randall's other operas include *Henry's Wife* and *The Woman in the Green Coat*, and his work has been presented at Lyric Opera Cleveland, New York City Opera's VOX Festival, Virginia Arts Festival, Center for Contemporary Opera, and Manhattan School of Music.

His choral work *Remain* (a setting of an immigration rights pamphlet) premiered in March 2018 by the MasterVoices Chorus. He is a graduate of Harvard University, Cambridge University, and NYU Tisch's Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program, where he is now an Associate Arts Professor. He is a Staten Island native and *Jeopardy!* Champion; www.randalleng.com.



Lauded for her “sublime” playing (Feast of Music) and heralding orchestral scores of “incredible range and color” (OperaPulse), **Mila Henry** (music director/pianist) is an integral member of New York's contemporary opera community, she frequently collaborates with Beth Morrison Projects, PROTOTYPE, American Lyric Theater and American Opera Projects, where she was Assistant Conductor for the premieres of *As One* (BAM), *The Blind* (Lincoln Center Festival) and *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom* (Irondale Center). She has performed at LA Opera (*Thumbprint*), Opera Philadelphia (*We Shall Not Be Moved*, September 2017) and the Library of

Congress (OPERA America's *Fierce Grace: Jeannette Rankin*); served as Vocal Director for Ripe Time's

Obie-winning *The World is Round* (BAM); and appeared on VisionIntoArt's FERUS Festival, National Sawdust's Spring Revolution Festival and the New York Musical Festival. milahenry.com



Sam Helfrich has directed opera productions at New York City Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Portland Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Spoleto Festival/USA, Virginia Opera, Opera Boston, Pittsburgh Opera, and Wolf Trap, among others. Recent opera highlights include a staging of Haydn's *Creation* with the Pittsburgh Symphony, the New York premiere of *Angels in America* at New York City Opera, the world premiere of *The Summer King* at Pittsburgh Opera, Bach's *St. John Passion* with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Mark Anthony Turnage's *Greek* at Boston Lyric Opera. Recent theater credits include Arthur Miller's *After The Fall* at NYU Tisch Grad Acting, off-Broadway productions of *Owned*, a world premier play by Julian Sheppard, and *Tape*, by Stephen Belber, both of which played to wide audience- and critical acclaim. Upcoming projects include *Permdeath: A Video Game Opera*, with White Snake Projects, *Why is Eartha Kitt Trying to Kill Me?* with UrbanArias, as well as a premiere in development with New York City Opera. Helfrich holds a BA (Russian Literature) and a MFA (Theatre Arts), Columbia University.



Soprano **Alexa Jarvis'** 2017/18 season highlights include returning to the role of Mimi (*La bohème*) with both New Rochelle Opera and Vashon Opera, Rose in Jake Heggie's monodrama *At the Statue of Venus* at New York Symphony Space, a role debut as Liù (*Turandot*) with Pacific Northwest Opera, and debut with the Ravinia Festival singing Bernstein's *Mass*. On the concert stage Alexa appeared at Carnegie Hall twice last season with the Gerda Lissner Competition and Mannes Festival. Alexa has also been a frequent soloist with Seattle Symphony in their Masterworks and Pops series, and *Our Earth* a collaboration with Seattle Opera. In musical theater Alexa recently performed Rosie in *Cabaret* with director Kevin Newbury and Leslie Stifelman, music director of *Chicago* on Broadway. Alexa can be heard on several video-game/movie soundtracks including *The Industrial Musicals Movie* and Grammy-nominated children's musical fable *The Shoe Bird*. Alexa was a finalist in the Franco Viñas Opera Competition in Barcelona, winner of the Washington District Metropolitan Opera Competition and received awards from the International Gerda Lissner Competition, Opera Index, Giulio Gari Foundation and Julian Autrey Song Foundation.



Mezzo-soprano **Kathryn Krasovec** has performed on such prominent stages as The Metropolitan Opera, Spoleto Festival USA, Carnegie Hall, National Theater of Prague and Theater Bremen in Germany. Recent highlights include a performance of *The Echo Drift*, a thrilling one-woman Opera by Mikael Karlsson as Walker Loats at the 2018 Prototype Festival. She returned to The Princeton Festival as Mrs. Sedley in *Peter Grimes* and was the Mezzo Soloist in the Emmy winning world premiere of *Peacemakers* by James Aikman with the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra. Ms. Krasovec made her Carnegie Hall debut in Mohammed Fairouz's *Audenesque* as soloist with the Mimesis Ensemble. After five years performing various roles in Germany and the Czech Republic, Ms. Krasovec debuted at Spoleto USA in the US premiere of Philip Glass's *Kepler*. Future engagements include Aikman's *Peacemakers* with Centre des Arts Pluriels Ettelbruck and Theater der Stadt Trier in Luxembourg and Germany.



Korean born Mezzo-Soprano **Yoojin Lee** has delighted audiences with her blend of a powerful voice and stage presence. Her career started at Mannes College of The New School for MM and PSD in 2009-2013. She is currently a member of Metropolitan Opera Ensemble and is an active member performing since 2016. Ms. Lee has also performed many various repertoires, classic to contemporary music at Mannes College and other programs, IVAI in 2013, Prelude to Performance with Martina Arroyo foundation in 2014 and Caramoor festival in 2016 and 2017. Recently she performed in the premiere of "Sirens" and "Gulliver's Travels" by Victoria Bond at Symphony space and American Opera Projects in New York City. Also, a special performance at the New York Public Library . Ms. Lee will also debut as Suzuki from Madama Butterfly with New York City Opera this summer.



LUKE LEONARD (Stage Director) is an artist whose work spans the performing and visual arts. He is the Founding Co-Artistic Director of Monk Parrots (www.monkparrots.org), a New York-based ensemble that creates concept driven live work through multidisciplinary collaboration. His stage productions have been described as "taking creditable gambles...outstanding" by *The New York Times*, "bold and experimental...pure theatrical experience" by *nytheatre.com*, and "visually arresting" by *The Austin American-Statesman*. Recent projects include Beth Morrison Projects: *Next Generation* at National Sawdust, the world premiere of *The Scottish Opera*, an 80-minute re-imagining of Giuseppe Verdi's *Macbeth*, and the Australian Premiere of Pulitzer Prizewinning composer David Lang and Mac Wellman's opera, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*. Awards include a 2016 *OperaChaser* Award for Outstanding Lighting Design and a 2015 *OperaChaser* Award for Outstanding Stage Direction. Luke holds a Master of Fine Arts in Directing from The University of Texas at Austin (www.lukeleonard.com).



A leading conductor of Opera and Musical Theater, Grammy nominated musician **James Lowe** has appeared at the San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Washington National Opera, and the Glimmerglass Festival, as well as on Broadway. This season he will conduct *La Bohème* at Houston Grand Opera as well as *Turandot* at Tulsa Opera. He recently made his European debut conducting *Candide* at the Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse and Opéra National de Bordeaux. On Broadway, James Lowe was the Music Director and Conductor of the recent revival of *Les Misérables*, as well as the Tony Award-winning revival of Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*, starring Sutton Foster and Joel Grey. He made his Broadway debut conducting performances of *Gypsy*, starring Patti LuPone. Mr. Lowe was nominated for a *Grammy Award* for his work on the *Anything Goes* cast album, which he conducted and co-produced. He has appeared in concert with Sir Elton John, singer-songwriter Randy Newman and the legendary Booker T. Jones.



Nicole Joy Mitchell (Contralto) is a proud native of Brooklyn, New York. She has performed regularly with American Opera Projects promoting the works of new composers. This is her second year participating in the AOP and NYU collaborative workshop. Last year, Nicole made her debut at Portland Opera in a double-bill of David Lang operas, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* (of which she can be heard on the recording released in 2015) and the Pulitzer Prize winning opera *The Little Match Girl Passion*. This summer, she returns for her seventh season as a Guest Teaching Artist at Ojai Youth Opera where she shares her love of the art form with children ages 7-18 years old by teaching voice, acting and other skills useful to the young artists. Nicole has performed at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, Lincoln Center Festival, New York City Opera, Sarasota Opera and abroad at Teatro di San Carlo, Landestheater and the Festival de Wiltz.



New York City-based countertenor **Jordan Rutter** enjoys a young career embracing opera, concert repertoire, and contemporary work. He is slated to make his joint company debut with Chicago Opera Theater as Doodle in Stefan Weisman and David Coté's *The Scarlet Ibis* in the work's 2019 Chicago premiere. Additional recent highlights of his work include his association with Robert Paterson's *Three Way*, which he workshopped with American Opera Projects and performed in the world premiere at Nashville Opera and the New York premiere at Brooklyn Academy of Music. Additional highlights of Mr. Rutter's operatic activity include Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Opera on the Avalon, the Sorceress in *Dido & Aeneas* with the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, and the role of Le fils de Macduff in Ernest Bloch's *Macbeth*. Mr. Rutter's oratorio credits include Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, Handel's *Messiah*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Scarlatti's *La Giuditta*, and Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*.



Baritone **Nathaniel Sullivan** is an NYC-based performer of vocal music and theatre. His opera roles have included Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Sid (*Albert Herring*), the Baritone (*Hydrogen Jukebox*), the Count (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and Elias in the 2018 world premiere of PATH New Music Theater's *Simulacrum*. In 2016, Sullivan covered the roles of Gilgamesh and the Young Monk in the world premieres of Paola Prestini's *Gilgamesh* and Scott Wheeler's *Naga*, produced by Beth Morrison Projects. As a winner of the Bard College Conservatory of Music's 2016 Concerto Competition, Sullivan joined The Orchestra Now in October 2017 in performances of HK Gruber's *Frankenstein!!* and Frank Martin's *Sechs Monologe aus Jedermann*. He received a BM in vocal performance from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (2014), and an MM in vocal arts from the Bard College Conservatory of Music (2017). Currently, Sullivan acts as Director of Operations for Resonant Bodies Festival.

www.nathanielsullivanbaritone.com



Described as having “A rich, glowing lyric sound destined for the heights” (Opera News), **Amelia Watkins** (soprano) has performed with leading orchestras and opera companies, including the Los Angeles Opera, New York City Opera, Prague National Opera, Carnegie Hall, Weill Hall, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Verbier Festival, Leipzig Gewandhaus, National Arts Center, and in concert in Hong Kong. Embracing musical styles from Bach to Berio and beyond, Amelia specializes in the works of living composers. She recently drew praise for her performance as Brainy Woman in Michael Gordon and Deborah Artman’s *Acquanetta*, directed by Daniel Fish at the 2018 Prototype Festival. Ms. Watkins can be heard on Albany Records in *New Growth*, the Grammy nominated Bobby McFerrin album *Vocabularies*, Missy Mazzoli’s *Song From the Uproar*, the upcoming studio recording of *Acquanetta*, and in various film and television scores.