

For Immediate Release

11/20/2017

Boston Opera Collaborative

Boston Opera Collaborative to present local premiere of *AS ONE*

The chamber work is the most-performed new opera in the U.S. today

Boston, MA - This January 25-28, Boston Opera Collaborative will produce the Boston premiere of *As One* – a chamber opera for two voices and string quartet about one transgender woman’s journey to make peace with herself – that has become the most-performed new opera in America today since its premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2014.

The opera has garnered considerable critical acclaim. The New York Times wrote that *As One* “forces you to think, simultaneously challenging preconceptions and inspiring empathy...winning humor and a satisfying emotional arc.” While New York Classical Review calls *As One* “formidable on all fronts...everything that we hope for in a contemporary opera: topical, poignant, daring, and beautifully written.”

Performances will take place at Longy School of Music of Bard College, which is partnering with BOC both to produce the show and to create a community engagement performance that will tour to local schools, churches and community centers.

As One is a 75 minute, one-act opera where a mezzo-soprano and baritone both portray the sole protagonist, as Hannah Before and Hannah After her gender transition. The opera follows Hannah’s story from her childhood inklings that she is different to her first steps toward transition and deeper discovery of herself.

“We’re so pleased to be able to share this opera with Boston audiences,” said Greg Smucker, stage director for *As One*, and BOC’s co-artistic director. “It’s an incredibly accessible work, full of warmth and humor, with a compelling, melodic score and a truly powerful libretto. The experience of transgender individuals is very much part of our national conversation today, and this opera is an effective vehicle for both increasing our understanding of one person’s transgender journey, as well as the challenges and joys that many transgender individuals experience.”

As One is loosely based on the true-life story of co-librettist and filmmaker Kimberly Reed. Kimberly has told her story in her documentary film, “Prodigal Sons”, and in many other settings, including the NPR Moth Radio Hour stage and as a guest on Oprah. She has become a prominent figure in normalizing transgender identities in society.

BOC is programming pre-show discussions, post-show talk backs and a mini-festival around the performances of *As One*. There will be a post-show talk-back with the cast after the Saturday performance, led by guest speaker Dr. Helen Lewis, Assistant Professor of Theater and queer/gender

studies at Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Before the Sunday performance, there will be a pre-show screening of *The Year We Thought About Love*, a 68 minute documentary film which celebrates the powerful work of a Boston LGBTQ troupe, True Colors: OUT Youth Theater, as they write a play about love. After the screening, youth leaders from the film and representatives from the Theater Offensive will lead a conversation. Limited tickets available.

As part of this production, BOC is partnering with Longy School of Music of Bard College to create community engagement performances of *As One*. They are developing a curriculum using the opera to foster discussion and understanding in communities where it is performed. Following the professional run of the show, Longy graduate students will bring the chamber opera to local venues with the goal of widening awareness and acceptance of the transgender community.

“This partnership with BOC is exactly the kind of work that Longy students are trained for,” said Karen Zorn, Longy’s president. “As a conservatory, our mission is to prepare students to make a difference in the world, bringing music to new audiences and using the power of music to promote healing, to ask questions, to raise awareness, to offer dignity and to involve audiences more deeply in the experiences of other people. This partnership between a professional opera company and a conservatory is unique, and we’re very excited about the impact of this work in our community.”

As One is double-cast, performed by Scott Ballantine, Britt Brown, Rebecca Krouner, and Andrew Miller, and will be sung in English with supertitles. The show will be conducted by Andrew Altenbach, staged by Greg Smucker, with vocal coaching by Jean Anderson Collier. *As One* is accompanied by a string quartet.

Tickets are \$15-\$35 in advance and at the door. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit www.bostonoperacollaborative.org.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

09/01/2018

Boston Opera Collaborative

BOC's 4th-Annual OPERA BITES Features 6 World Premieres Showcases Local Composers

Boston, MA – October 26-28 Boston Opera Collaborative is at Longy School of Music of Bard College for their fourth annual installment of *Opera Bites: A Feast of 10-Minute Operas*. This season-opener for BOC is an intimate evening of short operas, sung in English in a cabaret-style setting with food and drink.

The 2018 Opera Bites program is comprised of seven operas – six new commissions and world premieres, and one U.S premiere. Composers Marti Epstein, Jonathan Bailey Holland, Eva Kendrick, Rachel Peters, Tony Solitro, and Scott Wheeler wrote commissions for BOC. Epstein, Bailey Holland, Kendrick, and Solitro are all Boston-based composers. The U.S. premiere is by British composer Sam Wilson. BOC has again partnered with Longy School of Music of Bard College this to produce event.

These bite-sized operas run between 10 and 15 minutes and are accompanied by a small instrumental ensemble conducted by Dan Ryan. The stories explore a range of scenarios, from the comic consequences of a deadly fortune cookie to the divergent lives of sisters who grew up during WWII. “This program of new, short operas in English is one of the highlights of our season each year,” said co-artistic director Patricia-Maria Weinmann. “With a mix of pieces that are both comic and poignant, it’s a fun evening of exciting opera in a casual setting with light snacks and wine.”

Attendees will be fully immersed in and close to the action in this 130-seat venue. “One of our goals at BOC is to make opera intimate - we perform in smaller venues where audiences can see singers’ faces and where they’re always close to the action.” Explains co-artistic director Greg Smucker.

Tickets are \$15-\$45 online and at the door and include food and drink. For tickets and information please visit www.bostonoperacollaborative.org.

Opera Bites 2018 was created in collaboration with Longy School of Music of Bard College.

For Immediate Release

9/23/19

Boston Opera Collaborative

One-night-only at Room&Board: modern opera by local composer Jonathan Bailey Holland

Boston, MA - This November 7th at 7:30 pm at the Room&Board showroom on Newbury St in Boston, Boston Opera Collaborative will produce *Room&Board&Opera* – a presentation of three one-act operas by local composer Jonathan Bailey Holland. Audiences will be close to the action in this unique venue and will enjoy light food and drink during the performance. Seating in this alternative performance space is limited to 99 patrons.

This triple bill features “Naomi in the Living Room,” “The Battle of Bull Run Always Makes Me Cry,” and “Always,” all one-act operas by Bailey Holland in English that range from raucous to poignant. Jonathan Bailey Holland has been hailed by WBUR as “one of opera theater’s most innovative composers” and lauded for taking a “genre-crossing approach to making contemporary classical music.” Bailey Holland has had works commissioned and performed by orchestras and chamber ensembles around America and is Chair of Composition, Contemporary Music, and Core Studies at Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Highlights of his 2019-20 season include commissions by the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

Boston Opera Collaborative is dedicated to telling compelling stories in unusual venues. “We are incredibly excited about presenting these fabulous operas in a stylish, cool venue on Newbury Street,” says co-artistic director Patricia-Maria Weinmann, “Audiences will be delighted to luxuriate in the surroundings and warm hospitality of the beautiful Room and Board showroom while enjoying appetizers and wine. A perfect combination of comfort, style and sheer fun.”

Room&Board&Opera is sung in English, accompanied by chamber orchestra, conducted by Tianhui Ng. Stage Direction by Greg Smucker and Patricia-Maria Weinmann.

Tickets are \$45 in advance and at the door. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit www.bostonoperacollaborative.org.

One Man's Curiosity and the Founding of the Dallin Museum

Many talented and generous people have made The Cyrus Dallin Museum a reality over the past twenty years. But, this museum might not be here at all if it wasn't for one burning question James McGough had, and the subsequent journey the answer led him on.

In the summer of 1970, Mr. McGough opened a barbershop opposite Arlington Town Hall. He was curious who created the iconic flagstaff outside of Town Hall and asked customers about it. Board of Selectmen Member Arthur Saul discovered that the sculpture was by Cyrus E. Dallin.

James recalls, "Me, I never heard of him...I suggested a plaque of some sort should be placed near the sculpture to let visitors know who [created it] and what the figures represent."

It wasn't until 1979, with funds from Meg-a-Bucks, that the town was able to commission the plaque. During this process, Arlington created a committee (The Cyrus Dallin Committee) to search town buildings and list any works of art it may find. James served as committee chair.

As Geri Tremblay recounts in her 20th Anniversary Remarks, the committee found an astonishing number of works of art, all in various states of disrepair. While the committee raised funds to restore and conserve these treasures, James even stored a Dallin sculpture at his barbershop!

Once roughly \$35,000 was raised, restoration began. As James McGough puts it, "What a privilege an uneducated, shy, introvert, who was simply a barber, received when he was able to bring broken, dirty, severely damaged sculptures to the world-famous Fogg Museum of Harvard University in Cambridge, MA."

Who is to say where the body of work of this famous sculptor would be today, if it wasn't for a curious barber named James McGough investigating a flagstaff in 1970.

Spotlight Interview with Rob Mirak of Mirak Automotive

The Dallin Museum has called the Jefferson Cutter House home for 20 years. This is all thanks to a generous donation by the Mirak family. In 1989, the Miraks donated the Museum's building to the Town of Arlington to make way for the expansion of their car dealership. The family still plays an important role in sustaining the Dallin Museum, as well as many other organizations in Arlington.

Rob Mirak is the current Dealer Principal at Mirak Automotive, having taken over for his father Ed Mirak when he retired in 2007. Rob is a major supporter of the Museum's annual Summer Soiree fundraiser. We sat down with him to talk about his family's history of giving back to the community.

Dallin Museum: Tell us a bit about your grandfather, John Mirak, founder of Mirak Automotive.

Rob: John came to the U.S. around 1915 to escape the Armenian genocide, which had orphaned him. My grandfather didn't graduate from high school, but he went to automotive school and was a hard worker. John had a job as a mechanic at Arlington Center Garage in the early 1930s and soon partnered there. He eventually started his own company, Mirak Chevrolet. He respected his community, and they respected him. He spent many days walking up and down Mass Ave, just talking to local community members and friends, deepening connections. John had tremendous gratitude for the fact that he was able to achieve the American Dream and was humble about his success. He was also a good family man. He loved to fish, and I have fond memories of summers spent in Maine.

Dallin Museum: It sounds like your grandfather started the tradition of Mirak Automotive giving back to the community. In addition to the Dallin Museum, what other causes does Mirak Automotive support?

Rob: Yes, we believe giving back to the community helps us have a strong relationship with the town and with our customers. We like to focus on giving to organizations that benefit kids and education. We've given to the Arlington Education Fund, Spring Fling, Arlington school sports teams, the soap box derby, and initiatives at Dana Farber, among others.

Dallin Museum: We are so grateful for your support. Why do you value the Dallin Museum?

Rob: Without arts, what would any community be? Plus, we have to celebrate this Arlington celebrity (Dallin). I think young students can have pride in their town when they learn about the legacy of Cyrus Dallin. The fact that the museum is housed in a historic building makes the experience that much more special. I also love how it has a space for local artists to exhibit their work. The museum put up an exhibition that included my grandmother (John's wife) Artemis' art, which was a wonderful opportunity for my family. I think it's just a great space for education, exploration, and growth.