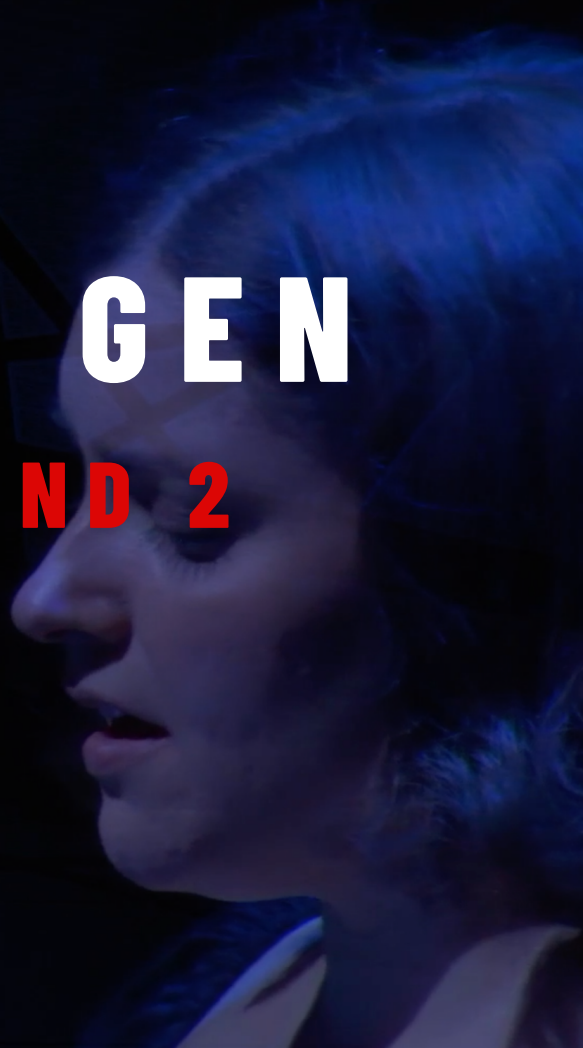


BMP

BMP: NEXT GEN

CYCLE 2, ROUND 2



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ABOUT

First launched in 2017-18, the BMP: Next Gen program was established to help BMP stay connected to a new generation of composers, singers and artists just coming out of school. Aspiring composers from coast to coast are invited to submit vocal works up to ten minutes in length. BMP Creative Producer Beth Morrison and Executive Director Jecca Barry select ten first-round finalists from these applicants and then produce an evening of new music out of these submissions. Two composers are then chosen by a panel of invited professionals in the field for a second-round competition, returning the following year to each showcase a new and original 30-minute work commissioned by BMP. Ultimately, one of these two finalists will receive a commission for an evening-length work, including the development and World Premiere production of their project.

The panelists who selected Gartman and Nourbakhsh to continue on to round 2 were: Christopher Koelsch, CEO, LA Opera; Du Yun, Pulitzer-prize winning composer; David T. Little, Grammy-nominated composer; Beth Morrison, BMP's President and Creative Producer; and Jecca Barry, BMP's Executive Director.

SUPPORT

Produced by Beth Morrison Projects. BMP: Next Gen was made possible through commissioning and underwriting support from Elizabeth & Justus Schlichting. Additional support provided by the National Endowment for the Arts – Art Works. This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Presented at National Sawdust.

IT IS A COMFORT TO KNOW

LIBRETTIST

Susan Bywaters

COMPOSER

Elizabeth Gartman

DIRECTOR

Madeline Whitesell

PERFORMERS

Elias Husiak, LEADER
Sydney Anderson, ONE
Sophie Delphis, TWO
Kate Maroney, THREE
AJ Rodriguez, FOUR
Justine Aronson, FIVE

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Fanny Wyrick-Flax, FLUTE/PICCOLO
Ford Fourqurean, CLARINET/BASS CLARINET
Lena Vidulich, VIOLIN
Julia Henderson, CELLO
Adam Holmes, PERCUSSION
Daniel Schreiner, PIANO/SYNTHESIZER
Zachary Ritter, ELECTRONICS
Evan Honse, C TRUMPET
Daniel Linden, BASS TROMBONE
Colin Davin, ELECTRIC GUITAR
Yoshi Weinberg, HARP

PROGRAM NOTE

BY ELIZABETH GARTMAN AND SUSAN BYWATERS

It is a Comfort to Know was initially inspired by the social and psychological study *When Prophecy Fails*, published in 1956. The study follows members of a small cult after their prophesied apocalypse fails to occur. The study specifically examines the members' coping mechanisms, and the cognitive dissonance between their beliefs and true events. In our opera, members of a death cult predict the end of the world, as foretold by the Leader. However, when that prophecy fails to deliver, they are faced with a decision: admit they are wrong, or choose to be right – no matter the cost.

THRESHOLD OF BRIGHTNESS

LIBRETTIST

Lisa Flanagan

COMPOSER

Niloufar Nourbakhsh

DIRECTOR

Shadi Ghaheri

PERFORMERS

Shannon Delijani, FOROUGH

Leela Subramaniam, TURAN

Jordan Rutter, KAMYAR

Justine Aronson, SOPRANO DOLL

Silvana Chu, ALTO DOLL

Kannan Vasudevan, TENOR DOLL

Adam Richardson, BASS DOLL

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Fanny Wyrick-Flax, FLUTE/PICCOLO

Ford Fourqurean, CLARINET/BASS CLARINET

Lena Vidulich, VIOLIN

Julia Henderson, CELLO

Adam Holmes, PERCUSSION

Zachary Ritter, ELECTRONICS

Sarah Haines, VIOLA

Tristan Kasten-Krause, CONTRABASS

Huizi Zhang, PIANO/SYNTHESIZER

PROGRAM NOTE

BY NILOUFAR NOURBAKHSI AND LISA FLANAGAN

THRESHOLD OF BRIGHTNESS was a direct result of writing our first opera, WE THE INNUMERABLE - a story of rebellion and hope set during Iran's Green Movement. As we wrote, we exchanged poetry, articles and essays to find our voice. Niloufar introduced me to Iranian women poets, including Forough Farrokhzad. I was enthralled by Forough's life- as erotic, dark, momentous, jubilant, tragic, & profound as her poetry. I kept exclaiming "Her life would make an amazing opera!" (In fact, it could fill several operas.) Thanks to Beth Morrison we were able to bring our dream project to life. With this commission, we dove into research- scouring letters and diaries. For hours, Nilou would translate the myriad sources from Persian over Zoom while I typed. We produced more than 20 pages of research. Out of all our research, we felt her poem "Let Us Believe in the Cold Season" was the best lens to tell her story thru, knowing the uncanny parallels it held to Forough's own death just two years after its publication.

THRESHOLD OF BRIGHTNESS includes much of these characters' own real life words: Turan's traditional gender roles, how Forough's father blackmailed a political prisoner's daughter into becoming his second wife; Kamyar's aria draws on a 1999 interview describing their final encounter. And Forough's own diary entries and love letters fill this piece. Constantly aware of death, that awareness gave Forough freedom and transcendence. At the heart of this opera, it is thru her acceptance and celebration of death that Forough finds the love, courage & freedom that fueled her life and poetry. We hope you leave feeling some of the same love for Forough that we have found in creating this opera. Thank you for sharing in it with us.

COMPOSER | ELIZABETH GARTMAN

Elizabeth Gartman (b.1996) is a composer and soprano currently based in New York City. Her compositions call attention to the implications behind the vocal instrument paired with the physical body. Her work also explores themes of process in performance, as well as active listening and response. Elizabeth's compositions have been received in New York at venues such as National Sawdust (Beth Morrison Projects Next Gen 2021), the Mark Morris Dance Center (New Chamber Ballet), and the Manhattan School of Music. Her work has been featured across the country at events such as Songfest in Los Angeles, New Music on the Point near Burlington, the Music by Women Festival at the University of Mississippi, as well as in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, and near Sheboygan, Wisconsin - Elizabeth's hometown.

Elizabeth received the William Schuman Prize for the Most Outstanding Composition in the 2021 BMI Student Composer Awards, and has been twice recognized as a finalist in ASCAP's Morton Gould Young Composer Competition (2021, 2018). Upon graduating with her Master's Degree in Composition from the Manhattan School of Music in May of 2021, Elizabeth was awarded the Carl Kanter Prize for Orchestral Composition (first place) and the Giampaolo Bracali Composition Award. At the Manhattan School of Music, Elizabeth studied with Susan Botti (composition) and Lucy Shelton (voice). Elizabeth previously received Bachelor's of Music Degrees in both Composition and Vocal Performance from the University of Illinois in 2019, where she worked with Dr. Reynold Tharp (composition), Dr. Carlos Carrillo (composition), and Dr. Ollie Watts Davis (voice). Elizabeth serves as a faculty member in composition and theory/ear training at the Manhattan School of Music Precollege Division, and teaches voice and beginning piano with Harrison School of Music.

LIBRETTIST | SUSAN BYWATERS

Susan Bywaters is a librettist based in Boston, MA and New York, NY. Her works often center around memory, history, and modern interactions with the past.

Susan's text [weight], set by composer Elizabeth Gartman, was featured in Beth Morrison Projects' NextGen in May of 2021, where Gartman was selected as a finalist. Her opera the new motive power was workshopped at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, and was presented in a set of scenes by Lyric Theatre @ Illinois in 2018. Three songs based on her poetry when you leave me, a commentary on climate change, are set to premiere in August of 2021 at the upbeat summer music course in Croatia.

Also a dramaturg, Susan has collaborated on such works as the semi-devised viva verdi! and the opera hanel and gretel (humperdinck) with the Lyric Theatre @ Illinois, as well as the feminist scenes collection forse si calmerà with director Madeline Whitesell. As a scholar, her writing has focused on feminism in modern opera production, and she was recognized as an emerging scholar at the Mid-American Theater Conference in 2017.

Susan holds a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance and a Masters of arts in theatre studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

DIRECTOR | MADELINE WHITESELL

Madeline Whitesell is a Brooklyn-based director and designer whose work deals with the intersections of music and theatre. Madeline likes to work with the very old and very new, aiming to derail the current conventions of opera and music-theatre. She takes particular inspiration from light art, pop culture, contemporary dance, gender & queer theory, dialectical materialism, and her experience with chromesthesia. She has developed work with Beth Morrison Projects, The Brooklyn Academy of Music, The HERE Arts Center, The Tank, The Philly Fringe Festival, Opera NEO, Opera on Tap-New York, The John Michael Kohler Arts Center, and The Krannert Center for Performing Arts. Her music video *Isolate* will be shown in the 2022 Ann Arbor Film Festival. Currently, Madeline is developing a theatrical album with Nashville-based Musician Emily Blue.

LEADER | ELIAS HUSIAK

Elias Husiak (he/him/his) is a NYC born & raised actor and singer. Recent Credits include: *Oedipus: Sex with Mum was Blinding* (BAM Fisher), *Hotel: AntiOedipus* (Centre Pompidou/IRCAM), *A Spirited History of Drinking*, *Christmas Carol Cocktails* (New World Stages/The Imbible), *Taming of the Shrew*, *Richard III*, & *As You Like It* (The Ithaca Shakespeare Company). He got his BFA in Musical Theatre from Ithaca College and is going into his final year studying the Meisner Technique at the Neighborhood Playhouse. IG: elihusiak

ONE | SYDNEY ANDERSON

A contemporary music enthusiast, soprano, Sydney Anderson has participated in numerous World Premieres and workshops, recently featured in concert with Aural Compass Projects, Beth Morrison Projects, and as Snow/Child on the 2021 World Premiere recording of *The Selfish Giant* (Assad/Palmer) with American Lyric Theater. Earlier this season, she created the role of Dalinda in *Being Ariodante* (Dawe) with Ensemble Échappé, and sang Ruth Bader Ginsburg in *Scalia/Ginsburg with Opera in the Heights*. In 2019, Sydney covered the Title Role of Ricky Ian Gordon's *Ellen West* with Opera Saratoga and was named an Eastern District Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, winning the Audience Favorite Award at the Region Finals.

TWO | SOPHIE DELPHIS

Franco-American mezzo-soprano Sophie Delphis' operatic roles include: Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Giunone (*La Calisto*), Carmen and Mercédès (*Carmen*), Flora (*La Traviata*), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Marla Maples (*The Drumf and the Rhinegold*, premiere), Cenerentola and Tisbe (*La Cenerentola*), Concepción (*L'heure espagnole*), Hansel, (*Hansel and Gretel*) and Elle (*La voix humaine*). An avid recitalist, Sophie regularly produces programs for musical and cultural organizations in the United States and China. Recent and upcoming works include: Ravel's *Chansons madécasses* and *Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé*, Bolcom's *Cabaret Songs*, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten* and Messiaen's *Harawi*. Along with classical repertoire, she enjoys collaborating with composers, improvisers and theater artists on new works. She is a soloist on the Grammy Award-nominated Naxos recording of Milhaud's *Oresteia* trilogy. She currently resides in New York City, where she is pursuing a doctoral degree in voice performance at the Graduate Center CUNY.

THREE | KATE MARONEY

Recognized by the New York Times for her “vibrant and colorful” singing, mezzo-soprano Kate Maroney is in demand on concert, oratorio and opera stages in works that span from the Renaissance to the 21st century. A fervent champion of new music, Kate recently completed a month-long tour (April 2018) throughout Ireland with the theatre company Gare Saint Lazare Ireland, performing music by composer Paul Clark in a Samuel Beckett pastiche called "Here All Night." Kate recently performed Dominick Argento’s Pulitzer-prize winning piece, *From The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, in a staged adaptation by Håkan Hagegård at the Ordway Theater in St. Paul, MN, as part of the Source Song Festival. In addition to performing, Kate is an avid teacher and she recently joined voice faculty at Mannes (The New School) where she teaches a voice pedagogy course and private students within the Voice and Opera department.

FOUR | AJ RODRIGUEZ

AJ Rodriguez is a San Francisco Bay Area tenor who started his musical journey around the age of twelve. AJ would describe himself as a interdisciplinarian within his field. Noteworthy performances include the role of Alfred in Johann Strauss's "Die Fledermaus," Macheath in Kurt Weill's "The Threepenny Opera," and the Celebrant in Leonard Bernstein's "MASS", all with San Jose State University Opera Theater. He just concluded the role of Mercury in Offenbach's "Orpheus in the Underworld" and the role of Basillio/Don Curzio in Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro," both at the Manhattan School of Music. He holds a bachelor degree from San Jose State University in Music Education and a Masters in Voice Performance from The Manhattan School.

FIVE | JUSTINE ARONSON

Hailed by The New York Times as possessing "a deep reservoir of expressive devices" and by the Los Angeles Times as "dramatically and gratifyingly juicy," soprano Justine Aronson’s repertoire spans the traditional and the contemporary, with performances that adventurously embrace the unexpected. Highlights of the current season include engagements with The Guggenheim’s Work & Process Residency, The American Opera Project, On Site Opera, and Mirror Visions Ensemble, and in recent seasons with Lyric Fest of Philadelphia, Los Angeles Philharmonic and LA Phil’s Chamber Music series, Five Boroughs Music Festival, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Wild Shore New Music, and Eighth Blackbird, among others. Recent workshops include the role of Nicola/Lakmé with Guggenheim/Thresh Dance, the roles of gene and actress for Iphigenia, created by Wayne Shorter and Esperanza Spalding, and the role of The Assistant for David Lang’s prisoner of the state with the New York Philharmonic.

COMPOSER | NILOUFAR NOURBAKHSH

Described as “stark” by WNPR, and “darkly lyrical” by the New York Times, winner of 2nd Hildegard competition, recipient of 2019 Female Discovery Grant from Opera America, and a finalist for Beth Morrison Projects Next Generation Competition, Iranian-American composer Niloufar Nourbakhsh’s music has been commissioned and performed by Nashville Symphony Orchestra, Library of Congress, I-Park Foundation, National Sawdust Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, Center for Contemporary Opera, Women Composers Festival of Hartford, PUBLIQuartet, Forward Music Project, Calidore String Quartet, Cassatt String Quartet, Akropolis Reed Quintet, Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, and Ensemble Connect at numerous festivals and venues including Carnegie Hall, Washington Kennedy Center, Mostly Mozart Festival, Seal Bay Festival of American Chamber Music, and many more. A founding member and co-director of Iranian Female Composers Association, Nilou is a strong advocate of music education. In 2014, she worked as the site coordinator of Brooklyn Middle School Jazz Academy sponsored by Jazz at Lincoln Center. She is currently an adjunct faculty at Molloy College, a co-director of Peabody Conservatory Laptop Orchestra, and she regularly performs with her ensemble, Decipher.

Nilou is a music graduate and a Global Citizen Scholarship recipient of Goucher College as well as a Mahoney and Caplan Scholar from University of Oxford. Among her teachers are Lisa Weiss, Laura Kaminsky, Daniel Weymouth, Matthew Barnson, Margaret Schedel and Daria Semegen. She received a Ph.D. in music composition from Stony Brook University under the supervision of Sheila Silver.

LIBRETTIST | LISA FLANAGAN

Lisa Flanagan is an award-winning narrator, voice actor, stage director, improviser, opera librettist, and classical singer. Her voice-over work includes animation, video games, and commercials. Lisa has received multiple AudioFile Earphones Awards, Voice Arts Awards, and the 2019 Audie Award winner for Fantasy. She has cats and lives in Brooklyn, NY.

DIRECTOR | SHADI GHAHERI

Shadi Ghaheri is a Theatre/Film director, choreographer from Iran based in NYC. She has directed: Memorial (NYUTisch) Banned, (Broadway Bound), Glimpse (Rattlestick), Mother Courage (Hunter College), Fen (Columbia University), Untitled (Rattlestick Theatre), Lucretia (HERE), Death of Yazdgerd, Titus Andronicus (Yale School of Drama), The Slow Sound of Snow (Yale Cabaret). She co-curated Yale Summer Cabaret season, directing Trojan Women and Lear. Also she co-founded/co-curated Emruz Festival, and Peydah Theatre Company. Shadi was a 2016 Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow, the 2018 directing fellow at Rattlestick Theatre and the winner of Robert L.B. Tobin Showcase 2019. shadighaheri.com

FOROUGH FARROKHZAD | SHANNON DELIJANI

Iranian-American Mezzo-Soprano, Shannon Delijani, is currently based in Los Angeles. Praised for her versatility, her repertoire ranges from early music to bel canto to musical theater and new works. This fall she will be performing in the U.S. premiere of *Idaspe* with Quantum Theater, in collaboration with Chatham Baroque. She then returns to Los Angeles to begin her Doctorate in Music at UCLA. Shannon has performed throughout the country and internationally with the Mannes Sounds Festival, Trentino Festival, Classic Lyric Arts France, Pittsburgh Festival Opera, and Bare Opera. Shannon holds a BM from the USC Thornton School of Music and a MM from Mannes Conservatory at The New School. // shannondelijani.com

TURAN VAZIRITABA | LEELA SUBRAMANIAM

Praised by Opera News as a "gleaming soprano" and the Wall Street Journal as "piercingly lovely," soprano Leela Subramaniam is turning heads with her rapid ascent to opera stardom. After winning the prestigious Opera Foundation Björn Eklund Scholarship, Ms. Subramaniam was invited to join the Bayerische Staatsoper Opera Studio in Munich for the 2015-2016 season, where she appeared as Miss Wordsworth in *Albert Herring*, *Barbarina* in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Papagena* in *Die Zauberflöte*, and *die Hoher Schatten* in the Opernfestspiele premiere of Hauke Berheide's *Mauerschau*. In addition, she went on tour performing in many concerts around southern Germany in excerpts as *Giunia* in Mozart's *Lucio Silla*, *Ira* in *Idomeneo*, and *Violetta* in *La Traviata*.

KAMYAR | JORDAN RUTTER

Jordan Rutter is a countertenor based in New York City. An avid participant in the development and performance of new opera, Rutter has worked in workshops with The American Opera Project. A recent highlight of Rutter's career was their debut with Chicago Opera Theater in *The Scarlet Ibis* in the leading role of *Doodle*. In the Baroque repertoire, Rutter has performed the role of the Sorceress in *Dido & Aeneas* with the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival and covered the role with Heartbeat Opera. Rutter has regularly performed in Handel's *Messiah* and joined the Academy of Sacred Drama as *Oloferne* in Scarlatti's *La Giuditta*.

SOPRANO DOLL | JUSTINE ARONSON

Hailed by The New York Times as possessing "a deep reservoir of expressive devices" and by the Los Angeles Times as "dramatically and gratifyingly juicy," soprano Justine Aronson's repertoire spans the traditional and the contemporary, with performances that adventurously embrace the unexpected. Highlights of the current season include engagements with The Guggenheim's Work & Process Residency, The American Opera Project, On Site Opera, and Mirror Visions Ensemble, and in recent seasons with Lyric Fest of Philadelphia, Los Angeles Philharmonic and LA Phil's Chamber Music series, Five Boroughs Music Festival, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Wild Shore New Music, and Eighth Blackbird, among others. Recent workshops include the role of *Nicola/Lakmé* with Guggenheim/Thresh Dance, the roles of *gene* and *actress* for *Iphigenia*, created by Wayne Shorter and Esperanza Spalding, and the role of *The Assistant* for David Lang's *prisoner of the state* with the New York Philharmonic.

ALTO DOLL | SILVANA CHU

Mezzo Soprano Silvana Chu received her Master's degree in Music at the Manhattan School of Music. Besides her operatic roles as "Suzuki" in Madama Butterfly, "Mary" in Der fliegende Holländer, "Orlofsky" in Die Fledermaus etc, Ms. Chu premiered several contemporary productions such as American Operas "Shangri-La" by Susie Ibarra, "Sir Gawain & the Green Knight" by Richard Peasle, "Heart Mountain" by Sarah Mattox, and Japanese Opera "Nasu no Yoichi" by Kazuko Hara. In 2018, Silvana Chu was First Prize Vocal Competition Winner of the Romanian International Music Competition in Japan. In 2019, she was invited by the Romanian Music Society to perform her Vocal Recital at the Romanian Embassy in Tokyo. In 2022, Ms. Chu will perform "The Magic Flute" as 2nd Lady with The Lighthouse Opera Company in NYC.

TENOR DOLL | KANNAN VASUDEVAN

Kannan Vasudevan, tenor, has performed in opera and oratorio from the Baroque to contemporary music. Highlights of his stage experience include the title role in The Play of Daniel, Ariadne auf Naxos (Dance Master), The Magic Flute (Monostatos), and Purcell's The Indian Queen (Fame). Kannan was praised as "lively" (Opera News) for his portrayal of Tonik in Smetana's Two Widows and "sang sweetly" (Opera Magazine) for his performance as Pronin in Inessa Zaretsky's Man in a Black Coat. He plays multiple roles in Kamala Sankaram's Thumbprint, which premiered at the 2014 Prototype Festival in New York and was remounted to wide acclaim at LA Opera in 2017.

BASS DOLL | ADAM RICHARDSON

Baritone Adam Richardson is a multitalented baritone known for his powerful operatic, concert, and theater performances. Mr. Richardson's 2021/2022 season included a Cincinnati Opera debut, various engagements with Beth Morrison Projects, joining the cast of Ricky Ian Gordon's new opera Intimate Apparel at Lincoln Center Theater, a debut with Linton Chamber Music, and understudying the title role of Malcolm X in X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X at Detroit Opera which he'll later reprise at Opera Omaha in Fall 2022. Other notable credits include a Broadway National Tour and a house debut with Opera Philadelphia in Daniel Bernard Roumain's world premiere opera We Shall Not Be Moved, directed by Tony Award winner Bill T. Jones. This opera saw reprised performances at The Apollo in New York and the Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam.

KAMNA GUPTA | MUSIC DIRECTOR

Kamna Gupta is an American prize-winning conductor experienced in operatic, orchestral, and choral repertoires. Conducting engagements in 2022 includes *In Our Daughter's Eyes* with LA Opera, *Zolle* with the International Contemporary Ensemble, *Jungle Book* with The Glimmerglass Festival, *Les Pecheurs de Perles* with Vancouver Opera, and *The Ritual of Breath is the Rite to Resist* at the Dartmouth Hopkins Center for Arts. Ms. Gupta will also join Spoleto Festival USA as an assistant conductor for their production of *La bohème*. Additional recent company credits include the Royal Opera in Versailles, Seattle Opera, Beth Morrison Projects, Sarasota Opera, Opera Saratoga, Tapestry Opera, and American Lyric Theater.

LINDSEY TURTELTAUB | STAGE MANAGER

Lindsey is a production and stage manager for theatre, opera, dance and events. She served as the Director of Production at Williamstown Theatre Festival (2018- 2021). Selected freelance credits include: [B'WAY] *The Realistic Joneses*, *Follies*. [OFF-B'WAY] *Hadestown*, *Hundred Days*, *What's It All About?* (NYTW), *X*, *Julius Caesar* (The Acting Company), *Allegro* (CSC). [REGIONAL] Member of the *Wedding*, *The Closet*, *The Roommate*, *A Great Wilderness* (Williamstown), *Bad Jews* (Long Wharf). [OPERA & MUSIC] Over 10 world premieres with Beth Morrison Projects incl. *Book of Mountains & Seas* (St. Ann's Warehouse), *The Ouroboros Trilogy* (Arts Emerson), *Brooklyn Babylon*, *Real Enemies* (Brooklyn Academy of Music), *Dog Days* (LA Opera, Fort Worth Opera), *Iron and Coal*, *Song from the Uproar*, *Soldier Songs*, *Elsewhere*, *Brooklyn Village*, *Jazz at Lincoln Center*, *Carnegie Hall*, *Juilliard Opera*, *Los Angeles Music Center*. [EDU] UCLA (BA), Yale School of Drama (MFA.)

KRISTA SMITH | LIGHTING DESIGNER

Krista is a Lighting Designer and Interdisciplinary Artist with an enthusiasm for new work, adaptations, and storytelling interwoven with music. An experienced teaching artist, she has worked with young playwrights in the development of their artistic voice through The Dwight/Edgewood Project, guest lectured on Lighting Design and Process at Colgate University while working as an Artist in Residence, and assisted Jennifer Tipton in the teaching of her Lighting Design Master Class of *Swan Lake* in partnership with The Asian Arts Council and Ballet Philippines.

Originally from California, Krista received her B.A. in Theater Arts from San Francisco State University and her M.F.A. in Lighting Design from Yale School of Drama.

CONTEMPORANEOUS | MUSIC ENSEMBLE

Contemporaneous is an ensemble of 23 musicians whose mission is to bring to life the music of now. Recognized for a "ferocious, focused performance" (The New York Times) and for its "captivating and whole-hearted commitment" (I Care If You Listen), Contemporaneous performs and promotes the most exciting work of living composers through innovative concerts, commissions, recordings, and educational programs. Based in New York City and active throughout the United States, Contemporaneous has been presented by such institutions as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Park Avenue Armory, PROTOTYPE Festival, Merkin Concert Hall, MATA Festival, St. Ann's Warehouse, and Bang on a Can and has worked with such artists as David Byrne, Donnacha Dennehy, Iarla Ó Lionáird, Dawn Upshaw, and Julia Wolfe.



Beth Morrison Projects (BMP) is one of the foremost creators and producers of new opera-theatre and music theatre, with a fierce commitment to leading the industry into the future, cultivating a new generation of talent, and telling the stories of our time.

Founded by “contemporary opera mastermind” (LA Times) Beth Morrison, who was honored as one of Musical America’s Artists of the Year/Agents of Change in 2020, BMP has grown into “a driving force behind America’s thriving opera scene” (Financial Times), with Opera News declaring that the company, “more than any other... has helped propel the art form into the twenty-first century.”

Operating across the US and internationally, with offices in Brooklyn and Los Angeles, BMP’s unique model offers living composers the support, guidance, and freedom to experiment, allowing them to create singularly innovative and impactful projects. Since forming in 2006, the company has commissioned, developed, produced and toured over 50 works in 14 countries around the world, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning chamber operas *Angel’s Bone* and *p r i s m*.

In 2013, BMP co-founded the PROTOTYPE Festival with HERE Arts Center, which has been called “utterly essential” (The New York Times), “indispensable” (The New Yorker), and “one of the world’s top festivals of contemporary opera and theater” (Associated Press).

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SUPPORT BMP

For our fiscal year-end campaign we are focusing on the impact BMP and Beth have on young composers.






Please support BMP on our mission to identify and cultivate the most thrilling composers of vocal theater writing today.

For questions about ways to give, please contact Director of Development, Julie Maykowski, at juliem@bethmorrisonprojects.org

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IT IS A COMFORT TO KNOW - LIBRETTO

1

I did my research.

I didn't see it before.

I was asleep. But

I woke up.

Open your eyes.

Are you awake?

Are you asleep?

Why do you only believe
what you already believe?

I don't believe.

Now, I know.

He knows.

We know.

I have found my people.

Would you like to join us?

Would you like to know, too?

THE LEADER

My beloved children:

I know when you will die.

Would you like to know?

1-5

We need to know

THE LEADER

I know all,

I see all.

Would you like to see?

1-5

We need to see

THE LEADER

I have seen your death.

Soon, you will see.

1-5

Soon, we will see.

THE LEADER

All the world will die Today,
before the rising of the sun.

Let it be known,

for knowing is a comfort:

You will die Today,

before the rising of the sun.

1-5

We will die today

before the rising of the sun.

THE LEADER

Are you ready to die?

1-5

We are ready to die.

THE LEADER

It feels good to be ready.

It feels good to know.

It is a comfort

to ask no questions.

It is a comfort

to know.

1-5

Now we know.

THE LEADER

Have you cast aside your worldly possessions?

1-5

We have forsaken them.

They are meaningless.

IT IS A COMFORT TO KNOW - LIBRETTO

THE LEADER

Have you cleansed yourself
of your earthly connections?
Carnal relationships,
or those bound by blood.
Those who disbelieve.
Have you purged them?

1-5

We have forsaken them.
They are meaningless.

THE LEADER

Then you are ready
for the setting of the sun.

1-5

We are ready
for the setting of the sun.

THE LEADER

Bask with me
in the comfort of your righteousness.
Your rightness.
For there is comfort in knowing.

1-5

(repeated)
It is a comfort to know.

2

Excuse me...
Sorry to speak out of turn, but-
When?

THE LEADER

What?

2

You said "we will die today
before the rising of the sun."
"there is comfort in knowing," et cetera.

But that's the sun.

So, when?

THE LEADER

Have faith.

1

I have faith, great Leader,
but bestow upon me the great power to see:
When?

THE LEADER

Tomorrow,
I meant the rising of the sun tomorrow.
Before the rising of the sun tomorrow,
you will die.

4

But you said today.

THE LEADER

I meant tomorrow.

2

Oh my God.
I threw my whole life away for this

4

Fuck.

THE LEADER

Have faith.

2

My life is ruined.
I burned my house down.
Why did I burn my house down?

IT IS A COMFORT TO KNOW - LIBRETTO

4

(loudly)
Fuck!

2

My little house in Chicago
with the pointy red roof.
Three bedrooms, \$200,000.
A steal in that market.

Original hardwood floors,
antique claw-foot tub,
A gas stove, with five burners,
all turned at full blast.

I'd had to look up how to light the fire from the
street,
"DIY molotov cocktail"

My little house in Chicago,
with the pointy red roof.
It was always made of timber,
just a little pile of sticks, a-blaze.

I wanted to show them all what was coming.
The end was near.

My little house in Chicago,
they said none of it was left.
My black hole.

4

Where in Chicago?

2

What?

4

Where in Chicago was your house?

2

Carol Stream.

4

I knew it.
That's not even Chicago.
That's the suburbs.

2

Why do / you care?

4

I'm just saying, people always say they're from
Chicago when they're really from the suburbs. It's
misleading. I'm from Niles, and -

2

That's the suburbs too!

4

I mean, hardly.

2

My little -
I think I have to go.

5

Oh my god, can you guys shut up. Jesus / Christ

4

/ I'm sorry, but you can't get a house in Chicago for
\$200,000.
Whatever. Fuck!

THE LEADER

Tomorrow, I meant tomorrow.
A miscalculation.

All the world will die Tomorrow,
before the rising of the sun.

Let it be known,
for knowing is a comfort:
You will die Tomorrow,
before the rising of the sun.

IT IS A COMFORT TO KNOW - LIBRETTO

1, 3, 5

We will die tomorrow
before the rising of the sun.

THE LEADER

Are you ready to die?

1, 3, 5

We are ready to die.

THE LEADER

It feels good to be ready.
It feels good to know.
It is a comfort
to ask no questions.
It is a comfort
to know.

1, 3, 5

Now we know.

THE LEADER

Then you are ready
for the setting of the sun.

1, 3, 5

We are ready
for the setting of the sun.

THE LEADER

Bask with me
in the comfort of your righteousness.
Your rightness.
For there is comfort in knowing.

1, 3, 5

(repeated)

It is a comfort to know.

3

Please tell me that's not the sun.
Please, please tell me that's not the sun.
It can't be, please.

5

Uh, that's definitely the sun.

3

No, no, please, no.
Just kill me. No.
It's not the sun.

5

It's the sun.

3

Why am I still alive?
Why am I still alive?

THE LEADER

And on the third day,
there shall be darkness.

3

NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU FUCKING SAID!
YOU DIDN'T SAY THE THIRD DAY.

5

You definitely didn't.
You said tomorrow.

THE LEADER

I meant tomorrow evening,
as in when the sun goes down tonight.
Before midnight.
It was just a... miscommunication.

3

Oh my god he has no idea what he's talking about.
He has no idea what he's talking about!

IT IS A COMFORT TO KNOW - LIBRETTO

3

Oh my god.
I killed someone!
We were all gonna be dead soon!
We were all gonna be dead...
Oh my god. I'm so fucked.

I can still see him sitting there,
always in his favorite chair,
reclining. (It was a recliner.)

"Can you get me a beer?"
he'd said. So I got his beer,
and I watched him, reclining,

"I know that you're fucking the neighbor," I'd said.
"And?" he'd said. "We have an open marriage."
"And," I'd said. "I'm fucking the neighbor, too."
"Well maybe you should talk to the neighbor," he'd
said.

"because he likes me better."
And then he took a big swig of beer.
An IPA - and some peanuts at the bottom.

If only he had his epi-pen.
If only I hadn't dropped it,
I mean if only I hadn't stepped on it,
again, and again, and again.

I can still see him sitting there,
squirming in his favorite chair,
and then, reclining.

5

Oh my god -

3

I didn't even try to hide it,
left the receipt for peanuts on the counter -
I just wanted to do something for myself, for once.
I was so angry...
What did it matter if he died three days early?
We were all going to be dead,
We were all going to...

5

Honestly, that's kind of cool.

3

What?

5

I mean, I've never killed anyone.
And it sounds kind of, like, feminist,
if you think about it?

3

Really?

5

Yeah, really.
Like, now that I'm really thinking about it,
I wish I had killed someone.
I haven't done, like, anything.
My life is so boring!

3

I just want to go back.
Please let me go back!
Why couldn't the world end?

5

Relax.

THE LEADER

Shh.
Remain calm.
There is comfort in knowing.

5

She killed someone!
You know what, I'm done with this shit.
You should probably, like, change your name or
something.

3

Good luck.

IT IS A COMFORT TO KNOW - LIBRETTO

1

There is comfort in knowing.

THE LEADER

All the world will die today,
before the rising of the sun.
Let it be known,
for knowing is a comfort:
You will die today,
before the rising of the sun.

1

I will die today,
before the rising of the sun.

THE LEADER

Are you ready to die?

1

I am ready to die.

THE LEADER

It feels good to be ready.
It feels good to know.
It is a comfort
to ask no questions.
It is a comfort
to know.

1

Now I know.

THE LEADER

Do you still have faith?

1

I still have faith.

THE LEADER

Those who disbelieve.
The faithless ones.
Have you purged them?

1

I have forsaken them.
They are meaningless.

THE LEADER

Then you are ready
for the setting of the sun.

1

I am ready
for the setting of the sun.

THE LEADER

Bask with me
in the comfort of your righteousness.
Your rightness.
For there is comfort in knowing.

1

It is a comfort to know.

THE LEADER

The sun will rise soon.
I can see it coming.
Do you see it?

1

I will die today,
before the rising of the sun.

THE LEADER

Would you like to live?

1

I will die today,
before the rising of the sun.

THE LEADER

Right, but
Would you like to live,
instead?

IT IS A COMFORT TO KNOW - LIBRETTO

1

It feels good to be ready.

It feels good to know.

It is a comfort

to ask no questions.

It is a comfort

to know.

THE LEADER

I didn't want to be alone,

for this part.

It's like my father always said:

When they start to doubt you,

be prepared.

But you never doubted.

and now,

you will be right.

You will be right.

1 (Onstage) & 2-5 (Offstage)

It feels good to be ready.

It feels good to know.

It is a comfort

to ask no questions.

It is a comfort

to know.

THE LEADER

Fucking mess...

Next time, poison.

And,

before the sun goes down.

THRESHOLD OF BRIGHTNESS - LIBRETTO

FOROUGH

Back here. Again?
Already?

TURAN

Even more! Ajil o Hendune!
Plenty of pomegranate!

FOROUGH

Hello, Turan.

TURAN

Oh, how lucky I am!

FOROUGH

Salaam- Good to see you, Mother.

TURAN

Oh. You're here?

FOROUGH

I didn't expect to be.
I can come back later. It's no problem.

TURAN

No!
Stay for the night.

TURAN

You can't sit down.
Your father is out...

FOROUGH

Another fight? Waving shotguns at each other
again?

TURAN

...Carving the stone.

FOROUGH

The Colonel could just be down the lane.
So many prisoners, so many wives to celebrate
with.
Maybe this year, he'll release her father as a gift!
"Happy Yalda!"

TURAN

Don't speak of him like that. He is my husband.
And your father. We still are a family.

FOROUGH

Shabe Yaldamoun mobarak
Patiently, heavily, blindly forgetful.

TURAN

Forgotten? Not a thing. Not a moment.
You're not old enough to forget like I can.
But I don't forget what's important.
Not you my darlings. I could never forget you.

DOLLS

Mama. Oh mama!
Love you, Mama.

TURAN

Of course you know Baharak. My youngest- just six.
Fancies herself a dancer, always practicing her
spins.
And Hashem, still seven - a very good reader.
He has memorized & recites all the poems of Hafez!

The twins! Forever twelve. Sassan stares at the
globe. Someday he'll travel the world.
Dear little Roya, She'll make such a good
homemaker. Never an unkind word.

Forough. Always eight. Always so brave.
Always so quiet. Never complains.
And it's two weeks till her birthday.
Just two weeks away.

Let's no one sleep. Shabe Chelleh. Not sleep.
Sparkling eyes tipped up, hard and bright.
Remain tonight.... This longest night.
Stay
in
the light.

THRESHOLD OF BRIGHTNESS - LIBRETTO

DOLLS

Mama.

Oh mama.

/Don't be sad. Mama,

/Mama, why?

/Love you, Mama.

/Why, why? /Mama!

Why?

TURAN

She is my child but there is very little I could tell you about Forough.

Little that she would want me to tell.

Read to them.

FOROUGH

"I know the secret of seasons, understand the language of moments—"

TURAN

Not one of yours.

TURAN

I'd rather something decent.

Splay your name again in ink!

Woman! Never wife.
Not daughter. A woman.

FOROUGH

Why must I stop? You'd rather an Ode to Eyebrows?

So publish my obituary!

A woman has the right to remain a woman in her poetry.

Which wife?
The Colonel's second or third?

FOROUGH

One day, everything will end, my dear. I swear to god it will end.

Family, reputation, chastity, loyalty, all these ridiculous things.

Others will gather over a cup of coffee for their PhD in gossip,

A dissertation in conversation

Let it be over

We fancy ourselves important- such righteous steadfast things

Dawn to dusk, fumbling and fighting, we ridiculous beings

I always feel death standing in front of me.

Speaking the language of moments

Whispers it's over.

Let me speak without any boundaries. I create that right for myself.

Write those hidden feelings, speak fleeting feelings, as men do.

I want to break these walls and live for my art.

DOLLS

Raha Raha

FOROUGH

If that needs sacrifice, so be it.

I can't stay here.

TURAN

You always leave.

Not tonight.

FOROUGH

One day they'll just notice I'm not here anymore.

TURAN

I endured every endless absence.

This is a night for family. You are a part of this family.

THRESHOLD OF BRIGHTNESS - LIBRETTO

FOROUGH

Is that my Kamyar?
Kami... Salaam

KAMYAR

Salaam, mother.
Shabe yaldat mobarak.

FOROUGH

My boy, my beautiful boy!
How lucky I am.
This was where we spent your very first Yalda.
Right here in your grandmother's house.
You left pomegranate hand prints all over the wall!

KAMYAR

You read me Hafez!

FOROUGH

You remember that?

KAMYAR

Of course!

FOROUGH

Your father wouldn't let me read you my poetry.
Does he know you're here? With me?

KAMYAR

It's alright.

FOROUGH

In the morning, I could show you my home.

KAMYAR

No. We have to stay here.

FOROUGH

We don't have to stay here.

KAMYAR

Momma, we do.

FOROUGH

Wait! Kami, please-
Please, don't run from me again!

DOLLS

Jane Maryam, cheshmato va kon, Sari bala kon
[My Dear Maryam, open your eyes, look up]
Daroumad Khorshid, Shod hava sefid,
[It is breaking dawn and sun has risen,]
vaghte oun resid, ke berim be sahra,
[It's time to go to the field now,]
Vay, Nazanin e Maryam
[Oh, sweet Maryam]
Jane Maryam, cheshmato va kon, mano negah kon
[My Maryam, open your eyes, look at me]
Beshim Ravouneh, Berim as khouneh
[Let's leave home, hit the road]
Shoune be shoune, be yade oun rouza
[Shoulder to shoulder, as in the old days]
Vay, Nazanin e Maryam
[Oh, sweet Maryam]
Baz dobare sobh shod, Man hanouz bidaram
[It's morning again and I'm still awake]
Kash mikhabidam, to ro khab mididam
[I wish I could sleep and see you in my dreams]

KAMYAR

That day, that last time I saw Forough.
After school that day, on Stalin Street.
I'd had a fight with a fat boy. We were the only ones left.
The boy with green eyes came and said "Your mother is waiting outside."

DOLLS

Did you recognize her!
/Did you call her 'mother'?

KAMYAR

She walked beside me and stood out in her Italian suit.
I could feel the stares.

THRESHOLD OF BRIGHTNESS - LIBRETTO

DOLLS

How glamorous! Glamorous!

/How mortifying.

/I'm sure she didn't mean to!

/It's not easy to be a mother.

KAMYAR

Mother.

Such a strange word then. Strange still.

She was more poem than mother. More than I
could bear.

She spoke to me like an adult. Not how a mother
should.

Mothers command. Mothers hit you.

Like Auntie would do.

I ran.

I didn't know what else to do.

Life lived over again, I would have chosen you.

FOROUGH

I don't think I've loved anyone as much as I love you.

Death was always drawing a little nearer...

Never more so than when I lost you.

KAMYAR

More so. Much more so.

FOROUGH

Years... That was years ago.

You look the same.

KAMYAR

I am the same.

And this time I won't run away.

Stay. Please.

Tonight we must remain.

The whole whole night.

FOROUGH

Oh really? And how long is tonight?

THRESHOLD OF BRIGHTNESS - LIBRETTO

DOLLS

I know the secret of seasons, Understand the
language of moments

KAMYAR

Yalda is the longest night,
darkest night.

FOROUGH

But today was February.

The dawn of a cold season.

Nearly Spring.

Out?

Carving... my stone.

There was a crash?

TURAN

Your father is out

Your father is out

Carving your stone.

FOROUGH

Let's dig a grave.

Fortunate corpse,

Let us pour the dirt over each other
sleep in silence 'til the end of time.

Never, never be separated again.

Truly it's how I want to die

Or how I want to live on really.

TURAN

When we had lunch that day you drove away.

I think it was the nicest conversation we'd ever had.

FOROUGH

Ignore the charge from the deep deep earth

TURAN

Let us believe

KAMYAR

In Yalda

DOLLS

In Mithra

In the dawn

Let us believe

Yalda

/Cold season

Hope for Brightness
Brightness

There is hope...

Let us

/Brightness

There is hope.

Believe

THRESHOLD OF BRIGHTNESS - LIBRETTO

FOROUGH

Let me sink- With all that I love just sink in
Dissolve with all that love

ALL

There is hope for brightness

FOROUGH

...and, I know the secret of seasons. Understand the language of moments.
For a final truth, it's the moment life gets lost within itself.
When you let go of yourself.
When I let go.
Let go

TURAN, KAMYAR, & DOLLS

Let go /let go /let go

FOROUGH

Let go