

LEFT COAST CHAMBER ENSEMBLE PRESENTS

# DEATH WITH INTERRUPTIONS

Based on José Saramago's Novel *Death With Interruptions*, translated by Margaret Jull Costa

Libretto by Thomas Laqueur

Composed by Kurt Rohde

Directed by Majel Connery



Nikki Einfeld, Soprano

Daniel Cilli, Baritone

Joe Dan Harper, Tenor

Leighton Fong, Cello

Matilda Hofman, Conductor

MARCH 19 AND 21

2015 • 8:00 PM



ODC THEATER

SAN FRANCISCO

LEFT  
COAST  
CHAMBER  
ENSEMBLE



SEASON  
**22**



**dare to  
listen**



**2014  
2015**



## ABOUT LEFT COAST CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Through stirring presentations of chamber music across the Bay Area, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble breaks down boundaries between old and new music, and knits together performers, composers, and listeners. Our imaginative programs offer diverse audiences multiple points of entry and multiple ways to engage with the music.

Founded in 1992, the ensemble includes twelve musicians; the players perform in different combinations, using strings, winds, guitar, and piano to present a wide range of repertoire. All of the members have played together for at least fifteen years, and some for nearly three decades.

Left Coast presents a season of five concert sets annually, with performances in both San Francisco and Mill Valley, and will expand its East Bay offerings next year.

In addition, Left Coast offers *Music from the Inside Out* — an education program for young musicians — and *Intersection* — a workshop for adult amateurs held in January and February each year.

The group has commissioned nearly one hundred new works, sponsors an annual composition contest that draws applicants from around the world, and carries on a tradition of performing the very best that today's composers, whether established or emerging, have to offer.

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José Saramago (1922–2010) came from the poorest of backgrounds—his grandparents, on both sides, were illiterate agricultural workers, and when Saramago’s family moved to Lisbon, they lived in cramped and insalubrious lodgings, where, given scant schooling, Saramago virtually taught himself to read from the newspaper his father brought home each day.

When Saramago gave his Nobel acceptance speech in 1998, he wrote movingly about his grandparents and about his own genesis as a writer, describing how his grandfather would sometimes lull him to sleep with his stories.

Those early experiences inform all of Saramago’s writing, his unvarying theme being the ordinary man or woman pitted against an indifferent or hostile environment. It has to be said that his style of writing does not look like an ordinary person’s kind of literature: great swathes of unbroken text punctuated only by commas and periods—no dashes, colons, semicolons, question marks or exclamation marks. And yet Saramago defined himself as an oral narrator, whose words, he said, are meant to have the same impact as music. He claimed to orchestrate rather than merely construct phrases and to write as if he were composing a score by concentrating on a pattern of sounds and pauses.

His later novels take a scathingly critical look at modern-day society and often ask the question ‘What would happen if...?’ In *Death with Interruptions* (published in 2005), he asks—in a society obsessed with eternal youth and terrified of death: what if death (who is lower case and a “she”) were to decide that no one should die. When this, inevitably, has dire consequences for society, death decides to reinstate death, but, instead, to give people warning of their imminent demise by sending them a little purple note—more dire consequences. However, when one of death’s purple notes is sent to a humble cellist, mysteriously, he never receives it and so doesn’t die. Rather puzzled, death (invisible) goes to visit him in the apartment he shares with his dog. She sits on the sofa watching the cellist sleeping, observes him when he wakes up to get a drink of water, to let the dog out for a pee, and then go back to bed. Later, the dog leaves his master’s bed and curls companionably up on death’s lap.

Intrigued, death disguises herself as a beautiful young woman, flirts with the cellist and, to her own astonishment, falls in love and, one night, goes to bed with him (he, of course, has no inkling of her true identity). However, the novel ends on an ambiguous note: “The following day, no one died.” This takes us back to death’s first experiment, which, of course, ended in disaster. So is this a happy ending or simply the prelude to more misery? Is love the solution to all problems or merely the begetter of more problems? Food for thought.

—Margaret Jull Costa

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PROGRAM

March 19 and 21, 2015, 8:00 pm  
ODC Theater, San Francisco

*Post-concert conversation with musicians and audience after the March 19 performance.*

*Andante con moto* from String Quartet No. 14 in D Minor (1824), D. 810 “*Death and the Maiden*”  
Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

— Brief Pause —

*Death With Interruptions*

An Opera in One Act (2014–15)

Based on the novel by José Saramago, translated by Margaret Jull Costa

Music by Kurt Rohde ∞ Libretto by Thomas Laqueur

Majel Connery, Director and Scenic Designer

Lighting Design by Anthony Powers

Costume Design by Jennifer Gonsalves

Nikki Einfeld *death*  
Joe Dan Harper *Narrator, scythe, dog*  
Daniel Cilli *cellist*

**Left Coast Chamber Ensemble**

Matilda Hofman, conductor

Leighton Fong, solo cello   Anna Presler, violin  
Phil Acimovic, electronics   Jory Fankuchen, violin  
Eric Zivian, piano   Phyllis Kamrin, viola  
Loren Mach, percussion   Tanya Tomkins, cello

**Volti San Francisco**

Robert Geary, Artistic Director

Sue Bohlin, Chorus Master

Soprano

Yuhi Aizawa Combatti, Shauna Fallihee, Cecilia Lam, and Diana Pray

Alto

Monica Frame, Sharmila Guha Lash, Emily Ryan, and Colby Smith

Tenor

Julian Kusnadi, Ryan Matos, Jacob Thompson, and Jeffrey Wang

Bass

Jeff Bennett, Peter Dennis Mautner, Jefferson Packer, and Philip Saunders

*Leading Blank: Introitus Interruptio*

**SCENE I**

*Chorus:* The situation was grave  
death's Letter

*Chorus:* We, here...

Dear sir,

I've got a letter for you...

*Chorus:* Don't get upset

Like an innocent fool

*Interlude I: Dance Mixed*

**SCENE II**

*Chorus:* Even God has no idea

You look very pretty

I am going to give you one last chance

death knows her man

I have a big favor to ask...

*Trio:* death heard her cellist play

*Interlude II: Vocalise*

**SCENE III**

*Chorus:* death heard her cellist play

I only came to thank you

*Recitative:* I didn't mean what you

were thinking

You must fail sometimes...

I have a recollection

*Pantomime:* death turns away

*Recitative:* The wretched cellist

Please go away...

The letter

*Trailing Blank: Exeunt*

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University of California, Davis, Chancellor's Award, granted to Kurt Rohde

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**SCENE I**

*Narrator*

In a small Iberian country death decided to stop working.  
At first everyone was overjoyed but soon all concerned –  
the Church, the state, the undertakers, the insurance companies –  
realized that the situation was dire.

The Maphia offered temporary relief but could not really replace death.  
death decides to start working again but under new and more regular conditions  
those who will die will get a timely notice.  
She informs the ministry of her intentions.

*death*

To whom it may concern...  
To whom, Dear Sir...  
salutations...  
Dear Mister...

*Electronics*

The situation was grave...

*Chorus*

One day, no one died  
As if  
Old Atropos  
Had decided  
to put aside her shears  
for a day

And another day,  
and another  
After many days Chaos reigned.

*death*

Dear señor minister,

I wish to inform you and all those  
concerned that  
from midnight tonight  
people will start to die again,  
...I should explain that the reason  
that led me ...  
to stop killing and put away my  
emblematic scythe  
was to give those human beings who  
so loathe me  
just a taste of what it would mean to  
live forever.

I feel it my duty to admit that I was  
wrong...  
the cruel and unjust way in which  
I used to proceed,  
taking people's lives by stealth,

from now on everyone will receive  
due warning  
and be given a week  
to put what remains of their life in  
order

I sign with the name  
I am usually known by,

death

*Chorus*

We, here, who cannot die, await all  
of you who pass us by.

*death*

Dear sir,

I regret to inform you that  
in a week your life will end,  
irrevocably and irremissibly.  
yours faithfully,

death

*Electronics*

pitiless,  
cruel,  
tyrannical,  
wicked,  
bloodthirsty,  
disloyal and treacherous,  
vampire,  
empress of evil,  
dracula in skirts,  
enemy of humankind,  
murderess,  
serial killer,  
daughter-of-a-bitch

*scythe*

I've got a letter for you...  
a violet colored envelope...  
pointless trying to tear it into  
pieces...

*Narrator*

blank amazement on her bony face  
an exception.  
Return to sender.

*death*

...returned,  
not known at this address,  
no forwarding address  
addressee gone away,  
or simply,  
dead

*Narrator*

indestructible...  
important...  
Yes, it is important..  
no exceptions...

*death*

The solution would be to send it  
again.

If I'd sent you,  
with your taste  
for expeditious methods,  
the matter  
would have been resolved,  
times have changed,  
always before  
whoever was meant to die died.

*Electronics*

A strange,  
mysterious,  
incomprehensible force,  
resisting his demise

*death*

It's impossible  
I'm death,  
all else is nothing

*Chorus*

confused, upset  
hardly surprising  
think how long she has done this job  
until now no disrespect  
from the human flock  
she is the sovereign shepherdess.  
Poor death is beside herself,  
distraught

*death*

The wretched cellist,  
since his birth,  
has been marked out to die  
a young man  
of forty-nine summers,  
has brazenly entered his fiftieth year.

*Chorus*

Don't get upset, madam death  
We understand your distress  
the first defeat is the hardest

*Narrator*

like an innocent fool,  
he continues to live  
this scraper of cellos  
turned into a survivor of himself.

## SCENE II

**Chorus**

In this country, in which no one  
dies, not everything was as sorted as  
we have just described.

Probably even God has no idea  
where he is taking us.

**scythe**

You look very pretty.

**death**

You spoke

**scythe**

I would have spoken  
even if you'd emerged  
as a fat woman  
in black  
like the one who appeared  
to monsieur Marcel Proust,

**death**

you have no idea  
who Marcel Proust was.

**scythe**

we scythes,  
those who cut down people  
and those who cut down grass,  
have never been taught to read.

however  
he was a great writer,  
one of the greatest who ever lived.

**death**

I wasn't the death who killed him.

I am going to give you one last  
chance.

If that's how you want it.  
I'll cross out the date of birth  
to the following year  
I'll amend his age  
where fifty was written,  
I'll write forty-nine.

**scythe**

You can't do that.

**death**

It's done.

**scythe**

There'll be consequences.

**death**

Only one

**scythe**

What's that?

**death**

The death, at last,  
of that wretched cellist

**scythe**

you don't have the power  
to change a card.

**death**

I have all the power  
and authority  
I need.  
I'm death  
never more so  
than from this day forward.

**scythe**

You don't know what you're getting  
into.

**Chorus**

Death knows her man,  
She had seen him asleep

**Narrator**

his dog by his side

**Chorus**

heard him tune his cello

**Narrator**

the tricky bit

**Chorus**

death felt sorry for him

**Narrator**

he is not going to have time  
to get it right

**Chorus**

a musician, nothing more

**Narrator**

the cellist's life  
had seduced death  
she sets out  
to seduce her cellist

**death**

My dear scythe  
I have a big favor to ask to you

I'm going to be away for a week  
I need you to take over dispatching  
the letters

A mental command  
an inner vibration in your blade  
will set them off

I'll leave them for you on the desk

**scythe**

How pretty you look today.

**death**

Go on, admit it, I'm irresistible

**scythe**

That depends  
on the kind of man  
you hope to seduce.

**Narrator**

the scythe has hit the nail on the  
head

**death**

handing over the letter  
will be an easy matter  
You're going to die,  
you have a week.

**death, scythe, cellist**

Death heard her cellist play  
bidding farewell  
to the world  
saying everything  
he always kept unsaid,  
truncated dreams,  
frustrated yearnings, in short – life.

## SCENE III

**Chorus**

Death heard her cellist play  
bidding farewell  
to the world  
saying everything  
he always kept unsaid...  
the orchestra washed over the cello's  
song  
gently submerging,  
absorbing, amplifying  
that song  
where music was transmuted into...

**Narrator**

the merest shadow of a vibration  
that touched the skin as if  
a butterfly had momentarily alighted

she waited until it was all over  
to speak to her cellist

**death**

I only came to thank you  
for the pleasure  
of hearing you play

**cellist**

Very kind of you

**death**

But I want an autograph  
I have here an envelope

**cellist**

I am flattered  
I don't deserve it.  
I had a good day  
You'll get over it.

**death**

You don't know me  
I always stick to my resolutions.

**cellist**

And what are they?

**death**

Only one; to meet you.

**cellist**

And now that you have met me  
we can say goodbye.

**death**

Are you afraid of me?

**cellist**

No, I just find you rather troubling.

**death**

"rather troubling" is my presence  
such a small thing,  
Let's go to a bar and give another  
concert.

**cellist**

She's mad.

**death**

Yes, there was a time  
when I played the violin.

**cellist**

You seem determined  
to surprise me  
with every word you say.

**death**

Its up to you  
To find out  
How surprising I can be.

**cellist**

Every word she says  
seems to carry another meaning

**death**

I didn't mean what you are thinking

**cellist**

And what was I thinking may I ask?

**death**

About bed and me in bed

**cellist**

Forgive me, no.

**death**

It was my fault  
If I were a man that is what I would  
be thinking.

We should part.

**cellist**

I will drop you at your hotel

**death**

No, I will take you home first

**cellist**

Do you always get your way?

**death**

Yes, always

**cellist**

You must fail sometimes  
God is god and he has done  
almost nothing to fail

**death**

You are right  
today I failed twice  
something that has never  
happened before.  
I never fail

**cellist**

ok  
Show me

**death**

Don't be stupid

**cellist**

She's mad, completely mad!

**dog**

I have a recollection  
of having slept in a woman's lap  
it might have been hers  
there she was

**dog & cellist**

over there  
watching him

**dog**

I remember no doggy imagining  
no dream  
it was her  
watching him as he slept

**cellist**

But she will be there  
at the concert  
Then we will ride home together  
I'll invite her in  
then we can talk calmly,  
she'll finally give me the longed-for  
letter.  
We'll both laugh at the exaggerated  
words of praise.

**Narrator**

Death failed to call the cellist  
He waited anxiously.

**cellist**

we'll talk calmly,  
finally – the longed-for letter  
We'll both laugh at the exaggerated  
words of praise

**Chorus**

Death failed to call the cellist  
He waited anxiously.  
She was not at the concert.  
The cellist felt like an imbecile.



**cellist**

I've fallen in love with a woman  
I know nothing about  
who is amusing herself at my  
expense  
who will go off, who knows where  
and who I'll never see again

**death**

It isn't true  
that I have been amusing myself  
at your expense  
As for falling in love with me  
you can hardly  
expect me  
to respond  
there are things  
my mouth is forbidden  
to speak

Once we have said goodbye  
all mysteries will be resolved

the man stirred,  
perhaps he was dreaming,  
perhaps he was still playing the three  
Schumann pieces and had played a  
wrong note,  
a cello isn't like a piano,  
on the piano, the notes are always in  
the same place,  
underneath each key,  
while on the cello they're scattered  
along the length of the strings,  
and you have to go and look for  
them,  
to pin them down,  
find the exact point,  
move the bow at just the right angle  
and with just the right pressure,  
so nothing could be easier than to  
hit one or two wrong notes while  
you're sleeping.

**cellist**

Please go away,  
Do not torment me

Are you leaving already?  
I've never touched you.

**death**

No, I was the one  
who stopped you touching me.

**cellist**

How did you manage that?

**death**

It wasn't that difficult.

**cellist**

Not even now?

**death**

Not even now.

**cellist**

We could at least shake hands

**death**

My hands are cold.

**death**

You'll see, you'll play even better  
than Rostropovich.

**cellist & death**

he was Johann Sebastian Bach  
himself  
composing in Cöthen.  
He got through the difficult passage,  
his happy hands made the cello  
murmur,  
speak,  
sing,  
roar,  
this is what Rostropovich had  
lacked,  
this room,  
this hour,  
this woman.  
her hands were no longer cold  
his hands were on fire  
their hands were not in the least  
surprised  
when hand reached out to hand.

**cellist**

You must go on.

**death**

I can't go on.  
I'll go on.

**Chorus & Narrator**

a single glance  
reduce to dust  
a simple match,  
ordinary match,  
everyday match,

**cellist**

the letter  
put her arms  
around the man,  
without understanding

**Chorus**

she who never slept  
gently closing

**dog**

They went into the bedroom,

**cellist**

got undressed,

**death**

and what was written would happen

**dog**

finally happened,

**cellist**

and again,

**dog**

and yet again.

**death**

He fell asleep,

**dog**

she did not.

**Narrator**

She went into the kitchen,  
lit a humble match,  
she who could make the paper  
vanish  
with a single glance  
and reduce it to dust

it was a simple match,  
that set light to death's letter,  
the letter that only death could  
destroy

Death went back to bed,  
put her arms around the man,  
without understanding  
what was happening to her,  
she who never slept  
fell sleep  
gently closing  
her eyelids.

**scythe**

The following day, no one died.

## FROM THE COMPOSER

I was immediately struck by how Saramago's *Death With Interruptions* connected so clearly with two things I think about perhaps more than anything... Okay, three things: death, music and sex. Since this is opera, I assumed that the obvious death/sex connections would be a given; this left me with their connections to music. My conundrum: Here is a story about music that makes use of a number of references to music, and I would be setting it to music; how was I to do this without getting all meta? Ultimately, the story's "folding in on itself" quality was the only way I was able to understand what was happening in the story—death decides to change the rules about killing. In doing so, she makes mistakes and poor decisions, undergoes an unforeseen metamorphosis to become a woman, and falls in love. This all happens, only happens, because of the power of music.

Music as magic is a cultural archetype. Saramago's transformation of spectral death to living human is, in my opinion, a reverse retelling of Ovid's Orpheus myth. In his modern re-imagining, instead of Orpheus using his singing and lyre-playing to seduce the Furies, Persephone, and Hades to persuade them to allow Eurydice to rise with him back to the land of the living, it is Saramago's cellist whose playing is able to transfix and transform death [note the lower case death, as opposed to an upper case Death]. death moves from the inanimate to animate, haphazardly, even blindly at times, following the cellist's music as a map to a land she has never occupied before: ours.

Most unsettling about Saramago's tale is where it ends. In Ovid's version, Orpheus looked back at Eurydice in the final moments before they reached the surface, only to have her fall, again, into the underworld, lost forever. In Saramago's ending, it seems that death has made it to the "surface," having reached full transformation into a woman, complete in her flawed mortality. But the thing she has always done best, killing people, remains unresolved. When she begins her transformation, people stop dying altogether, only to begin to die again by way of her innovative method of mailing her victims a notice. It is at this point that the bureaucracy of life, not to mention the shortcomings of the postal service, gets in the way. But once death and the cellist finally seduce each other, it appears that her evolution is complete; She is at the "surface" with the rest of the living. But Saramago throws us a curveball: death, who never sleeps, has fallen asleep after making love to the cellist, and on that day, no one dies. What does this tell us? I believe it shows us that death is destined to forever occupy that moment just before reaching the "surface," hovering near a fully realized ideal of what humans think they want most—to live and love forever.

—Kurt Rohde

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Death With Interruptions* is about the power of music to overcome death. It's a subject tailor-made for opera, as the many Orpheus operas over the centuries will attest. But *Death With Interruptions* is an inverted Orpheus tale: this time, death comes to earth to be seduced by a musician. And he's no Orpheus.

In Saramago's novel, *Death With Interruptions*, death moves from a cold, hellish world into a world of life, and love and music. *Death With Interruptions*, the opera, traces a similar journey between these two worlds. But in opera, it's harder to move from a world without music into a world with it, because music is the currency of opera. Thus, Rohde's *Death With Interruptions* has changed the rules. Now, we begin and end in musical worlds, but they are musically different worlds. The difference between the world of Life and the world of death is the difference between music that is finished and complete, and music that is unfinished, unfamiliar, and even awkward.

From a staging perspective, an opera about music is a tricky thing. Like a novel about writing, or a film about filmmaking, an opera about music goes against the grain of how opera works. Usually, opera singers sing because that's what characters in opera do, and we accept this. But an opera that is about music draws attention to the oddity of people singing. Like attending to words on a page instead of reading them as a story, or watching for camera angles rather than being absorbed by film, an opera about music wakes us up to the fact that we are watching people do something very strange. And this can be dangerous, because it threatens the whole premise of opera. Why sing about things that can perfectly well be said?

This production stages that danger by threatening at every moment to fall apart. Characters linger at the boundaries of performance in various modes of pre- and post-production—the warm-up, the dress rehearsal, the cast party, the unstaged concert performance. Costumes feel flimsy, blocking seems improvised and, apart from a few chairs and music stands, there is next to no stage scenery.

Since death's path takes her from a non-musical place to a musical one, it may seem paradoxical that, at the start of the opera, death is the only character who looks like she's in an opera. Unlike the cellist that death falls in love with, she emerges at the beginning in full-blown operatic regalia and only gradually commits to something simpler. But opera is full of stories of supernatural beings doing extraordinary things. This opera is about an extraordinary character who quits that role in order to do the most ordinary thing in the world. She falls in love.

—Majel Connery

## FROM THE LIBRETTIST

I fell in love with *Death With Interruptions*—or rather, with Margaret Costa's English translation of Saramago's long, breathless sentences and with his meditations on death and memory—long before I had the means to help produce an opera or the opportunity to write a libretto. The means came when I received an award with few strings attached from the Mellon Foundation. I decided to use some of the money for this project because I love opera; because, as the most capacious of the arts, it would draw in as many collaborators within the academy and without as possible; and because I wanted to try my hand at writing a libretto.

Basing it on this particular novel came out of a conversation with the conductor of the Berkeley Symphony, Joanna Caneros, to whom I was introduced by a common friend, Jennifer Howard. Saramago's *Names*, about a clerk in a vast archive of the dead who becomes obsessed with a girl whose records cross his desk, had been another possibility. But *Death with Interruptions*, with its cellist-protagonist, seemed more musical and dramatically promising.

The first two thirds of the novel is the prelude to the story we see tonight. death—not Death in her cosmic magnificence but death with a lower case “d” charged with killing in a small Iberian country—decides to stop working. At first everyone is overjoyed, but soon the full reality of her absence sets in. Morbidity does not vanish; the old stay old and the infirm hang on the brink of life. The mercy of death is gone. But more importantly, everyone comes to understand how deeply dependent, practically speaking, we are on death. The Church, as anti-clerical writers like Saramago have been saying for centuries, dines off of the dead; but undertakers and insurance companies are equally in thrall to her; without her the welfare state is liable for unending pensions and families are left with their sick relatives in perpetuity. The “Maphia”—Saramago's version of the better-known organization—steps in to transport people over the border to a land where another death is still at work. We are made vividly aware that human life in its bureaucratic superficiality and selfishness depends on death. We are also reminded that we are fundamentally mortal creatures.

In the third part of the novel death relents, though under a new dispensation. And this is where the story of our opera begins. death slowly becomes human—not promising for someone in her line of work—and finally fails at her job when she falls in love with a cellist and with his music. It is this story of death's evolution into a being susceptible to human emotions that provides the narrative structure for the opera.

The hardest part about adapting a novel into a libretto was the need to savagely pare Saramago's—and Costa's—beautiful text to the required length. I had the number of words in Bach's St. John's Passion as a goal; we ended up with half as many, shaped by narration, arias, and choruses into the love story of the cellist and death. I wrote in stage directions that I hoped the cellist's dog would get a singing part and that the scythe should be funny, but it was Majel Connery and Kurt Rohde who made that possible.

—Thomas Laqueur



Lyric coloratura soprano, **Nikki Einfeld**, has been widely recognized for her “high flying virtuosity” (*New York Times*) as well as “a bright, lithe tone, pinpoint accuracy and a saucy stage demeanor” (*San Francisco Chronicle*). Einfeld’s engagements include appearances with San Francisco Opera, including the world premiere of *Delores Claiborne* by Tobias Picker, Gianetta in *The*

*Elixir of Love*, Barbarina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*; Vancouver Opera and New Orleans Opera as Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*; with Syracuse Opera and Green Mountain Opera Festival she has sung the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor*; with Opera Lyra Ottawa as Ophelia in *Hamlet*; and with West Bay Opera as Konstanze in *Die Entführung aus den Serail*. A former Adler Fellow and Merola Alumna with the San Francisco Opera, this Canadian soprano also received acclaim as a Grand Finalist in the 2006 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Her affinity for recital and concert repertoire, including many 20th- and 21st-century work premieres, has led to guest appearances with the San Francisco Symphony, Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra New Music Festival, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, the Left Coast Chamber Orchestra, Montreal Chamber Orchestra, and the Empyrean Ensemble. Upcoming engagements in the Bay Area include appearances with the Marin Symphony Orchestra and at the Mendocino Music Festival as Rosina in *Barber of Seville*.



Baritone **Daniel Cilli’s** performances during 2014–2015 include the American premiere of *Heart of Darkness* by Tarik O’Regan at Opera Parallèle, Oakland Opera’s adaptation of Weill’s *Mahagonny* with HOODSLAM!, the chamber orchestration of John Glover’s *Natural Systems* with BluePrint Ensemble, Harlekin in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Festival Opera Walnut Creek, Marullo in *Rigoletto*

at both Opera San José and Opera Santa Barbara, and Javert in *Les Misérables* with Utah Festival Opera. Other recent performances include the title role in *Gesualdo: Prince of Madness* by Dante DeSilva plus multiple roles in a Weill-Poulenc double bill with Opera Parallèle, Dandini in *La Cenerentola* at Livermore Valley Opera, the title role in *Don Giovanni* at West Bay Opera, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Cilli studied music at Stetson University, New England Conservatory, and Lieder at the Franz Schubert Institute in Baden-bei Wien, Austria.



Hailed for his “magnificent purity of expression” (*Fanfare Magazine*) and “stirring delivery” (*Boston Globe*), tenor **Joe Dan Harper** is a versatile and engaging interpreter of a wide-ranging repertoire from Schubert to Britten. Harper has performed with such groups as the Boston Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Boston Academy of Music, Central City Opera, Handel & Haydn

Society, South Carolina Opera, Utah Festival Opera, and Utah Opera. Harper has premiered works by some of America’s most prominent composers, including Thea Musgrave, Stephen Paulus, Daniel Pinkham, Libby Larsen, Ned Rorem, Robert Deemer and Lior Navok. He has been a featured performing artist and member of the faculty at SongFest in Malibu, California and the soundSCAPE new music festival in Pavia, Italy. A passionate interpreter of song repertoire with a noted gift for expressive and poetic diction, his discography includes Florestan Recital Project’s “The Complete Songs of Daniel Pinkham, Volumes 1 and 2,” Daniel Pinkham’s opera *The Garden Party* in the role of “Adam” on

the Arsis label, and Wesley Fuller’s setting of five poems by William Carlos Williams, *A Solace of Ripe Plums* released on Capstone Record. He was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to Germany, has been a Fellow at the Steans Institute for Young Artists at the Ravinia Festival and the Tanglewood Music Center, and holds degrees in performance from the New England Conservatory of Music and Southern Methodist University. Harper has been a member of the SUNY Fredonia voice faculty since 2004.



**Phil Acimovic** was born and raised in the quiet northeast corner of Connecticut. He currently studies composition at UC Davis. His music is calm but messy, organized but flexible, with pieces written for percussion, string quartet, reed quintet, and orchestra. He dedicated several years to studying Javanese Karawitan and performs that music often. Acimovic bakes the best pumpkin pie

in town and is an amateur astronomer. He prefers dark beer and black coffee.



**Jessica Clarkson** has worked with opera companies throughout California, including producing and assistant directing the widely praised 2013 OperaSLO production of *Carmen*. She most recently served as production manager and stage director for Kent Nagano’s workshop of Berlioz’s *Les Troyens* at San Francisco State University. Clarkson coordinates a scholarship program at the UC

Berkeley Center for African Studies and is a soprano soloist and chorus member in the UC Berkeley Chamber Chorus.



Director **Majel Connery** is Co-founder and Executive and Artistic Director of Opera Cabal. She is also the producer of operaSHOP, the company’s newest initiative, and the curator for its monthly Hyde Park Salon Series in Chicago. As a stage director, Majel has worked with opera director Christopher Alden at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Den Norske Oper (Oslo) and at Chicago Opera

Theater. She serves in an ongoing capacity as stage director, actor, and vocalist with Opera Cabal. As a scholar of contemporary opera and staging practice, Connery’s academic projects explore the relationship between music and movement, and visual aspects of the modern operatic stage. She received an A.B. in music composition from Princeton University, holds an M.A. in ethnomusicology and a Ph.D. in musicology from the University of Chicago, and is currently a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Music at the UC Berkeley.



Violinist **Jory Fankuchen** performs with the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, the Magik Magik Orchestra, Squid Ink, the Musical Art Quintet, and the Chamber Music Society of San Francisco. Jory has appeared as soloist with the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra, the Berkeley Symphony, at Tanglewood, and has had the distinction of performing on Jascha Heifetz’s Guarneri del Gesù

violin at the Legion of Honor. Fankuchen serves on the faculty of the Crowden Music Center, the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra, and Crowden chamber music workshops. He is a graduate of the San Francisco and the New England conservatories of music.





**Leighton Fong**, longtime member of LCCE, is Principal Cello of California Symphony. He plays regularly with Eco Ensemble and Empyrean Ensemble, and was a member of SF Contemporary Players. Fong studied at the SF Conservatory, New England Conservatory, Bern Conservatory, and the Royal Danish Conservatory in Copenhagen. He has taught at UC Berkeley since 1997.

**Jennifer Gonsalves** is a costume designer based in the Bay Area. A seamstress since the age of 13, she first started designing costumes in 2009 and has designed over 30 productions since then. She enjoys all aspects of costume work, including collaboration, design, pattern making, sewing, fitting, crafting, and millinery. She works regularly with the Joe Goode Performance Group and Palo Alto Children's Theatre. Contact her at [goneolives@yahoo.com](mailto:goneolives@yahoo.com).



Conductor **Matilda Hofman** has a varied career in Europe and the US. He has conducted Luigi Nono's *Prometeo* at the Salzburg Festival, Berliner Festspiele, Tonhalle Zürich and the Holland Festival. She has worked with Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Recherche, Kammerakademie Potsdam and the SWR Sinfonie-Orchester. In California she has conducted for Festival Opera, the Sierra Summer Festival, and Left Coast Chamber Ensemble. She is conductor for Empyrean Ensemble and Music Director of the Diablo Symphony Orchestra.



**Phyllis Kamrin** holds degrees from Curtis Institute and the New England Conservatory. She is a member of the string quartet within LCCE, and of Alma Duo, an ensemble with guitar. She has played with Sierra String Quartet, New Century Chamber Orchestra, and Philharmonia Baroque. Kamrin is Director of Adult Chamber Music at the Crowden School in Berkeley.



Librettist **Thomas Laqueur** is the author of four books and hundreds of articles and reviews. In connection with his forthcoming book, *The Work of the Dead: a Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton University Press), he was interviewed on the NPR program *To the Best of Our Knowledge* this year. A prolific writer, he contributes regularly to print and online publications, from *The London*

*Review of Books* to *Slate.com*. His most recent two books are *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Harvard University Press, 1990) and *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (Zone Books, 2003). Laqueur is the Helen Fawcett Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has been teaching since 1973. He is an aspiring cellist.



**Loren Mach** is passionate about 21st century music. A member of ECO Ensemble, San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, and co-founder of Rootstock Percussion, he has premiered countless solo, chamber, and orchestral works. Mach often performs with the San Francisco Symphony and other Bay area orchestras, but he prefers more intimate projects with groups like San Francisco

Contemporary Music Players, Empyrean, Earplay, sfSound, and LCCE. His other passions explore our fundamental relationship to food as a form of communion with others, and our interconnectedness with the natural world around us.



**Anthony Powers** is a lighting designer living in Seattle, Washington. He has designed for traditional and experimental theater, modern dance, and circus productions through out the US. For the past 8 years he has designed the lighting for and production managed corporate and live events as well as trade shows for a vast array of clients including Red Bull, Disney on Ice, EA Sports, Yahoo, Clorox, and Genentech. Powers is also the undisputed karaoke king of Ft. Smith, Arkansas. His work can be seen at [anthonypowers.virb.com](http://anthonypowers.virb.com).



**Anna Presler**, Anna Presler, Artistic Director of Left Coast and longtime violinist of the ensemble, teaches violin and chamber music at Sacramento State, and has been a member of New Century Chamber Orchestra since 1995. Presler was a fellow at Banff Art Centre, International Music Seminar at Cornwall, and Tanglewood Music Center and holds degrees from Yale University, SF Conservatory, and the North Carolina School of the Arts.



Violist and composer **Kurt Rohde** is a recipient of the Rome Prize, the Berlin Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Lydian String Quartet Commission Prize, and has received commission awards from the Barlow, Fromm, Hanson, and Koussevitzky Foundations. He received the 2015 Arts and Letters Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. A Professor at UC Davis, Rohde was a Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies in 2012–13. He plays with the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble and serves as their artistic advisor. Rohde's hobbies include running, triple IPAs, Philip K. Dick, and pretty much any recent film.



**Tanya Tomkins**, the first cellist to win the Bodky Competition for Early Music Soloists, is currently one of Philharmonia and Portland Baroque's principal cellists. An ABS Academy faculty member, Tomkins also teaches regularly at the SF Conservatory. She recorded the Bach Suites and performed them at the Library of Congress.



**Eric Zivian** is a graduate of Curtis Institute, Juilliard School, and Yale School of Music. He studied composition with Ned Rorem, Jacob Druckman, and Martin Bresnick, and piano with Gary Graffman and Peter Serkin. Zivian has performed new music with Earplay and Empyrean Ensemble, and Beethoven and Mozart with Santa Rosa Symphony, Toronto Symphony, and

Philharmonia Baroque.



## THE ODC THEATER

Artistic Director/Founder	Brenda Way	Development Team	Petrice Gaskin,
Executive Director	Victor Gotesman		Jenny Smrekar, and Caroline Walthall
Deputy Director for Advancement	Christy Bolingbroke	House Technicians	Brendan Aanes, Jack Beuttler,
Programming & Operations Manager	Jeffrey Morris		Mark Hueske, Eric Iverson, Zoe Klein, Matt Lewis,
Production Manager	David Coffman		Delayne Medoff, David Robertson,
Client and Patron Services Manager	Dan Rivard		Becky Robinson-Leviton, and Ernie Trevino
Technical Director	Jason Dinneen	Box Office Agents	Diana Broker, Rebecca Chun,
ODC/Dance Co-Artistic Director	KT Nelson		Leah Gardner, Joseph Hernandez, and Karla Quintero
ODC School Director	Kimi Okada	House Managers	Mary Lachman, Rebecca
Marketing Team	Julia Snippen, Neal Spinler, and Jerri Zhang		Rodriguez-Crosta, Christi Welter, Alec White, Karla Quintero, and Dane Yoshida
		Receptionists	Claire Augustine and Juliana Gorman

## MISSION AND IMPACT

Since 1976, ODC Theater has been the mobilizing force behind countless San Francisco artists and the foothold for national and international touring artists seeking debut in the Bay Area. Nationally known artists Spaulding Gray, Diamanda Galas, Molissa Fenley, Bill T. Jones, Eiko & Koma, Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE, Ban Rarra and Karole Armitage are among those whose first San Francisco appearance occurred at ODC Theater. ODC Theater is part of a two-building campus dedicated to supporting every stage of the artistic lifecycle-conceptualization, creation, and performance. ODC Theater exists to empower and develop innovative artists. It participates in the creation of new works through commissioning, presenting, mentorship and space access; it develops informed, engaged and committed audiences; and advocates for the performing arts as an essential component to the economic and cultural development of our community. The Theater is the site of over 150 performances a year involving nearly 1,000 local, regional, national and international artists. Our Theater, founded by Brenda Way, then under the leadership of Rob Bailis for nearly a decade, and currently under the direction of Christy Bolingbroke, has earned its place as a cultural incubator by dedicating itself to creative change-makers, those leaders who give our region its unmistakable definition and flare. This includes our flagship company-ODC Dance-and our School, in partnership with Rhythm and Motion Dance Workout down the street at 351 Shotwell. Over 250 classes are offered weekly and your first adult class is \$5. *For more information on ODC Theater and all its programs please visit [www.odctheater.org](http://www.odctheater.org).*

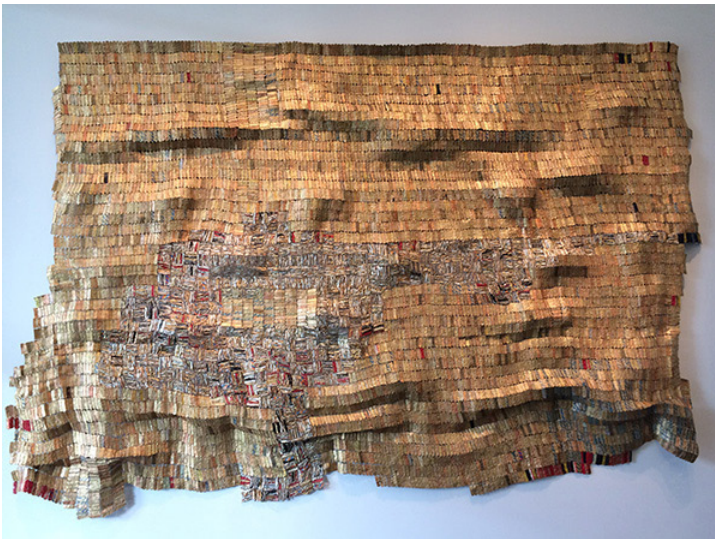
## SUPPORT FOR THE ODC THEATER

ODC Theater is supported in part by the following foundations and agencies: Creative Work Fund, The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, James Irvine Foundation, LEF Foundation, National Dance Project, National Endowment for the Arts, San Francisco Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Zellerbach Family Foundation and The Fleishhacker Foundation. ODC Theater is a proud member of Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Chamber Music America, Dance USA, Dancer's Group, and Theater Bay Area.

ART BY MATT KISH



**OPERA PARALLÈLE** will present the American premiere of *Heart of Darkness* by British composer Tarik O'Regan and librettist Tom Phillips, on May 1, 2, and 3, at San Francisco's Z Space. Based on the novella by Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* is a powerful work that portrays the greedy world of ivory smugglers in Central Africa as narrated by the central character, Marlow. The plot unfolds through a series of short, fast-paced scenes that gradually increase in tension, as Marlow's tale approaches its climax. Z Space is a former warehouse that has been converted to a flexible performance space ideal for cutting-edge productions. For further information, visit [www.operaparallele.org](http://www.operaparallele.org).



El Anatsui: *Hovor II* (2004)



Cornelia Parker: *Anti-Mass* (2005)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### *Left Coast Goes to the Museum*

Our final program of the 22nd season unites two great SF institutions, Left Coast and the de Young Museum. We will perform six new works based on exquisite sculptures in the museum's permanent collections: Cornelia Parker's *Anti-Mass* and El Anatsui's *Hovor II*. A generous grant from the San Francisco Arts Commission has funded new music from Jean Ahn, Nick Benavides, Jonathan Holland, Emily Koh, Mei-Fang Lin and Ryan Suleiman. Also on the program is music of Jon Deak, Robert Schumann, Felix Leuschner, and Thea Musgrave.

May 31 at 8:00 pm, 142 Throckmorton Theatre, Mill Valley

June 2 at 8:00 pm, San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Left Coast will also perform the six new works at Friday Nights at the de Young on the evening of May 29.

### *Join us for Left Coast's 2015-16 Season*

Left Coast will announce next season's programs in May.

Please subscribe to our mailing list to receive early notice about next year's concerts.

### *Upcoming Volti Performances*

*Pandora's Gift*: Volti's Resident Composer Mark Wings explores the myth of Pandora's Box in a confluence of music, poetry, theater and dance, with poet Denise Newman providing the libretto and director-choreographer Erika Chong Shuch staging Volti and the young singers of Ensemble from Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir.

The concert opens with premieres from Volti's two young-composer-competition winners,

Ryan Brown and Liza White.