



Rinde Eckert biography

RINDE ECKERT is a writer, composer, librettist, musician, performer and director. His Opera / New Music Theatre productions have toured throughout America and to major theater festivals in Europe and Asia. With a virtuosic command of gesture, language and song, this total theatre artist moves beyond the boundaries of what a 'play,' a 'dance piece,' an 'opera' or 'musical' might be, in the service of grappling with complex issues. Eckert describes many of his characters as "little men with big ideas whose consequences of their hubris are often disastrous." Sometimes tragic and austere, sometimes broadly comedic, entirely grounded by presence, his work is alchemical: moving from rumination and distillation to hard-won illumination, or its lack.

Rinde Eckert began his career as a writer and performer in the 1980's, writing librettos for Paul Dresher (*Pioneer, Power Failure, Slow Fire, Ravenshead*). He composed dance scores for choreographers Sarah Shelton Mann and Margaret Jenkins, including the evening-length *Woman, Window, Square* for The Margaret Jenkins Dance Company. Rinde began composing and performing his own music/theater works in 1992 with *The Gardening of Thomas D*, an homage to Dante which subsequently toured the United States and France. Staged works for solo performer include *Becoming... Unusual: The*

Education of an Eclectic; three one-act plays: *An Idiot Divine*, *Romeo Sierra Tango* and *Quit This House*; and works for radio including *Shoot the Moving Things* and *Four Songs Lost in a Wall*.

Writing credits for the theater include *Highway Ulysses*, *Horizon*, *Orpheus X*, *And God Created Great Whales*, which has been produced three times with the original cast and director, for a total of 227 performances. *And God Created Great Whales*, *Horizon* and *Orpheus X* have run off-Broadway, garnering Drama Desk Nominations and the Lucille Lortel Award. Rinde has received numerous honors and awards for his body of work. In 2012 he was named an inaugural Doris Duke Artist, was honored to receive the 2009 Alpert Award in the Arts for Theatre, a 2007 Guggenheim Fellowship, and The American Academy of Arts and Letters 2005 Marc Blitzstein Award. In 2007 Rinde Eckert was the finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama.

Eckert's work has been produced in New York by the Foundry Theatre, Culture Project, Theater for a New Audience and the New York Theatre Workshop. American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Center Stage in Baltimore, Cleveland's Dobama Theatre Company, REDCAT in Los Angeles at the Roy & Edna Disney/CalArts Theater, and Berkeley Repertory Theater have also produced his work. Directors have included Tony Taccone, Robert Woodruff, David Schweizer, Richard ET White and Ellen McLaughlin. Rinde Eckert has directed for The Asia Society, Juggernaut Theater, Opera Piccola and the Paul Dresher Ensemble. In 2013 he directed a remounting of *Eye Piece* for Barnard College students, and directed the two operas *Theotokia* and *The War Reporter* by Jonathan Berger and Dan O'Brien for Stanford Live.

New music projects Rinde has written and directed include *I Have Stopped the Clocks* for Roomful of Teeth; the critically acclaimed CD and concert *Sandhills Reunion* (music by Jerry Granelli, text by Eckert); *The Schick Machine* a solo-theater work for percussionist Steven Schick composed/produced by Paul Dresher; *Imaginary City* with So Percussion; *Sound Stage* for the ensemble Zeitgeist; *Gurs Zyklus*, a new music/performance/multi-media installation and collaboration with sound sculptor Trimpin; and Steven Mackey's oratorio *Dream House*. Conducted by Gil Rose with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the recording received three Grammy Nominations in 2010: Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance and Best Engineered Album, Classical. In 2014 Rinde performed *Dream House* with the New York Philharmonic.

Eckert wrote the text and performed in the multi-media production *Slide* with composer/guitarist Mackey and the new music ensemble 8th blackbird, which toured to major university campuses and the Ojai Festival. Renamed *Lonely Motel* by Cedille Records, the project won the 2011 Grammy Award for Best Small Ensemble Performance. Eckert and Mackey are members of BIG FARM, a 'prog-rock' super group with drummer Jason Treuting (So Percussion) and bassist Mark Haanstra. Rinde Eckert's own uniquely eclectic music is released on Germany's Intuition label and through Songline/Tonefield Productions.

In March 2015 during a 2-week residency at Les Subsistances, the Laboratoire international de création artistique in Lyon, France, writer/performer Eckert and composer/performer Ned Rothenberg expanded *Five Beasts* into a full-evening work. Imagining how animals might perceive human beings, Eckert brings the conceit to life with an array of unconventional sounds and gestures. He curated a concert series at Brooklyn's National Sawdust during 2016 where he performed *Five Beasts*, *Sandhills Reunion* and other of his works. *Five Beasts* will tour during 2017-2018.

In February 2017 Rinde Eckert makes his Kennedy Center recital debut as part of Renee Fleming's inaugural VOICES Series.

The new music-theatre work *Aging Magician*, a Beth Morrison Production, uses sonic and visual elements to guide a man entering his final stages of life to the fantastical world of Coney Island. Composed by Paola Prestini with libretto by Rinde Eckert, direction and design by Julian Crouch, instrument design by Mark Stewart, and projection design by S. Katy Tucker, *Aging Magician* combines music, theatre, puppetry, instrument making, and scenic design to create an enduring work for the stage. The work has been performed at Mass MOCA, the Walker Arts Center and the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois, and travels to Arizona State University in February 2017. The work runs for a week in March 2017 at the New Victory Theater in New York City.

The Kronos Quartet's production of composer Jonathan Berger's monodrama *My Lai* was written for singer-actor Rinde Eckert, master Vietnamese musician Van Anh Vo and the Kronos Quartet. The work debuted at Stanford University and Chicago's Harris Theater in 2015-2016, and will tour in the 2017-2018 Season.

Rinde has taught graduate students from the English Department and School of Music at Princeton University since 2007. His extensive writing and directing residencies began at the University of Nebraska where he created *Horizon*; the University of California at Davis Department of Theater and Dance to write and direct *Fate and Spinoza*; in partnership with Hancher and the University of Iowa to create, write, direct and perform in *Eye Piece*, a play exploring the loss of vision which Rinde again directed for Barnard College students in March 2013; and at Wesleyan University's Center for the Arts to create, write and direct theater students in *The Last Days of the Old Wild Boy*. He led a 2-week teaching residency with the Departments of Theater and Dance at Towson University during spring 2015 and is currently co-teaching a course on creativity with Paul Drescher at the University of South Maine.

Rinde Eckert lives in Nyack, New York with his wife Ellen McLaughlin, the playwright and actress.

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