



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 began his career in the 1980's writing librettos for Paul Dresher (*Pioneer, Power Failure, Slow Fire, Ravenshead*) and performing. 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. In 1992 he began composing and performing his own music/theater work with *The Gardening of Thomas D*, an homage to Dante which toured in the United States and France. His staged works for solo performer include *Becoming...Unusual: The Education of an Eclectic*; the three


one-act plays *An Idiot Divine*, *Romeo Sierra Tango* and *Quit This House*. Works for radio include *Shoot the Moving Things* and *Four Songs Lost in a Wall*. In February 2017 Rinde opened the inaugural season of Renée Fleming's Voices Series at the Kennedy Center where he premiered his recital *Rin: Tales from the Life of a Troubadour*.

Theatre writing credits include *Highway Ulysses*, *Horizon*, *Orpheus X*, and *And God Created Great Whales*, which was 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 all had off-Broadway runs, garnering Drama Desk Nominations and the Lucille Lortel Award. Other important awards include being named an inaugural Doris Duke Artist in 2012, receiving 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. His directors have included Tony Taccone, Robert Woodruff, David Schweizer, Richard ET White and Ellen McLaughlin. Rinde 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 operas *Theotokia* and *The War Reporter* by Jonathan Berger and Dan O'Brien for Stanford Live.

Writing and directing new music projects have included *I Have Stopped the Clocks* for Roomful of Teeth; the critically acclaimed CD *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 2010 Grammy Nominations: 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 disc 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.



Recent highlights, upcoming projects and engagements include the Kronos Quartet's production of composer Jonathan Berger's monodrama *My Lai*, written for singer-actor Eckert, Vietnamese musician Vanh An Vo and the Kronos Quartet. Performances in the 2017-2018 season include the Singapore Festival, Brooklyn, major college campuses and Holland.

Rinde wrote the libretto and performs the lead in the new music-theatre work *Aging Magician*, a Beth Morrison Production. The work recently ran for 2-weeks at the New Victory Theatre in New York City and will be performed at UCLA this season.

Rinde has taught at Princeton University since 2007, working with graduate students from the English Department and School of Music. His extensive writing and directing residencies began at the University of Nebraska to create *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, perform in and direct *Eye Piece*, a play exploring the loss of vision which Rinde again directed for Barnard College students; Wesleyan University's Center for the Arts to create, write and direct theater students in *The Last Days of the Old Wild Boy*; and a 2-week teaching residency with the Departments of Theater and Dance at Towson University. Rinde and Paul Drescher led a yearlong project with the University of South Maine in 2016-2017.

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

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