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Sunday, June 12, 2022 | 5:30pm

Libbey Bowl

Festival Finale

AMOC* | Ruckus | Friends

ACT I: Ruckus & AMOC*
Celeste ORAM

Girolamo FRESCOBALDI

Sigismondo D'INDIA

Celeste ORAM

Antonio VIVALDI

Philip GLASS
(arr. Michael RIESMAN)

ACT II: AMOC*
John CAGE

Nina SIMONE

Franz SCHUBERT

Julius EASTMAN

A Tuning Tune

Ruckus

Canzoni a due Bassi

Coleman Itzkoff *cello* | Doug Balliett *double bass* | Ruckus

Infelice Didone

Text by the composer | Anthony Roth Costanzo *countertenor* | Ruckus

Attuning Tune

Ruckus

Preludio from Sonata VI in B-flat major for Cello, RV46

Coleman Itzkoff *cello* | Ruckus

Qual per ignoto calle, RV 677

Anthony Roth Costanzo *countertenor* | Ruckus

Liquid Days

Text by David Byrne

The Encounter from 1000 Airplanes on the Roof

Anthony Roth Costanzo *countertenor* | Emi Ferguson *flute*
Gleb Kanasevich *clarinet* | Miranda Cuckson *violin* | Keir GoGwilt *violin*
Carrie Frey *viola* | Coleman Itzkoff *cello* | Doug Balliett *double bass*
Elliot Figg *harpsichord* | Jonny Allen *percussion* | Mari Yoshinaga *percussion*
Matthew Aucoin *conductor*

She is Asleep

Julia Bullock *soprano* | Conor Hanick *piano*

Revolution

Four Women

Julia Bullock *soprano* | Conor Hanick *piano*

Ständchen (excerpt from *Open Rehearsal*)

Bobbi Jene Smith *director* | *Open Rehearsal* company

Stay On It

AMOC* Full Festival Company

Celeste ORAM (b. 1990)
A Tuning Tune (2022)

Girolamo FRESCOBALDI (1583-1643)
Canzoni a due Bassi (1628)

Sigismondo D'INDIA (c. 1582-1629)
Infelice Didone (1623)

Celeste ORAM (b. 1990)
Attuning Tune (2022)

Antonio VIVALDI (1678-1741)
Preludio from Sonata VI in B-flat
major for Cello, RV 46 (c. 1720-30)
Qual per ignoto calle, RV 677 (c. 1730-32)

Philip GLASS (b. 1937)
Liquid Days (1985)
*The Encounter from 1000 Airplanes
on the Roof* (1989)

Celeste ORAM (b. 1990)
Attuning Tune (2022)

John CAGE (1912-1992)
She is Asleep (1943)

Nina SIMONE (1933-2003)
Revolution (1969)
Four Women (1966)

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)
Ständchen (1828)

Julius EASTMAN (1940-90)
Stay On It (1973)

Imaginary Opera

This festival celebrating the interdisciplinary creative spirit that defines AMOC* culminates in a wildly varied program. Call it an opera — the topic being a revisionist history of the art interlaced with a vision of its future. For the original impetus behind the “American Modern Opera Company” was to radically rethink the potential of opera as a collective “work” (the root meaning of the word): a gathering of the arts into a larger whole that feeds off the synergy of multiple disciplines sharing space. Playing the role of an overture is brand-new music by Celeste Oram. She wrote *A Tuning Tune* and *Attuning Tune* for the period instrument ensemble Ruckus, imagining these pieces as “preludes to a Baroque program” and at the same time as “opportunities for the ensemble to really tune their instruments (something a Baroque ensemble spends great time and care on).”

Oram explains: “These tunes center around a short, sing-songy text I composed, which reflects on some of the more moral and metaphysical

concepts that for centuries have been attached to musical intonation and the act of ‘playing in tune.’ In particular, some of the language references William Walker’s *Southern Harmony*, an important hymn book in the American shape note repertory (which Ruckus is also deeply engaged with).”

There is still much to learn from the rich ferment of possibilities that characterized the transition from late Renaissance to Baroque, out of which opera itself arose. Just when opera was blossoming in his native Italy, Girolamo Frescobaldi stands out as the first major composer in Europe to focus primarily on instrumental music. Though derived from the vocal tradition of the chanson associated with love songs, the canzone evolved into a genre for instruments alone (a predecessor of the sonata). Frescobaldi’s contrapuntal invention influenced many successors, including J.S. Bach.

In contrast, the Sicilian Sigismondo d’India became a leading composer of secular vocal music during this time — an era of

sweeping change from earlier polyphonic styles of composition that dominated. D’India bridged and blended generational differences. The intensity of his dramatic sensibility invites comparisons with his (and Frescobaldi’s) older contemporary Monteverdi. D’India composed no operas per se but produced a prolific output of shorter forms and varieties of song, including madrigals and character scenes that resemble miniature operas. One of these scenes, *Infelice Didone*, depicts the lamenting Dido in her final moments — an archetypal operatic scene. Abandoned by Aeneas, she reacts to the betrayal by stabbing herself with his sword and having her body burnt on a pyre. D’India’s word painting (to his own text) stunningly captures the conflicting emotions raging within Dido and remains overwhelming almost 400 years after it was written.

Flourishing a century later, the Venetian Antonio Vivaldi combined expertise in instrumental and vocal music. We hear examples of both, starting with the slow prelude from a sonata for cello and

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IMAGINARY OPERA

continuo that belongs to a series of some ten such works Vivaldi composed relatively late in his career. He produced vast quantities of vocal music as well, spanning sacred and secular genres. Vivaldi had a stint running one of Venice's opera houses and claimed to have written 94 operas (only around 50 survive). *Qual per ignoto calle* ("Through Unknown Streets") is a solo vocal chamber cantata, which Ruckus views as a descendant of the kind of scene D'India wrote in *Infelice Didone*. Comprising two pairs of recitatives and arias, Vivaldi's cantata uses storm imagery to figure the predicament of a person in the throes of unrequited love. The lover is compared to a pilgrim who hopes to survive the stormy night and greet the dawn (an image for being accepted by the beloved).

Anthony Roth Costanzo's 2018 album *ARC: Glass/Handel*, for which he recorded the two songs in the Philip Glass set, is part of a larger, ongoing project that explores cross-connections between the Baroque and Minimalism and blends music, dance, live painting, and fashion. Like his fellow AMOC* colleagues, Costanzo moves effortlessly between early music and contemporary composers. His portrayal of the title figure in Glass's 1983 opera *Akhnaten* channels something of the strange, surreal beauty that Baroque opera can evoke.

Liquid Days is from the cycle of six songs Glass wrote for the 1986 album *Liquid Days*, which brought his music to a more widespread audience and featured his own Philip Glass Ensemble (with a cover

photo by Robert Mapplethorpe). David Byrne wrote the lyrics for the title track and its sequel (*Open the Kingdom*). In *1000 Airplanes on the Roof* from 1988, Glass collaborated with the playwright David Henry Hwang to create a "science fiction music drama" using holographic set projections. A single character ("M") reflects on his apparent abduction by extra-terrestrial creatures. Though wordless, the vocalist's soaring line in *The Encounter* expresses awe (or is it joy, or fear?) in response to the ambiguous experience.

John Cage also uses a language of wordless vocalise in *She is Asleep*, a piece from 1943, soon after he had moved to New York City. This movement for soprano and prepared piano was envisioned as part of an unfinished suite including a movement for percussion quartet (12 tom-toms) and one for prepared piano. Although an abstract Cageian theory of proportions and accents informs the piece's detailed structure, the music seems to tap into primordial feelings.

Filtered through the turmoil of the 1960s, the Nina Simone set offers songs that have the intensity of arias. Simone's 1969 album of covers, *To Love Somebody*, includes *Revolution*, which is more complex than a "cover song" — a two-part response to The Beatles' provocative song from the revolutionary year of 1968. "It's about barriers being broken down, and they sure as hell need getting rid of," Simone said. "We need a revolution to sort it all out and get back to God." *Four Women* from the

1966 album *Wild Is the Wind* is a bold (and often misinterpreted) reflection on the stereotyping of Black women in American society.

An excerpt from the new dance theater work *Open Rehearsal* by Bobbi Jene Smith and colleagues, *Ständchen* ("Serenade") unfolds to Franz Schubert's haunting song from his final collection, which was published posthumously as *Swan Song*. Schubert captures the bittersweet moment of expectation, aware that the promise of love might turn out to be an illusion.

The grand ensemble finale is among the glories of opera. The music of Julius Eastman opened the 2022 Festival with a solo summons, and now the entire collective joins together to realize his message of perseverance and make it resound — we need it more than ever now.

—THOMAS MAY

This concert is approximately 90 minutes.