

libretti for opera

and here we are

independence eve

mercury falling

odes to earth and air

and here we are

a shadow puppetry opera

COMPOSER

Matthew Welch

LIBRETTO

Daniel Neer

ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL

Memoirs of Edgar Kneedler, Ethel Kneedler and Donald Kneedler

And Here We Are is an opera based on the memoirs of composer Matthew Welch's great uncle Edgar Kneedler, an opera singer isolated by his move to Asia and subsequent internment (1942-45) in the Santo Tomas concentration camp in WWII Philippines. The impact of cultural collisions is stressed in this unique narrative which culls from many sources. As Welch described in an interview about the new opera:

from composer Matthew Welch:

"The librettist, Daniel Neer, made a decision to center the narrative around my great-uncle Edgar Kneedler. But, since Daniel did quite the amount of research into other people's anecdotes about the camp, he also included information from other internees' memoirs and they all remembered things in different sequences, or with different emphasis. In a number of these other published books, Edgar Kneedler pops up quite a bit. So what Daniel was able to do was consolidate all of these into one quasi-fictive voice. We were able to tell a number of people's stories through a single narrative."

PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

May 6, 2018

WORLD PREMIERE

National Sawdust, Brooklyn NYC

Daniel Neer (baritone), Matthew Welch (conductor), Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew (design and direction)

Elyse Kakacek (soprano), Kate Maroney (mezzo-soprano), Joe Chappel (bass)

Ben Holmes (trumpet), Joe Bergen (Percussion), Chris Graham (Percussion), Mark Utley (Percussion), Emily Manzo (piano), Ian Riggs (bass guitar), Joe Tucker (drums)

December 15, 2016

Story Binge II

Selected Scenes, Work in Progress | Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Music Center, NYC

Daniel Neer (baritone), Joe Chappel (bass-baritone), Matthew Welch (conductor)

Ben Holmes, (trumpet), Joe Bergen (vibraphone), Emily Manzo (piano), Ian Riggs (bass guitar), Brian Chase (drums)

December 12, 2015

Experiments in Opera

Selected Scenes | In Residence at The Stone, NYC

Daniel Neer (baritone), Kate Maroney (mezzo-soprano), Matthew Welch (conductor)

featuring Blarvuster with Mantra percussion: Ben Holmes, (trumpet), Joe Bergen (vibraphone), Al Cerulo & Jude Traxler (glockenspiel), Emily Manzo (piano), Ian Riggs (bass guitar), Brian Chase (drums)

April 1 & 2, 2015

Story Binge

Selected Scenes, Work in Progress | Roulette Intermedium, Brooklyn

Daniel Neer (baritone), Matthew Welch (alto sax and conductor)

featuring Blarvuster: Ben Holmes, (trumpet), Joe Bergen (vibraphone), Emily Manzo (piano), Ian Riggs (bass guitar), Mike Pride (drums)

LINKS:

[And Here We Are WORLD PREMIERE promotional](#)

And Here We Are

a shadow puppet opera

music by
Matthew Welch

direction by
Jeanette Yew

libretto by
Daniel Neer

based upon
a true story by
Edgar Kneeder

featuring
**Blarvuster and
Mantra Percussion**

**National Sawdust
May 6, 2018**

experiments in opera





independence eve

an american opera in three scenes

COMPOSER

Sidney Marquez Boquiren

LIBRETTO

Daniel Neer

Independence Eve is a new one-act chamber opera by composer Sidney Marquez Boquiren and librettist Daniel Neer that explores the troubled journey of race relations in America. Comprised of three independent scenes, each taking place on July 3 of different decades in unspecified cities, Independence Eve focuses on the stories of three character pairings struggling with identity and acceptance amidst issues that span one hundred years of our American experience. Independence Eve is being developed through the guidance and mentorship of American Opera Projects.

PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

January 24 & 26, 2020

Opera Birmingham | Red Mountain Theatre Company | Birmingham, Alabama

Brian Wallin (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Dennis Whitehead Darling (stage director), Cris Frisco (music director)

June 3-11, 2017

WORLD PREMIERE

UrbanArias | Signature Theatre | Washington, DC

Brandon Snook (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Shaun Patrick Tubbs (director), Robert Wood (music director)

November 10, 2016

Scene I: 'Stop and Frisk'

Ensemble Pi | 13th Peace Project Concert: Black Lives Matter | Roulette, Brooklyn, NYC

Brandon Snook (tenor), Damian Norfleet (baritone), Marlon Daniel (music director)

February 3-5, 2015

Workshop and Reading

Harlem School of the Arts | NYC

Brandon Snook (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Mila Henry (music director), Daniel Neer (director)

November 13 & 15, 2014

Reading

Adelphi University Performing Arts Center | Garden City, NY

American Opera Projects | South Oxford Space | Brooklyn, NYC

Brandon Snook (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Mila Henry (musical director), Damian Norfleet (director)

November 14, 2014

Scene I: 'Stop and Frisk'

American Opera Projects | Hear America Singing | Bronx Collaborative High School

Brandon Snook (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Mila Henry (music director), Damian Norfleet (director)

September 16, 2014

Scene I: 'Stop and Frisk'

Two Sides Sounding | Brooklyn BEAT Festival | The Unsung City | Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn NY

Brandon Snook (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Mila Henry (musical director), Ted Gorodetzky (director)

September 13, 2014

Scene I: 'Stop and Frisk'

Two Sides Sounding | Brooklyn BEAT Festival | East New York Farmers Market | Brooklyn, NY

Brandon Snook (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Mila Henry (musical director), Ted Gorodetzky (director)

May 2, 2014

Scene I: 'Stop and Frisk'

Two Sides Sounding | AOP25: Living Composers, Living New York | The Actors Fund Arts Center | Brooklyn, NYC
Brandon Snook (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Mila Henry (musical director), Ted Gorodetzky (director)

November 6, 2013 Libretto Reading
American Opera Projects | First Chance Reading Series
Michael Criscuolo and Damian Norfleet (actors), Lemuel Wade (director)

September 13 - 22, 2012 Scene I: 'Stop and Frisk'
American Opera Projects | Brooklyn BEAT Festival | OPERATION Brooklyn |
The Irondale Center, Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, Flatbush Reformed Church | Brooklyn, NYC
Brandon Snook (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Mila Henry (musical director), Noah Himmelstein (director)

September 7 & 9, 2012 Scene I: 'Stop and Frisk'
American Opera Projects | Composer & The Voice: Six Scenes | South Oxford Space | Brooklyn, NYC
Brandon Snook (tenor), Jorell Williams (baritone), Mila Henry (piano), Noah Himmelstein (director)

PRESS:

June 5, 2017 – **The Washington Post: Tackling race in opera — at center stage**

"There's a lot packed into this small, punchy piece... Opera doesn't need to be obviously relevant to be important. But when one does take on a particularly topical subject, it's nice to see it doing it justice."

June 8, 2017 – **DC Theatre Scene: New chamber opera Independence Eve from UrbanArias**

"It's magical... the piece is thoughtful, tender and infinitely musical. Daniel Neer, the librettist, concentrates on the relationships, not the politics..."

June 4, 2017 – **DC Metro Theatre Arts: Review: 'Independence Eve' at UrbanArias**

"This is compact opera that lays social concerns at your feet."

September 15, 2014 – **The New Yorker: "Stop, Frisk, Sing"**

July 17, 2014 – **Crain's New York Business: "Stop-and-frisk, the musical"**

LINKS / INFO:

Independence Eve's development at American Opera Projects

Segment of 'Stop and Frisk' aria from The Actors Fund Arts Center, Brooklyn

Opera Birmingham performance: Scene 1 Scene 2 Scene 3

'Talk Of The Town' Feature in THE NEW YORKER





Boquiren and Neer's

INDEPENDENCE EVE

An American Opera
in Three Scenes



mercury falling

monodrama for tenor, solo dancer and chamber ensemble

COMPOSER

Chandler Carter

LIBRETTO

Daniel Neer

Mercury Falling is a fanciful interpretation of the last night in the life of Parisian sculptor Jean-Louis Brian (1805-1864). In the winter of early 1864, Brian attempted to protect his clay statue of Mercury in Repose from the bitter cold by covering it with his only blankets – and subsequently froze to death beside it. Mercury Falling depicts Brian's feverish attempts to finish his sculpture for the impending Salon exhibition. As the temperature drops and he succumbs to hypothermic hallucinations, he is lured into a fantasy world in which the god Mercury comes to life.

Incorporating themes of the artist's struggle for meaning, recognition and even survival, Mercury Falling is a monologue that shifts between reality and an allegorical fantasy world. The vocalist portrays the artist through vignettes of music and text (both sung and spoken) in free-association. Accompanying him on stage is a dancer/model portraying the life-sized Mercury. The chamber ensemble alternately evokes the freezing, desperate climate of the artist's studio and his increasingly grandiose expectations for his work of art.

PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

June 19, 2009

Long Leaf Opera Festival | Stewart Theater | North Carolina State University

Daniel Neer (tenor), Jake Szczypek (dancer), Viktor Valkov (piano), Benjamin Smith (piano), Jody Oberfelder (choreographer), Chandler Carter (music director), Ted Gorodetzky (director)

PRESS:

"...the music was in turns mystical, affectionate, conflicted, triumphant, and much more....the athletic dancing and singing took us through emotional paroxysms of immense proportions...a strangely and powerful moving drama. It brought to mind those same issues that Thomas Mann (and Benjamin Britten) delved into in *Death in Venice*. What is it about beauty that so disarms us? What is it about great art that is often both deeply unsettling and uniquely satisfying?" - Classical Voice of North Carolina

"Librettist Daniel Neer fancifully envisions what is going through Brian's head that night, as the sculptor readies himself for a comeback after an early splash of fame. As the cold sets in, Brian begins to hallucinate, imagining that the statue is alive, telling it all his hopes for a success at an upcoming exhibition. Carter's score...beautifully conjures icy coldness with tinkling short phrases and fevered delirium with dissonant, skittering chords. The music constantly changes to fit Brian's mood swings. These are superbly realized by Neer as performer, his voice coloring all Brian's fears and yearnings while expressing his derangement with haunting physicality. The physical interaction of sculptor and statue is viscerally staged, adding nuanced dimensions to the concept, sensitivity shaped by director Ted Gorodetzky...a confident, intriguing work." - Raleigh News and Observer

LINKS:

[Mercury Falling Promotional VIDEO](#)

[MUSICAL EXCERPT FROM MERCURY FALLING](#)





odes to earth and air

chamber opera for mezzo-soprano, baritone, piano, and mixed media

COMPOSER

Sidney Marquez Boquiren

LIBRETTO

Daniel Neer

Odes to Earth and Air is a multi-media chamber opera focusing on the tumultuous relationship of 19th century sculptor Camille Claudel and her brother, the author and diplomat Paul Claudel. Combining chamber opera (mezzo soprano and tenor) with film media, it presents an imagined dialogue between the iconic Claudel siblings, whose soulful and reflective diatribe on their lives are skillfully reflected in an accompanying narrative of film images. *Odes to Earth and Air* attempts to deconstruct the driving motivation of two powerful cultural and intellectual giants who helped catapult the Symbolist movement of art and literature in early 20th century Paris, and explores the factors of gender, religion, politics and family relations in their artistic endeavors and quest for personal fulfillment.

PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

October 16, 2010

WORLD PREMIERE

Adelphi University Performing Arts Center

Abigail Fischer (mezzo-soprano), Daniel Neer (baritone), Adam Nielsen (piano), Ted Gorodetzky (director and visual media artist)