

manitoba

UNDERGROUND

opera

**TO HAVE
AND
TO HOLD**

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**to have and to hold,
from this day forward,
for better or for worse,**

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WELCOME TO OUR 2021 SEASON



We are beyond thrilled to be welcoming each and every one of you back to live opera. Thinking back on this past year, I am thrilled with the projects MUO has been able to accomplish. Our joy is always sharing music and stories both in person and digitally, and we are thrilled to be back doing that with you.

This season is like no other MUO has ever produced. The First Drive-In Opera concert in Winnipeg, along with a multimedia one woman show on the roof of the Winnipeg Art gallery, are definitely new ventures for us. But if there is one thing that we have learnt from Covid it is: Adapt. Pivoting our scheduled shows to fit within the confines of the COVID regulations has been a challenge, but it has also been an incredible opportunity for all of our artists to think outside the box and find something entirely new! I think you are all going to enjoy the creations they have found.

This season's theme of "to have and to hold" seems even more inspiring now after the year of lockdown we have had. The importance of cherishing those people and even ideals we hold dear has never felt more potent. As we slowly begin the longer than desired return to normalcy, I find myself taking a moment to reflect on all the people who have made this possible project. Not just our extraordinary casts, productions teams and staff, but also the amazing scientists, doctors, nurses, teachers, and other essential workers who have really brought us through this pandemic. It is very safe to say we would not be here this evening without all their work, and I, for one, am beyond grateful!

So here we go, back to live opera!

Brenna Corner,
Artistic Director

**"an incredible
opportunity for all
of our artists to
think outside the box
and find something
entirely new!"**

SVADBA & BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Stage Director SARAH JANE PELZER*
Music Director KIMBERLEY-ANN BARTCZAK
Stage Manager MEAGHAN FLETCHER

SVADBA

Milica JAYNE HAMMOND
Danica JANICE MARPLE
Lena KATHERINE MAYBA
Zora KAREN SANTOS
Nada KATHLEEN MURPHY
Ljubica MELANIE NICOL

BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

Judith DAWN BRUCH-WIENS
Bluebeard IAN FUNDYTUS

Keyboard One (Recorded) KIMBERLEY-ANN BARTCZAK
Keyboard Two (Live) SHANNON HIEBERT
Camera Operator NATALIE BUCKLEY

**” Sutra ces se udati,
Iz svog doma otići ”**
Tomorrow you will wed,
Leaving your home behind

“The participation of these Artists is arranged by permission of Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the provisions of the Dance Opera Theatre Policy (DOT).”



Milica — Bride-to-be



Danica



Lena



Zora



Nada



Ljubica

Bridesmaids



Judith

Newlyweds



Bluebeard

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When I was approached to direct these two pieces and link them around the theme of marriage, the first thing that came to mind was the difference between a marriage and a wedding. Svadba ends before a wedding, and Bluebeard's castle picks up right after one, but that's about where the similarities end. What I found fascinating after studying them both in detail was that neither piece really grapples with the realities of a marriage, or dwells over-long on what makes a match successful and healthy. A picture started to emerge of a woman, the bride to be, ecstatically in love with the idea of love and diving into a fantasy of a wedding without really considering or understanding the marriage that would follow.

As I let myself fall into a world of pinks and purples, novelty decorations, and matching outfits I imagined a woman with doubts, surrounded by her best friends, pushing those doubts aside to cling to the romance she so desperately wants. I imagined what kind of relationship might come after that kind of denial, once the glitter is left behind and the two of them are alone. Suddenly, Bluebeard's Castle became a portrait of a dysfunctional relationship over time, compressed into the length of an evening.

The restraints of Covid have turned this piece into something completely unique.

**" Here you
stand alone
with Bluebeard
in his castle "**

With only Judith performing live, the other seven characters have become like ghosts or memories, haunting a woman desperately re-living her choices and trying to understand how she got here, trapped in a prison partly of her own making.

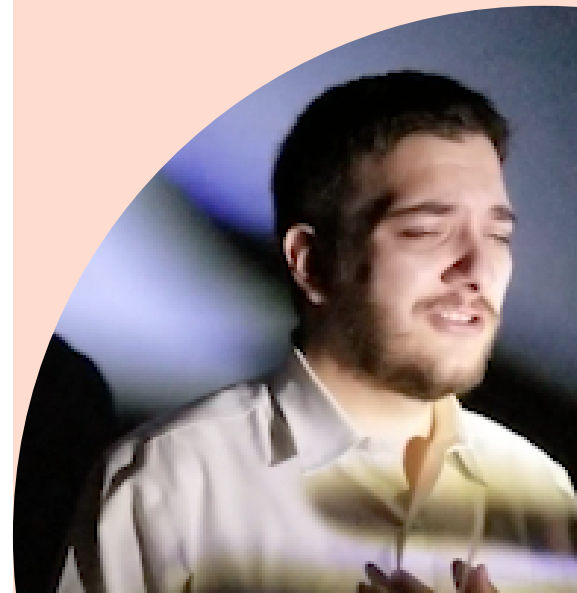
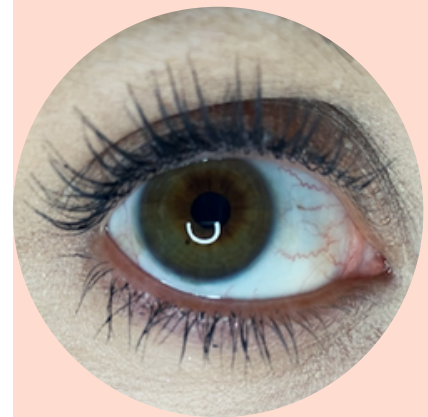
ABOUT THE PIECES

Svadba

Six women gather the night before a wedding to celebrate their last night together as unmarried friends. At times rowdy, and at times ritualistic, Anna Sokolovic draws on her native Balkan folk music to create a score that's both haunting and surprising. Sung mostly in Serbian, Sokolovic plays with the sounds to create a chattering, fantasy language that uses all possible variations of the human voice, and elevates girl-talk to an almost supernatural experience.

Bluebeard's Castle

Judith has come to live with Bluebeard after their wedding, leaving behind her family and the brightness of her home. She refuses to be pushed away by her mysterious, new husband, insisting that she will love him no matter what he might be hiding, if only he'll open up to her. She demands that the seven doors in his dark castle be opened, to let in the air and light. Behind those doors, she discovers things that are terrifying and things that are wonderful, but all of it is covered in blood. Finally, she reaches the last door, a door from which she won't return.



BÉATRICE ET BÉNÉDICT

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor MICHELLE MOURRE
Dramaturg BRENNAN CORNER
Stage Manager MEAGHAN FLETCHER

(in order of vocal appearance)

Léonato RAYMOND SOKALSKI
Claudio JEAN VAN DER MERWE
Héro KINNON WEDDALL
Béatrice LIZZY HOYT
Don Pedro MATTHEW PAULS
Bénédict JAMES MCLENNAN*
Ursule NICKI LEGRAND

Répétiteur SHANNON HIEBERT

Orchestra

Violin I SUSAN MCCALLUM
Violin II LIANA FONSECA
Viola ELLY HOOKER
Cello YURI HOOKER
Bass MEREDITH JOHNSON
Piano ARI HOOKER

**" some, cupid kills with arrows,
some, with traps "**

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Ursule
Héro's lady-in-waiting



Béatrice

Cousins



Héro
Bride-to-be

Uncle/Niece

Father/Daughter



Léonato
Governor of Messina

Engaged



Claudio
Groom-to-be

Soldiers/
Buddies



Bénédict



Don Pedro
Sicilian general / The Boss

Not big fans of each other but secretly totally in love.

If only they could get over their pride and admit they like each other...

Editor's note:
In real life, try to avoid turning someone else's wedding into your own double wedding.
It's not cool, friend.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Brenna Corner

Béatrice et Bénédict is one of my favourite pieces. I was introduced to it while a student at the University of Manitoba. I remember being struck by the incredibly complex and real reactions the characters had, and the way Berlioz had been able to weave the complexity of those human emotions into every moment of the score. It always seemed to me to be an opera that Shakespeare would have imagined his work turning into.

Transforming the piece from a Berlioz Orchestra with full chorus into a COVID-safe drive-in opera concert has been a wonderful experience. While I am of course saddened to not be able to create the gaiety and physical comedic interactions in this production, I am thrilled that we have been able to really drill down to the essence of the piece: the joys and risks of falling in love.

So check that dial is tuned in correctly and sit back and enjoy our drive-in opera! Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* has always been a favourite of mine, and I hope today *Béatrice et Bénédict* becomes a favorite of yours.

**" I would rather
hear my dog
bark at a crow
than hear a
man swear he
loves me. "**

SYNOPSIS

Act 1

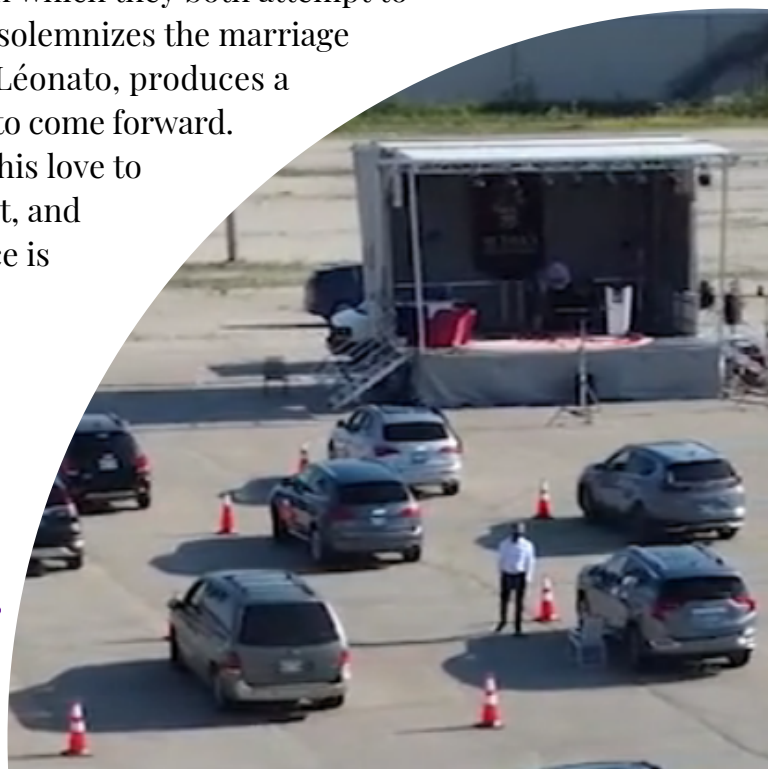
Don Pedro, prince of Aragon, is visiting Messina after a successful military victory with his compatriots Claudio and Bénédict. They are greeted by Léonato, governor of Messina, together with his daughter, Héro, and niece, Béatrice.

Héro has been awaiting the return of her fiancé, Claudio, unwounded and rewarded for his valour. Béatrice inquires about and scorns Bénédict. They trade insults, as they have in previous meetings, and tease each other. Bénédict swears to his friends that he will never marry. Later, Claudio and Pedro scheme to trick Bénédict into marrying Béatrice. Knowing that he is listening, Léonato assures Pedro that Béatrice loves Bénédict. Upon hearing this, Bénédict resolves that Béatrice's love must not go unrequited, and so he decides to pursue her. Meanwhile, elsewhere, Héro and her attendant, Ursule, manage to play a similar trick on Béatrice, who now believe Bénédict loves her.

Act 2

Béatrice then realizes that she has fallen in love with Bénédict. With Héro and Ursule she sings of the happiness of a bride about to be wed. As she turns to leave she is met by Bénédict, prompting an exchange in which they both attempt to conceal their love for each other. A notary solemnizes the marriage of Claudio and Héro, and, as arranged by Léonato, produces a second contract, asking for another couple to come forward. Bénédict summons the courage to declare his love to Beatrice; the two sign the wedding contract, and the work ends with the words "today a truce is signed, we'll be enemies again tomorrow".

Thank you to Camryn Dewar
who is running our titles tonight!



A PLACE OF HEALING

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Creator BRENNA CORNER
Music Director & Pianist KIMBERLEY-ANN BARTCZAK
Director of Photography KAREN SANTOS
Head Camera PAUL MCKEEN
Editor BRENDAN MCKEEN

Singers SYDNEY CLARKE
JULIA DAVIS
NICKI LEGRAND
KAREN SANTOS
KINNON WEDDALL

Interviewees DR. JEN ANDERSON
CON. MARIA BUDAHAN
PAM HADDER
VICTORIA MCINTOSH

Featuring ELIJAH KANHAI
GREER KANHAI
SAGE KANHAI

**“ We’re going to stop
the cycle here. ”**

PROGRAMME

"Come Scoglio" from *Così fan tutte*
Words by Lorenzo Da Ponte
Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

"Widmung" from *Myrthen*
Words by Friedrich Rückert
Music by Robert Schumann

"Elle a fui, la tourterelle" from *Les contes d'Hoffmann*
Words by Jules Barbier
Music by Jacques Offenbach

"Ach Ich liebte" from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*
Words by Gottlieb Stephanie
Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

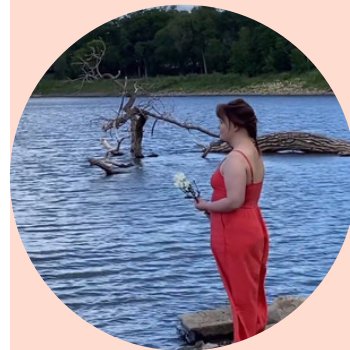
"Gretchen am Spinnrade"
Words by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
Music by Franz Schubert

"An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust"
from *Frauenliebe und -leben*
Words by Adelbert von Chamisso
Music by Robert Schumann

"Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante" from *Carmen*
Words by Henri Meilhac
Music by Georges Bizet

"Alleluia" from *Exsultate, jubilate*
Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

"Non mi dir" from *Don Giovanni*
Words by Lorenzo Da Ponte
Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



EDITOR'S NOTES

A Place of Healing was a privilege to create alongside Willow Place.

When we reached out, it was a cold December night just after Christmas and we were looking to create more work for singers in this city. We were inspired by listening to Pam Hadder speak about the incredible work that Willow Place is doing to address domestic and family violence. We were also struck by the devastating toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on individuals living in these types of situations. Covid has been a struggle for us all, but the added stress that some in our community were facing, due to things like family violence, was truly eye opening for us as a company. We knew that we wanted to do something to bring more conversation and focus to this topic in whatever way we could. And so the idea of a video in support of Willow Place came about.

Working within the COVID-19 provincial restrictions we gathered together a group of incredible female artists and exceptionally generous community members to partner with us. We are so grateful for all the hard work and dedication of our artists and the graciousness, openness, and kindness of our community members. To say this project has been a highlight for us would be to downplay the true inspiration and fortitude that was shared with us, and which we have tried to capture. Our goal was and is to continue the conversation around domestic and family violence. All our music making, video creation and even interviews were done at a distance to keep everyone safe.

All proceeds from this video will go directly to Willow Place to help support their continued work in our community. We want to thank them for everything they do to protect and educate and uplift our city. A place of healing is a basic thing we all need sometimes.

DONORS (2019–PRESENT)

Without you, we would be sitting at home, silent.

Andrea Bellhouse
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Thank
You!

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