

Ladies First / Sisters and Wives

- Out Of The Shadows, Into The Spotlight -

with honorary guest

Mona El-Naggar

May 11, 2018 7 PM

Scorca Hall - Opera America



PROGRAM

7 PM reception

7:30 PM AWARD CEREMONY

Awardee – **Mona El-Nagggar**, Award artist – **Kyra Mo**

7:45 PM

Mona El-Nagggar - The Story of Esraa (excerpt)

Lynn Bechtold - Solitude (based on a song by Pauline Viardot), Zentripetal: Lynn Bechtold, Violin & Jennifer DeVore, Cello; World Premiere

Kathleen Supové - Tempest, Kathleen Supové, Piano; World Premiere

Ann Warren - À ma soeur, de mon coeur, Kathleen Supové, Piano; Keve Wilson, Oboe; Mioi Takeda, Violin; World Premiere

Paula Matthusen - ins frisches Segenspruch, Sharon Harms, Soprano & Kathleen Supové, Piano

Milica Paranosic (quotes by Alma Mahler, Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann) - New Bohemian Suite #2, Loire Cotler, Rhythm Vocalist; Milica Paranosic, Voice; Lynn Bechtold, Violin; Mioi Takeda, Violin. Special Guest Robert; World Premiere

Loire Cotler - Miriams Prophecy - Loire Cotler, Rhythm Vocalist & Glen Velez, Frame Drums

Aleksandra Vrebalov - Mileva (excerpt), Sharon Harms, Soprano; Lynn Bechtold, Violin; Mioi Takeda, Violin; Jennifer DeVore, Cello; Kathleen Supové, Piano

Mona El-Nagggar - Ladies First (excerpt)

9 PM

Afterparty at Haymaker Bar and Kitchen at 252 West 29th Street

Program Notes:

***Solitude* by Lynn Bechtold**

Pauline Viardot composed *Solitude* in 1850, as one in a set of pieces for her vocal students. Having studied with Anton Reicha and Franz Liszt, and collaborated with Frédéric Chopin, Pauline was a composer of promise. Liszt said of his student, "with Pauline Viardot, the world had finally found a woman composer of genius."

Viardot went on to become famous more for her voice than for her compositions and piano playing. She premiered many roles and pieces, by composers such as Gounod, Berlioz, and Brahms. Thanks to singers of today, and sites such as IMSLP, her music is becoming known and performed again.

I chose to arrange her song *Solitude* for violin, cello, and pre-recorded electronics. The cello part is mostly by Viardot. I took more liberties with much of the violin part. The electronic drone heard throughout the piece is meant to represent the male naysayers who preferred her to be known as a soprano rather than a composer. As Viardot stopped singing before recording devices were invented, I chose to add mashups of famous singers of modern times singing her famous roles: Rosina in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*; Orfeo in Gluck/Berlioz's version of *Orfeo ed Eurydice*; and Sapho in Gounod's opera of the same title. The vocals have been manipulated to blend with the song.

***Tempest* by Kathleen Supové**

The tempest being talked about here is of the "tempest in a teapot" variety. When asked to create a piece that spoke to my relationship with my husband (composer Randall Woolf), I immediately thought of a little piece he once composed, one that he thought captured my personality. I've included a bit of it in this work, more as a launchpad for an imagined rebellion. Some of the piano textures also convey a rebellion in the form of working through some of the intimidation I feel from certain difficult piano pieces of his. Here, they remain unquoted....and unnamed.

***À ma soeur, de mon coeur* by Ann Warren**

Lili Boulanger (21 August 1893 – 15 March 1918) was a French composer and the younger sister of Nadia Boulanger. These two sisters made an extraordinary impact on French musical life, Lili being the first woman to win the much coveted *Prix de Rome*, and Nadia becoming perhaps the most influential musical teacher of the 20th century. Lili's life and work were troubled by chronic illness, cutting her life short at the early age of 24. However, she had some good fortune, a loving sister. *À ma soeur, de mon coeur* tries to capture the tender sisterly relationship. Without Nadia's support, Lili would surely not, in the twenty or so high-quality scores she completed, have achieved so much in so short a time.

***ins frisches Segensspruch* by Paula Matthusen**

ins frische Segensspruch was commissioned through Portland State University as part of a celebration of the 175th Anniversary of Robert Schumann's marriage to Clara Wieck as well as his setting of Adelbert von Chiamisso's *Frauenleben und -liebe*. The specific task was to score Chiamisso's ninth poem from this collection, which was unset by Schumann, and is replaced by a reprise of the opening material from the start of the song cycle.

The almost exact repetition of the piano part in this reprise is marked by one small difference – a brief rest that perforates the musical lines at the very end of the cycle. *ins frische Segensspruch* explores combinations of repetition and perforation, both in terms of the musical material employed as well as in the physical enactment of performance. For this reason, electronics are derived from previous performances of Schumann's original work, with the original poem being sung by a combination of renown sopranos. Words that do not occur in the rest of the song cycle are performed by the solo baritone. The audience may also engage with this fragmentation by playing accompanying fixed media parts on cell phones.

***New Bohemian Suite #2* by Milica Paranosic**

Highlight of the NBS2 text:

By Brigit Katz - Source: *smithsonian.com*

While Fanny's father encouraged his daughter to perform in the family home, he believed it would be indecent for a woman of her status to pursue any kind of career. The Mendelssohn family was very high class, and a high class woman did not appear publicly as a professional. Publicity was associated with loose morals and possibly amoral behavior.

By Gina Dalfonzo - *Resurrecting Fanny Mendelssohn*

But Fanny composed nonetheless —with strong encouragement from her husband, artist Wilhelm Hensel. He said he wouldn't marry Fanny unless she carried on composing; and every morning of their marriage, before he went off to paint, he would put a piece of blank manuscript paper on her music stand and tell her he wanted to see it filled up when he returned.

By Clara Schumann

I once believed that I had creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not wish to compose there never was one able to do it Am I intended to be the one? It would be arrogant to believe that. May Robert always create; that must always make me happy.

***Miriam's Prophecy* by Loire Cotler**

Miriam's Prophecy is a homage to the prophetess Miriam, sister of Moses, who played the frame drum and led the people of Israel in celebration after the Red Sea escape from the Egyptian Army.

***Mileva (excerpt)* by Aleksandra Vrebalov**

Mileva is an opera about Mileva Maric Einstein, the first wife of Albert Einstein.

The work is commissioned for the 150th Anniversary of Srpsko Narodno Pozoriste (Serbian National Theater) in Novi Sad, Serbia, Maric's and Vrebalov's hometown. The opera is in two-acts (10 scenes), for full orchestra, chorus, 10 soloists, and tape - with documentary audio material such as Albert Einstein's voice and tamburica band.

The libretto is written by a Serbian playwright, Vida Ognjenović, and is based on Ognjenović's play Mileva Einstein. The languages in the opera are Serbian, English (the excerpt from Shakespeare and the explanation of the $E=mc^2$ formula in Einstein's original voice) and German (excerpts from Goethe's Urworte, and Einstein's letters).

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Stay in touch:

Ladies First, 281 West 119th Street, #5A New York NY 10025 Phone: +1 – 212 – 203-6163

Email: ladiesfirstnyc@gmail.com

<http://ladiesfirstnyc.wixsite.com/ladiesfirstnyc>

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