



MADAME THEREMIN

A CHAMBER OPERA IN TWO ACTS

MUSIC BY KENNEDY VERRETT

LIBRETTO BY GEORGE M. KOPP

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

LAVINIA WILLIAMS, child of the Harlem Renaissance. She broke the color line to become a classical ballerina; founded a school of dance in Haiti; scandalously married....

LEON THEREMIN, Russian scientist. Inventor of an electronic musical instrument with a spectral sound — the theremin — played without physical contact; ordered back to Stalin's Soviet Union; sent to the gulag.

In the opera *MADAME THEREMIN*, Lavinia discovers a sanctuary of Afro-Caribbean culture, hidden underground since colonial times. Here she encounters....

MAMA AUGUSTINE, vodou priestess. Mama guides Lavinia on a spiritual journey through music, dance, and prayer. Lavinia reconnects with her ancestral roots and sets herself on a new path, but she is still unable to save her husband, a victim of "progress."

Musically, *MADAME THEREMIN* embraces the rich tradition of operatic vocal styles, and makes use of more contemporary timbres found in Black American and Haitian musical traditions. This coupled with the expanded use of the theremin, radios and instruments created for the opera, provides an Afrofuturistic sonic space in which the story will unfold. The story is one that has never been told. Lavinia Williams has always been a footnote in the life of the more famous Leon Theremin. In telling her story we bring something new to the world, in a startling form.

MADAME THEREMIN tells the story of Lavinia Williams' defiance of convention and discovery of her muse and her spiritual roots. Many stories of the Black experience dwell on sadness. This one ends in joy.

(PLEASE TURN OVER FOR PRODUCTION INFO)



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PRODUCTION INFO

Length: 90 minutes, Intermission optional

VOCAL FORCES

Mama Augustine (Mezzo Soprano):

Housekeeper at the Waldorf Astoria and
vodou priestess

Leon Theremin (Tenor): Russian engineer,
inventor of the theremin

Elizaveta (Soprano): Cultural attache to the
Soviet Consulate in New York

Lavinia Williams (Soprano): African American
dancer; married to Leon Theremin

Noble Washington (Bass-Baritone): African
American actor, singer, international star

Billington (Baritone): Manager, Waldorf
Astoria Hotel

First Princetonian (Baritone): Partier at the
Waldorf Astoria Hotel

Edmond (Non-singing role for musician): Hotel
maintenance worker

INSTRUMENTAL FORCES

Flute (double Piccolo and Alto Flute)

Clarinet (double Bass Clarinet)

Alto Sax

Bassoon

Trumpet (double Flugelhorn)

2 Percussion (Tanbu, Bamboula, Marimboula,
Gran Cassa, Piatti, Suspended Cymbals,
Assorted Shakers, Djembe, Marimba,
Vibraphone, Chimes, Glockenspiel, Toms,
Roto Toms, Timpani, Metal Trash Cans)

Theremin

Harp

Piano

3 Violins

3 Violas

2 Celli

1 Contrabass

AUDIO EXCERPTS & CREATOR BIOS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:
www.MadameThereminOpera.com

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