

MADAME THEREMIN

A (MOSTLY) TRUE TALE OF A DAUGHTER OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

COMPOSER: KENNEDY VERRETT

LIBRETTIST: GEORGE M. KOPP

Introducing composer Kennedy Verrett, an exciting new voice in the world of opera

Over a decade ago while composing scores for film and television, Kennedy Verrett established his groundbreaking new music project, the Mad Composer Lab (madcomposerlab.com). Conceived in the spirit of innovation which inspired the likes of Julius Eastman, Lou Harrison, Pauline Oliveros, and others, the Lab has since become a vital part of the forward-looking cultural scene in Portland, Oregon, Kennedy's current home base. His affinity to Harrison's music also brought him to the Lou Harrison House in Joshua Tree, California, where as composer-in-residence in 2022 he created the site-specific immersive acoustic piece *SoundCheckEarth* for 17 musicians strategically positioned in the ancient rock formations of Joshua Tree National Park.



Photo of Kennedy Verrett by Eva Soltes, Harrison House

In his first opera *Madame Theremin*, Kennedy combines traditional classical instrumentation and vocalization with a myriad of percussion instruments, prepared piano, and of course, the theremin to achieve startling results. Through complex rhythms, sounds of jazz and gospel, African drums, and Haitian call-and-response, *Madame Theremin* intrigues, astounds, and ultimately delights an audience. Please visit the website at www.madamethereminopera.com.



**SCAN HERE FOR VIDEO AND
AUDIO EXCERPTS FROM
"MADAME THEREMIN"**

(PLEASE TURN OVER FOR PRODUCTION INFO AND A BRIEF SYNOPSIS)

PRODUCTION INFO

Length: 90 minutes; Two acts with optional intermission

VOCAL FORCES

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

Mama Augustine (Mezzo Soprano): Housekeeper at the Waldorf Astoria and *vodou* priestess

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

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

Elizaveta (Soprano): Cultural attache to the Soviet Consulate in New York, also a spy

Billington (Tenor): Manager, Waldorf Astoria Hotel

Princetonian (Bass-Baritone): Reveler at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel

Edmond (Non-singing role for jazz / classical saxophonist): *Vodou* acolyte

INSTRUMENTAL FORCES

Flute (double Piccolo and Alto Flute)

Clarinet (double Bass Clarinet)

Alto Sax (double Tenor Sax)

Bassoon (double Contra)

Trumpet (double Flugelhorn)

2 Percussion (Drumset, Gran Cassa, Piatti, Suspended Cymbals, Berimbau, Assorted Shakers, Large Djembe, Congas, Bongos, Marimba, Vibraphone, Chimes, Glockenspiel, Toms, Roto Toms, Timpani, Metal Trash Cans)

Theremin

Modern Terpsitone (Such as Terpsitone Bollard)

Midi Controlled Electronic Sounds and FX

Harp

Piano

Strings (optional electric instruments) Violin I & II, Viola, Cello, Contrabass - 3, 3, 3, 2, 1

SYNOPSIS: The Real. The Unreal. And the Surreal.

True story. 1938. New York City. Lavinia Williams, child of the Harlem Renaissance, ballet dancer, is scandalously married to Lev Sergeivich Termen (Leon Theremin as he is known in English) Soviet inventor of the futuristic electronic musical instrument that bears his name, played with a wave of the hands through an electromagnetic force field. While her husband is threatened with arrest for vague "anti-Soviet" crimes, Lavinia is launched on a spiritual quest, taking her to a mystical subterranean outpost of *vodou* devotees, where she encounters her Afro-Caribbean ancestors...and her guiding artistic spirit. *Madame Theremin* is a historical opera that speaks to contemporary issues with excitement, intrigue, and humor to please both seasoned opera goers and new audiences.

REPRESENTATION:



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