

Friday, January 12, 2018, 8 PM  
'62 Center for Theatre and Dance, CenterStage  
Fresh Squeezed Opera

7:00 PM Pre-concert Talk/Discussion with Kate Soper, Iva Dee Hiatt Assistant Professor of Music, Smith College, and Alison Case, Professor of English, Chair of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Williams College.

## HERE BE SIRENS

"Things themselves become so burdened with attributes, signs, allusions, that they finally lose their own form. Meaning is no longer read in an immediate perception, the figure no longer speaks for itself; between the knowledge which animates it and the form into which it is transposed, a gap widens. It is free for the dream"

- Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*

"We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?"

- Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

## FROM THE AUTHOR

The spark for *Here Be Sirens* (2012-14) was lit during a barside conversation on the difficulty of meshing scholarly interests with a performer's urge to regale. Can a healthy academic skepticism be reconciled with an incorrigible Romantic streak? And who wants to put on a show about it with me? Eventually, the mythological Sirens came along to answer these questions and to provoke a few others.

"Here Be Sirens" is a phrase used as cartographical notation on medieval maps, scrawled over uncharted water to signify dangerous unknowns. We know the Sirens, who have been with us for as long as we can remember, but their status as mythological – and therefore indefinable – beings allows us to speculate endlessly on their motives. Sirens have been everything from abstract emanations of celestial harmony to omniscient pseudo-demons to luscious mermaids, according to how they fire the current collective imagination (and fire it they do). Accordingly, this story is about them, but it also uses them to investigate certain timely conundrums: is it possible to intellectually enjoy something that is involuntarily pleasurable? What does it mean to be an artist if you never get to meaningfully interact with your audience? And what is the point of infinite knowledge if it only cuts you off from the world?

In developing this piece, I culled from recent compositional work and from songs written in teenagedom, built a staggering fort out of library books, learned how to pratfall and how to

bow a piano. I'm grateful to everyone with whom I shared the early drafts and to all my amazing collaborators. I now invite you to sit back, settle into the tractor beam, and enjoy this non-fatal speculative re-enactment of the Sirens and their song!

— Kate Soper

## THE PERFORMERS

Peitho (a Siren) \_\_\_\_\_ Claire Myers McCormick  
Polyxo (a Siren) \_\_\_\_\_ Victoria Benson  
Phaino (a Siren) \_\_\_\_\_ Devony Smith

## THE CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM

Composer/Librettist \_\_\_\_\_ Kate Soper  
Director \_\_\_\_\_ Amber Treadway  
Costume Design \_\_\_\_\_ Liene Dobraja

## HERE BE SIRENS

### SETTING

An island somewhere around the Mediterranean.

### TIME

A washed-out, bright-grey day. The past and future.  
(The pre-archaic Greek past and the post-apocalyptic U.S. future.)

### SYNOPSIS

All music by Kate Soper  
Texts by Kate Soper and as indicated

### PROLOGUE

1. "The Myth of Er": text by Plato
2. "Concerning the Siren": text by Bishop Theobald
3. "Song"

### SCENE 1: SIRENS BREAK RANK

4. "Sirenbraided": texts by Homer (abridged Soper) and Carl Jung

5. "Naufragium 1": text by Erasmus

#### SCENE 2: POLYXO EXPLAINS IT ALL

6. "Altas Undas/Furtivus Amor": texts by Raimbaut de Vacqueiras and Tibullus

7. "Phonebook Aria"

8. "Naufragium 2": text by Erasmus

#### SCENE 3: ORIGIN SPECULATION 1

9. "Witch-Wife": text by Edna St. Vincent Millay

10. "Naufragium 3": text by Erasmus

#### SCENE 4: THE ABDUCTION OF PERSEPHONE

11. "The Abduction of Persephone"

12. "Hymn to Neptune": text by Thomas Campion

13. "Naufragium 4": text by Erasmus

#### SCENE 5: ORIGIN SPECULATION 2

14. "Muses Entra'ct"

15. "Siren Nomenclature"

16. "O Sailor":

17. "Naufragium 5": text by Erasmus

#### SCENE 6: THE CONTEST OF THE MUSES AND THE SIRENS

18. "The Muzes Elyzium": text by Michael Drayton

19. "Pythagorus 1": text by Iamblicus

20. "Across the Turbid Waves": text by Dante (trans. Soper)

21. "In a Silent Valley": text by John Milton

22. "Pythagorus 2": text by Iamblicus

23. "Naufragium 7": text by Erasmus

#### SCENE 7: PEITHO RISING

24. "Sappho Fragments": text by Sappho (trans. Anne Carson)

25. "Here to Me from Krete": text by Sappho (trans. Anne Carson)

26. "Naufragium 7": text by Erasmus

#### SCENE 8: A CYCLE COMPLETES

27. "Song to Odysseus": text by Homer

Running Time: 1 hour 45 minutes. No intermission

## THE COMPANY

KATE SOPER is a composer, performer, and writer whose work explores the treacherous continuums of expressivity, intelligibility, and sense. If she were a Siren stuck for all eternity on a mythological island, she would bring the collected scores of Machaut, a fridge full of Gaffel Kölsch, and a lot of Iris Murdoch novels. Upcoming projects as performer/composer/writer include a new work for soprano and large ensemble, a cabaret song on the first metaphysical poem, and a new opera with original libretto based on the medieval French allegory *The Romance of the Rose*. Kate is a co-director and performing member of Wet Ink, a New York-based new music ensemble dedicated to seeking out adventurous music across aesthetic boundaries. She is the Iva Dee Hiatt Assistant Professor of Music at Smith College.

VICTORIA BENSON, soprano, began her career at the age of eleven when she performed as one of the Three Spirits in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at Virginia Opera. While still in high school, she attended the Washington National Opera Institute for Young Singers and performed as a soloist and choir member throughout the DC metro area, including at The Kennedy Center. Victoria received her musical degrees from Ithaca College and Westminster Choir College, where she performed in many operas and scenes programs as well as solo recitals. She currently studies with Kate Johnson. Last year Victoria took on new challenges: She sang her first pants role as Pedro in Utopia Opera's *Don Quichotte*, performed in her first Russian opera, *Iolanta*, with New Opera NYC, and premiered the new work *La Zombiata* with Fresh Squeezed Opera.

CLAIRE MYERS MCCORMICK, soprano, has performed as a soloist in operatic and concert settings across the country. Highlights include performances of excerpts from *Here Be Sirens* by Kate Soper, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Sally Mae in the NYC premiere of *Baby Shower* with Fresh Squeezed Opera, the title role of *Suor Angelica* and a summer with the Caramoor Music Festival as an Apprentice Artist. Claire is a member of the Metropolitan Opera Extra Chorus, and an active choral singer and teacher in New York City. A graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy, she received her B.M. from the University of Colorado, and her M.M. at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University.

DEVONY SMITH, soprano, excels in both contemporary and traditional repertoire with her "sensuous" and "strong" voice (New York Times). From Santa Cruz, California, Devony made her Lincoln Center recital debut as the Grand Prize Winner of the MIMF Art Song competition this past spring. Most recently on the operatic stage, Devony performed Susanna (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) with Bronx Opera and OperaRox Productions, *Cendrillon* with Utopia Opera, and Vicky with Fresh Squeezed Opera in the East Coast Premiere of Bruce Trinkley's *Baby Shower*. Patrick Dillon of OperaNews praised her Susanna, describing it as "utterly alive and natural, and beautifully sung." Devony has worked with living composers Mark Adamo, Jake Heggie, Joan Tower, John Musto, and Harold Faberman. While in Dawn Upshaw's Graduate Vocal Arts Program at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, from which she recently graduated with her M.M., she created the lead role in Shawn Jaeger's opera, *Payne Hollow*, collaborated on

concerts of contemporary music with Pulitzer Prize winning composer Joan Tower, and performed the World Premiere of Daniela DeMatos's *Encounter*. Smith received her B.A. from Pepperdine University, where she performed Meg in Adamo's *Little Women*.

AMBER TREADWAY, director, recently directed the NY premiere of Griffin Candey's *Sweets by Kate* at the Stonewall Inn for OperaRox Productions, for which she also directed their inaugural production of *Nozze di Figaro* in 2015. Other directing credits include *Mud, Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen*, and *Frogs (Remix)*, her original adaptation of Aristophanes' *The Frogs* (Columbia College Chicago.) As a stage manager: Bolcom's *Lucrezia*, and a site-specific *Turn of the Screw* in a lakeside mansion (Chicago Fringe Opera.) Amber holds a BFA in Directing at Columbia College Chicago. An Ozarks native, she is delighted and a little stunned to now reside in New York City.

### Fresh Squeezed Opera

Supported by a strong community of composers and performers, FSO strives to present genre-pushing new works of the highest caliber that explore the depths of operatic music. We believe there is a role for opera in contemporary society, and we present operas that current audiences and New York communities connect and engage with.

We believe that collaboration across disciplines, fields, and media pushes the genre of opera forward. With our Core Company Residency Program, Fresh Squeezed Opera connects singers and composers, and gives them the resources to collaboratively create new work and grow professionally.

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