Epiphany: The Cycle of Life

VisionIntoArt

Young People’s Chorus of New York City

An immersive choral installation inspired by the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, traditional African folk songs, and ancient mythologies.

DATES:  NOV 4—7 at 7:30pm
         Doors and Installation at 7pm

LOCATION:  BAM Fisher (Fishman Space)

RUN TIME:  1hr (no intermission)

Season Sponsor: Bloomberg Philanthropies

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Leadership support for programming by New York City artists in the BAM Fisher provided by Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Additional support provided by The TinMan Fund.

Leadership support for music at BAM provided by: Frances Bermanzohn & Alan Roseman.

#EpiphanyCycle
#BAMNextWave
Epiphany: The Cycle of Life

CONDUCTED BY
Francisco J. Núñez

ORIGINAL CONCEPT & VIDEO
Ali Hossaini

THEATRICAL CONCEPT & STAGE DIRECTION
Michael McQuilken

STORY DEVELOPMENT
Nathaniel Bellows, Maruti Evans, Michael McQuilken, Netsayi, Francisco J. Núñez, Paola Prestini, Sarah Kirkland Snider, and Niloufar Talebi

SCENIC AND LIGHTING DESIGN
Maruti Evans

COSTUME DESIGN
Nicholas K

PROJECTION DESIGN
Brad Peterson

SOUND DESIGN
Nicholas Pope

Co-produced by VisionIntoArt and Young People’s Chorus of New York City

Developed at 3LD Art & Technology Center

PROGRAM

Passage
Vhiri reNgoro
Composed by Netsayi Chigwendere

Epiphany
COMPOSED BY Paola Prestini
LIBRETTO BY Niloufar Talebi

Intermezzo
COMPOSED BY Netsayi Chigwendere
LIBRETTO BY Netsayi Chigwendere

Funeral Song
Sugar for Your Wounds
The Light

Ouroboros
COMPOSED BY Sarah Kirkland Snider
LIBRETTO BY Nathaniel Bellows

PERFORMED BY Young People’s Chorus of New York City Francisco J. Núñez, Music Director and Conductor

with Netsayi

AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE (ACME)
Ben Russell & Caleb Burhans, violins
Caitlin Lynch, viola
Clarice Jensen, cello & artistic director

David Cossin, Ibrahima “Thiokho” Diagne, & Ian Rosenbaum, percussion

PERFORMERS
YOUNG PEOPLE’S CHORUS OF NYC CONCERT CHORUS
Francisco J. Núñez, Artistic Director/Founder

Tiffany Alulema
Clare Altman
Michelle Britt
Kelli Carter
Samuel Chachkes
Nadine Clements
Louisa Cornelis
Brianne Cotter
Scarlet Diaz
Jamila Drecker-Waxman
Nola Dwyer-Hernandez
Dea Elezaj
Maggie Feldman
Asila Folds
Celia Frank
Keerti Gopal
Naya Griles
Emma Higgins
Nyota Holmes-Cardona
Bianca Jeffrey
Olivia Katzenstein
Zoe Kaznelson
Bethany Knapp
Maria Kogarova
Gabrielle Kone
Riya Kothy
Alyssa Koutellos
Gabrielle Kuker
Aylene Le Sourd
Rebecca McCartney
Evelyn Menkes
Joy Motz
Miki Nakano
Jasmine Neal
Kayla Norflus
Maya Osman-Krinsky
Ranya Perez
Jordan Reynoso
Elvira Rivera
Sophie Saidmehr
Jeniecly Scarlett
Isabel Schaffzin
Sarea Shariff
Natalie Shclover
Thalia St. Hubert
Jacqueline Stern
Kaia Tien
Theodora Tomuta
Erika Urgiles
Caroline Watters
Kaila Wharwood
Cierra Willis

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Vadim Malinskiy

ASSOCIATE PROJECTION DESIGNER
David Palmer

MASTER ELECTRICIAN
Tom Dyer
ABOUT
Epiphany: The Cycle of Life

PROGRAM NOTE

An exuberant living installation filled with live music, *Epiphany: The Cycle of Life* sends its audience through tunnels of light while reflecting on our earthly attachments and our place in the cosmos. Based on video cycles by Ali Hossaini (*Epiphany* and *Ouroboros*), Francisco J. Núñez, YPC Founder and Artistic Director, conducts the Young People’s Chorus of New York City, joined by Zimbabwean singer Netsayi, American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME), percussionists David Cossin, Ibrahima “Thiokho” Diagne, and Ian Rosenbaum as they perform world premiere compositions by Paola Prestini, Netsayi, and Sarah Kirkland Snider. This ecstatic and mysterious hour of new music blossoms within a vibrant and all-encompassing media and scenic installation. The performance consists of three parts, *Epiphany,* *Intermezzo,* and *Ouroboros.*

Part 1: *Epiphany*

*Epiphany* is a reflection on the endless cycle of death and rebirth, told through the eyes of youth. The event began as a reflection on mortality for Ali Hossaini who was with his mother when she died. As she became less animate, her environment came alive. Brightly colored balloons were talking, she said. The walls were breathing. Many cultures believe that when our parents die, they leave a cord that connects us to the numinous beyond. In creating the original video installation—also entitled *Epiphany*—Ali imagined a world where everything was full of grace, and, guided by several spiritual traditions, he began exploring that world with a camera. Then, drawing from the Latin Mass, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* pre-Columbian Aztec poetry, Zoroastrian beliefs, and death-bed conversations, librettist Niloufar Talebi envisioned a story of transformations—of being released into the unknown. Paola Prestini then composed a modern requiem for Niloufar’s libretto—a new musical world for the Young People’s Chorus of New York City that will usher us through that transformation.

Part 2: *Intermezzo*

Responding to the idea of *Epiphany,* Netsayi reflected on her beliefs and how they related to her music. She says, “To me, faith is about humility and discipline, a commitment to a single path. Therein lies freedom. Life in Zimbabwe is very close to death. At the time of writing this music, I attended a series of funerals, and this influenced my approach from responding to a concept to responding to the reality of my daily environment. Death is beyond our understanding. We free ourselves by leaving the need to understand at the garden gate and stepping onto the path.”

Part 3: *Ouroboros*

The “Ouroboros” is an ancient symbol of a snake eating its own tail—an emblem of rebirth and cyclicality, “the eternal return.” It serves as the inspiration for Sarah Kirkland Snider’s work by the same name, with text by Nathaniel Bellows, which explores the struggle—and eventual freedom—that arises from the self’s efforts to understand, and transcend, the constraints of the human world. *Ouroboros* is visually focused on a grand view of our majestic and unfathomable universe—an extraordinary vantage that connects the most massive supernova to the tiniest single-celled creature.

Director Michael McQuilken took the bountiful contributions from the creative team and wove them together within a large-scale theater machine that is patterned after the various stages of the afterlife Bardo passage (as described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.) Ultimately, *Epiphany: The Cycle of Life* is an affirmation of this extraordinary privilege called life. It is a gathering into a shared moment of mutual breath and contemplation. It is a love song for the unknowable possibilities awaiting us in lives yet to come.
Young People’s Chorus of New York City

Young People’s Chorus of New York City is a multicultural youth chorus internationally renowned not only for its superb virtuosity and brilliant showmanship, but as a model for an inclusive society that is being replicated globally. Founded in 1988 by Francisco J. Núñez, a MacArthur Fellow, YPC annually reaches more than 1,400 children from seven to 18 through its after-school and in-school programs. Its repertoire spans four centuries with works ranging from Renaissance and classical traditions to gospel, folk, pop, contemporary, and world music. YPC has also contributed greatly to expanding and invigorating the repertoire for young voices in the 21st century through its groundbreaking Transient Glory and Radio Radiance new music series. Through these series alone, YPC has commissioned and premiered over 80 compositions from the most distinguished composers of our time, many of whom had never before written for young voices. The “astounding virtuosity and palpable joy” (Wall Street Journal) of YPC performances inspires frequent invitations for collaborations and performances from a global array of festivals and cultural institutions on four continents, among them, invitations to represent North America at the World Choral Summits of Kyoto in 2005 and Beijing in 2012. YPC is in residence at Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Frederick P. Rose Hall and was named New York’s first radio choir by WNYC, New York public radio. In 2011 YPC was presented with the nation’s highest honor for youth programs, a National Arts and Humanities youth program award by First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House. ypc.org

VisionIntoArt

Co-founded in 1999 by composer Paola Prestini, VisionIntoArt (VIA) is a non-profit production company dedicated to fostering collaborative, interdisciplinary new music. VIA provides integral, comprehensive support from fund-raising, commissioning, and incubation to performance, recording, marketing, and beyond. VIA is the sustaining force behind more than 100 original productions to date, with a portfolio that reads like a who’s who of contemporary music, art, and such interdisciplinary fields as science and conservation. VIA is currently in residence as a laboratory partner at National Sawdust. As New York magazine observes, “You couldn’t ask for a better one-stop survey of what’s happening in new music now.” To document and disseminate the company’s work, 2014 saw the launch of VIA Records, hailed by Q2 Music as “an essential new voice in the future of American classical music.” visionintoart.com

3-Legged Dog

3-Legged Dog was founded in 1994 by a group of artists working at the Ontological-Hysteric Theater and has become one of the leading experimental arts groups in New York. Since its inception, 3-Legged Dog has performed and exhibited at the Kitchen, the Ontological, PS 122, La MaMa, the Signature Theatre, and at its home, 3LD Art and Technology Center. Outside New York its work has been seen at the Venice Biennale, Prague Quadrennial, Click Festival, Sundance Festival, American Film Institute Festival, and in many other festivals. From the center in lower Manhattan, 3LD has built an unrivaled talent magnet, drawing artists from around the globe to New York to create large-scale, immersive, and technology-driven artworks and experiences in New York City. 3-Legged Dog exists to produce new, original works in theater, performance, dance, media, and hybrid forms. Working from a strong literary tradition, its mission is to explore the new narrative possibilities created by digital technology, to foster self-expression and skill in young artists through educational initiatives, and to provide an environment for artists to create new tools and modes of expression allowing them to excel across a range of disciplines. Through cooperative resource gathering and sharing, 3-Legged Dog pushes scale, cooperation, and community building with other artists as the most viable course to survival and growth.

American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME)

The American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME) was honored by ASCAP during its 10th anniversary season in 2015 for the “virtuosity, passion, and commitment with which it performs and champions American composers.” The flexible ensemble comprises some of New York’s most sought-after, engaging musicians including violinists Caroline Shaw (winner of the 2013 Pulitzer prize) and Yuki Numata Resnick; violists Caleb Burhans and Nadia Sirota; cellist and Artistic Director Clarice Jensen; flutist Alex Sopp; pianist Timo Andres; percussionist Chris Thompson; and more. ACME has recorded for New World, New Amsterdam, and Butterscotch Records. Its recording of Max Richter’s eight-hour piece, Sleep, will be released by Deutsche Grammophon in fall 2015. The group’s 2015—16 season includes performances presented by BAM, the Sacrum Profanum Festival in Krakow (Poland), Washington Performing Arts in DC, Dartmouth’s Hopkins Center, Five Boroughs Music Festival, Scandinavia House, and National Sawdust. ACME’s dedication to new music extends across genres and has earned it praise from both classical and rock audiences. ACME’s many collaborators have included the Richard Alston Dance Company, Wayne McGregor’s Random Dance, Gibney Dance, Satellite Collective, actress Barbara Sukowa, filmmaker Jim Jarmusch, Grizzly Bear, Low, Matmos, Jeff Mangum, A Winged Victory for the Sullen, Roomful of
Teeth, Lionheart, and Theo Bleckmann. The group has performed at leading venues including Carnegie Hall, BAM, (Le) Poisson Rouge, Miller Theatre, the Met Museum, Constellation Chicago, Stanford Live, UCLA, Peak Performances, Melbourne Recital Hall, Big Ears, and All Tomorrow’s Parties in the UK, among many others.

NATHANIEL BELLows
Librettist—Ouroboros

Nathaniel Bellows works in the fields of writing, visual arts, and music. He is the author of three books: a collection of poems, Why Speak? (W.W. Norton); and two novels, On This Day (Harper-Collins) and Nan: A Novel in Stories (Harmon Blunt). He lives in New York City.

NETSayI
Performer and Composer—Intermezzo

Netsayi, the “Queen of Afrofolk,” has roots deep in the musical soil of Zimbabwe and an open-minded international sensibility. Her original and distinctive sound has wowed audiences around the world. Netsayi forged a reputation performing a cappella in London’s singer-songwriter clubs. She went on to receive universal acclaim for her two albums: Chimurenga Soul and Monkey’s Wedding, (“refreshingly, startlingly excellent,” raved Mojo). Following a 40-date UK tour supporting Grammy award-winning legends Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Netsayi returned home to Harare in 2010, where she established her band, Black Pressure. In 2012 the band was spotted by composer-artistic director Paola Prestini and invited to New York, performing live shows at NPR and Celebrate Brooklyn, among others. Netsayi continued to develop her solo career as both composer and collaborator, working with musicians, writers, video artists, and dancers to craft and expand her vision. Her music reveals wit and poetry, by turns emotive, pensive, and energizing and always comes from the heart. Netsayi is clearly at the forefront of the new wave of African artists gaining global recognition. With a 15-year career as a leading Zimbabwean singer-songwriter, Epiphany: The Cycle of Life marks Netsayi’s debut as an independent composer.

DAVID COSSIN
Percussion

David Cossin is a specialist in new and experimental music. He has worked across a broad spectrum of musical and artistic forms to incorporate new media with percussion. Cossin has recorded and performed internationally with composers and ensembles including the Bang on a Can All Stars, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Yo-Yo Ma, Meredith Monk, Tan Dun, Cecil Taylor, Talujon Percussion Quartet, and the trio, Real Quiet. Numerous theater projects include collaborations with Blue Man Group, Mabou Mines, and director Peter Sellars. Cossin was featured as the percussion soloist in Tan Dun’s Grammy and Oscar-winning score to Ang Lee’s film Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. Cossin joined Sting for his world tour, Symphonocities, and has performed as a soloist with orchestras throughout the world including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestra Radio France, St Paul Chamber Orchestra, Sao Paulo State Symphony, Sydney Symphony, Gothenburg Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Hong Kong Symphony, and the Singapore Symphony. Cossin ventures into other art forms including sonic installations, which have been presented in New York, Italy, and Germany. He is also an active composer and has invented several new instruments, expanding the limits of traditional percussion. Cossin is the curator for the Sound Res Festival, an experimental music festival in southern Italy and also teaches percussion at Queens College in New York City.

IBRAHIMA “THIOKHO” DIAgNE
Percussion

Ibrahim “Thiokho” Diagne was born in Dakar, Senegal. Diagne is a member of the Bambara ethnic group originating from Mali, West Africa. Music and art are a rich tradition in Diagne’s family, and from a young age he had dedicated his life to mastering the tabla drum. As a child, he perfected making his own drums from discarded goat skins and empty buckets and invited his brothers and friends to play. In 1989, Diagne was introduced to master sabar drummers M’Baye Faye and Lamine Faye of Dakar, and these were the first men to integrate Diagne into the Senegalese music culture with his inclusion into the bands Solo Cissoko and Kisito Band. In 2004, Diagne became the lead percussionist for Grammy award-winning, Angelique Kidjo, from Benin, with whom he toured North America, Europe, Central America, the Carribean, and parts of Africa. He has also performed with Stevie Wonder, Ziggy Marley, and Alicia Keys. Diagne currently resides in New York City where he continues to perform with various artists and teaches percussion classes.

MARUTI EVANS
Scenic and Lighting Design

Maruti Evans’ works include Else Where and 21c Liederabend (BAM); Witness Uganda, Alice vs Wonderland, and Mouth Wide Open (ART); Master and Margarita (Bard SummerScape); An Oresteia (Classic Stage Company); Crowns (Goodman Theater); and Swee ny Todd (Virginia Opera Company). He received the Drama Desk Sam Norkin award in 2013 for the designs of Tiny Dynamite and Pilo Family Circus and Drama Desk nominations for In the Heat of the Night, Slaughterhouse 5, and Blindness.

ALI HOSSAINI
Original Concept and Video

Ali Hossaini works at the cutting edge of art, technology, and business. His video installations have been exhibited around the world, winning acclaim from Vanity Fair, Cool Hunting, and others, including The New York Times, which calls him “a biochemist turned philosopher turned television producer turned visual poet.” Hossaini is CEO of Cinema Arts Network, a London-based consortium that includes the Barbican, BFI Southbank, and arts venues around the UK. Outside the UK, Hossaini works as a cultural planner who focuses on technology with current projects in Nigeria, Canada, and Texas. He is an associate of global
consultancy Lord Cultural Resources. His next art project is Neurodiversity, a collaboration with autistic people and scientists to create a sensory model of ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder).

NICHOLAS K
Costume Design

Nicholas K studied fashion design at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City and at Polimoda School of Design in Florence, Italy. Upon her return to the US, she took a position in menswear design at DKNY in 1996. She joined the founding team of Coach men’s sportswear the following year and then was courted back to DKNY where she spent the next two years designing womenswear. She went on to launch men’s and women’s apparel for John Varvatos while at Nautica and later consulted on nearly every other major American fashion brand, including Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, and Polo, before launching Nicholas K with her brother Christopher in 2005.

MICHAEL MCQUILKEN
Theatrical Concept and Stage Direction

Michael McQuilken is a Brooklyn-based director, writer, filmmaker, and composer. Recent directing work includes Epiphany, Angel’s Bone (a world premiere opera at Prototype), October in the Chair (American Theater of Actors, NYC), and Distraction is the Devil (a world-touring narrative rock show performed by McQuilken’s band, Odyssseus Finn). Past work includes Cassandra (an original play commissioned by BRIC media art house), Theatre is Evil (a world-touring theatrical rock concert experience McQuilken created for Amanda Palmer), Room No. 35 by Paola Prestini (commissioned by Kranert Center for the Performing Arts), and Id (an original play with music that McQuilken wrote, scored, and directed). McQuilken has been commissioned by Ars Nova and The Foundry to develop scores for two new musicals in 2015 and 2016. He also regularly makes music videos and short films with his film company, Q Motion Pictures. Additional composition work can be found via McQuilken’s solo music project, The Few Moments. He is a directing graduate of the Yale School of Drama.

FRANCISCO J. NÚÑEZ
Music Director and Conductor

Francisco J. Núñez is a composer, conductor, visionary, leading figure in music education, and the artistic director and founder of the Young People’s Chorus of New York City, renowned worldwide for its diversity and artistic excellence. Since he founded YPC in 1988, Núñez has changed the perception of the capabilities of a children’s chorus, dramatically heightening an awareness of the unlimited ability of children to rise to unforeseen levels of artistry. He also leads the University Glee Club of New York City, its fifth conductor since the all-men’s chorus was established in 1894, and is sought after nationwide as guest conductor by professional orchestras and choirs, master teacher, and frequent keynote speaker as a leading authority on the role of music in achieving equality and diversity among children in today’s society. Núñez recently created the Núñez Initiative for Social Change through the Choral Arts, bringing together leaders in various fields to develop a strategy to promote social advocacy for children to choral conductors and music teachers across the country. Núñez composes countless compositions and arrangements in all musical formats and styles for choirs, orchestras, and solo instruments and has been recognized with an ASCAP Victor Herbert award and the New York Choral Society’s Choral Excellence award. ABC-TV has honored him as its “Person of the Week,” and most recently, Fox News profiled him during Hispanic Heritage Month for “changing young lives with music.” In 2011 he was recognized with a MacArthur fellowship.

BRAD PETERSON
Projection Design

Brad Peterson is a video and projection designer based in New York City. Recent work includes Fish in the Dark (Broadway); Carousel (Stratford Festival); Labyrinth: Room No. 35 (VIA/BMP/Kranert); Soul Doctor (off-Broadway); Encounter (BMMF, NCPA—Beijing); This Takes Place Close By (thingNY); The Wiz (Maltz Jupiter); On the Town (Merry-Go-Round Playhouse); The Little Mermaid (NC Theater); Big Fish and Oswald (Casey Mahana); The Mountaintop (Gulfshore Playhouse); The Qualification of Douglas Evans, Enter at Forrest Lawn, and The Cheater’s Club (The Amoralists); Broadway Bares 23/24/25 (BC/EFA); Kiss Solo and Timelining (Gerard + Kelly); and Here Be Sirens (Morningside Opera). Other projects include An American in Paris and First Date (Associate Designer, Broadway) and Little Dancer (associate designer, Kennedy Center). Upcoming work includes The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe (Stratford Festival), Empire: A New Musical (McCoy-Rigby/La Mirada), and The Empty Space (off-Broadway).

Peterson is a graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and a proud member of the United Scenic Artists, Local 829.

PAOLA PRESTINI
Composer—Epiphany

Paola Prestini is “the enterprising composer and impresario” (The New York Times) and “visionary-in-chief” of VisionIntoArt. Prestini’s compositions have been deemed “radiant...amorously evocative” by The New York Times, and “spellbinding” by The Washington Post. She has been commissioned by Carnegie Hall, The New York Philharmonic, and Kronos Quartet, and her newest projects include an opera with director Robert Wilson, Two Oars, based on Hemingway’s The Old Man and the Sea to premiere at Opera Australia in 2018; Labyrinth: Installation Concertos at the Isabella Gardner Museum; The Hubble, a cantata commissioned by Bay Chamber Concerts with astrophysicist Mario Livio to premiere at Los Angeles Philharmonic; 21c Liederabend (BAM 2013); Gilgamesh, a new opera with Michael Counts, Cerise Jacobs, and Beth Morrison Projects to premiere in Boston; a residency at Park Avenue Armory/Watermill Center for Aging Magician with the Brook-
lyn Youth Chorus, commissioned by the Walker Arts Center and Krannert Center; The Colorado, an eco/film cantata to premiere at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Houston’s Da Camera series; and Mass Reimaginings, a new choral work commissioned by Trinity Choir with libretto by Brenda Shaughnessy and visuals by Anne Patterson. Prestini has studied with Samuel Adler and Robert Beaser while at The Juilliard School where she was a Paul and Daisy Soros fellow. In 1999, she co-founded VisionIntoArt, an interdisciplinary production company that has created over 100 productions worldwide. She is currently executive creative director of the new Brooklyn-based venue and non-profit, National Sawdust. Prestini’s awards include the ASCAP Victor Herbert Award and the Paul and Daisy Soros fellowship.

IAN ROSENBAUM
Percussion

Praised for his “excellent” and “precisely attuned” performances by The New York Times, percussionist Ian David Rosenbaum has developed a musical breadth far beyond his years. He made his Kennedy Center debut in 2009 and later that year garnered a special prize created for him at the Salzburg International Marimba Competition. Rosenbaum joined the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s CMS Two program in 2012 as one of the second percussionist selected in its history. He has appeared at the Bay Chamber, Bridgehampton, Music@Menlo, Norfolk, and Yellow Barn festivals. Highlights of the 2015—16 season include a performance of John Luther Adams’ evening-length percussion quartet Strange and Sacred Noise, the premiere of Epiphany at BAM, and the debut tour of Music Haul, a mobile concert hall created by the Yellow Barn Chamber Music Festival. This season, Rosenbaum will also curate a series of programs at the new Brooklyn venue National Sawdust. Rosenbaum is a member of Soundbox Percussion, HOWL, and Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble. He has recorded for the Bridge, Innova, Naxos, and Starkland labels and is on the faculty of the Dwight School in Manhattan. Rosenbaum endorses Vic Firth sticks and mallets.

SARAH KIRKLAND SNIDER
Composer—Ouroboros

Recently deemed “among the brightest lights to emerge in recent seasons” (Time Out New York) and “a potentially significant voice on the American music landscape” (Philadelphia Inquirer), composer Sarah Kirkland Snider writes music of direct expression and vivid narrative that has been hailed as “rapturous” (The New York Times), “haunting” (The Los Angeles Times), and “strikingly beautiful” (Time Out New York). The 2013 winner of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra’s Elaine Lebenbom Memorial Award, Snider has received commissions and performed internationally with San Francisco Symphony, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Residentie Orkest Den Haag, North Carolina Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, violinist Anne Akiko Meyers, percussionist Colin Currie, vocalist Shara Worden, yMusic, the Knights, Ensemble Signal, and many others. Her “ravishingly melancholy” (The New York Times) debut album, the orchestral song cycle Penelope (2010) was named to dozens of top-10 lists internationally, and she recently released Unremembered, a 13-part orchestral song cycle for vocalists Padma Newsome, D.M. Stith, and Shara Worden (an “intricately magical landscape”—Justin Davidson, New York magazine) on New Amsterdam Records, a label she co-directs with William Brittelle and Judd Greenstein. Sarah has an MM and artist diploma from the Yale School of Music and a BA from Wesleyan University.

NILOUFAR TALEBI
Librettist—Epiphany

Niloufar Talebi is a writer, librettist, award-winning translator, and multidisciplinary artist whose work has been described as “elegant” by The New York Times, and “visionary” by Operavore. She is the editor and translator of Belonging: New Poetry by Iranians Around the World (North Atlantic Books, 2008), and creator-performer of Four Springs (2004), Midnight Approaches (2006), Icarus/Rise (2007), and The Persian Rite of Spring (2010). Her libretti include Atash Sorushan (Fire Angels) (2011), a song cycle co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall, Cal Performances, and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; The Investment (2014), an opera commissioned by Washington National Opera’s American Opera Initiative; The Disinherited (2014), an opera developed with the American Lyric Theater’s CLDP; and The Plentiful Peach (2015), commissioned by the Los Angeles Children’s Chorus and premiered at Stanford Live. Talebi is the recipient of grants, awards, and residencies including the National Endowment for the Arts, San Francisco Arts Commission, and the James Irvine Foundation. Her work has been published in World Literature Today, PBS Frontline, ArteEast, Poetry International, Rattapallax, Two Lines, Harvard Divinity Bulletin, and Mother Jones.
VisionIntoArt

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Thanks!
VisionIntoArt is proud to be in residence as a laboratory partner at National Sawdust, an Opera America Professional member, and former participant in DeVos Institute of Arts Management Professional Development Program with the Kennedy Center and BAM. VIA is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in Partnership with the City Council and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. VIA is extremely grateful for its supportive board and friends including VIA Board Chair Jill and Bill Steinberg, the D’Avino Family Charitable Gift Fund, and Kevin Dolan. Finally, this project would not have been possible without a generous gift from Melville and Leila Strauss.

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Epiphany: The Cycle of Life was developed at 3LD Art & Technology Center. 3ldnyc.org
LIBRETTO—**EPHANNY**
By Niloufar Talebi

**Gloria**

SOLOIST(S):
All the days of my life
With such speed go by
If not for a teacher or two
I would not have known what to do

CHORUS (vigilers):
O life! Zoë!
Life full of color
Longstanding temple of fire
Ignite it! For dancing flames
across the lands
If not, darkness abounds
Darkness of your own doing abounds
To live as if immortal
But to have only this breath
That evaporates
Here, now

**Mysterium Tremendum**

SOLOIST(S):
It is my time.
Though I charted myself to life’s matrix
On a treadwheel of airs and theatrics
As razzle-dazzle flashing lights dim
I brace it alone awe-struck and grim

Where will I go? Oblivion?
Will anyone know I lived?
Will I have been a small being
On the vast prairie of dreams?

CHORUS (vigilers):
Your time has come
Do not be afraid
You are not alone
Everyone dies

SOLOIST(S):
Why? Where will I go?

**Bardo / Between**

SOLOIST(S):
I look from my open door
At mothers fathers and more
Childhood floods in
Moments burst
In the bare hour of flight.
We shall live no more
I will hold your hand ashore

Hold me tight
In the bare hour of flight
Cradle the nest at threshing time

CHORUS (vigilers):
From this brief burst
Between unknowns
You cross into the next
Noble one!
The gnashing fangs and glassy eyes
You see are not real
Those pure lands are not anywhere
But in your own heart
Do not be consumed by them
Recognize them as projections of your
terrified mind
Let go and liberation is instantaneous!

CHORUS (beloveds/mourners):
Kyrie eleison / Lord have mercy

**Dies Pacis or The Great Liberation**

CHORUS (vigilers):
The soft white light of the gods
Soft red light of the titans
Soft blue light of humans
Soft green light of animals
Soft yellow light of the pretans
And the soft smoky light of the hells
Dawn one after the other

Do not cling
Journey forth

SOLOIST(S):
Must I go
In the middle of things?
It comes
I brace it alone
Help me

CHORUS (beloveds/mourners):
You are not alone
We’re here

CHORUS (vigilers):
If you fear dying
Devils tear at you
If you make peace
Angels free you

EMA HOH!
The peaceful between dawns
The spirit flies!

**Requiem**

CHORUS (beloveds/mourners):
Is this it, the season of our lives?
We sit with swollen hearts
Grieve we will
In our earthly ways.

Lacrimosa dies illa / Tearful will be the
day

CHORUS (vigilers):
You can go!
Dissolve in rainbow light
Incandesce to smithereens
Pass through mountains
Circle the universe
Rest in empty luminosity
In final transparency
In nakedness
Flowersongs / Xochicuicame

That blossoms again and again.

Play your indivisible divine-like heart

Find your indivisible self

Seeds for a new life

Blossoming into the earth

We are like the rose

Everyone passes

A floating dandelion whisked apart

Tomorrow we all depart

A floating dandelion whisked apart

Everyone passes

Into the land of the unknown.

We are like the rose

Blossoming into the earth

Seeds for a new life

Find your indivisible self

Play your indivisible divine-like heart

That blossoms again and again.

Grace / Khvarana

CHORUS:
Do not let the bird of grace
Fly away from you.
The dead once lived in their own way
We must release them, let them go.
I still see you everyday.
You live in my laughter and tears.
I have written your name
on everything.

Open the windows to the world again
Outside is quintessence
Live your life, live your life,
live your life

Antilamentation

SOLOIST(S):
Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints in the snow.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there, I did not die.

EPHANPY

LIBRETTIST NOTES:

1. My aim was to structure and write
a text of a dying person's journey. To
chart an atlas of this world, I interwove
three separate narratives overlay-
ing and departing from the Christian
Latin Mass, pre-Day of the Dead Aztec
poetry, and Buddhist guidance in the
Tibetan Book of the Dead:

   a. Soloist(s) (the dying): their most
distilled personal thoughts and con-
cerns.
   b. Chorus (beloveds and mourners):
grief and loss experienced by loved
ones.
   c. Chorus (priests and vigilers):
instructions and vigil for the dying
adapted from, among other sources,
Robert Thurman's translation of and
supplementary writings on the Tibetan
Book of the Dead, the lyrical body of
14th-century Aztec poetry on life and
death, and conversations with inter-
faith and alternative hospice caregivers,
notably with Dr. Megory Anderson of
the Sacred Dying Foundation.

2. Mysterium Tremendum refers to the
Awe and Fear of the Mystery when
faced with death.

3. Bardo is the Tibetan term for a be-
tween stage, of which there are many,
including the stage after dying and
before entering another life.

4. “Libera memememamama” a word
play on the Latin phrase, “Libera Me,”
the added Mamama being the sound
of reaching for the source, the univer-
sal Mother, where we came from and
where we return to.

5. To alloy a new, secular requiem, I
modified a few key Latin and Greek
phrases from the Latin Mass. For
example, in the title, Dies Pacis or The
Great Liberation, rather than using the
title of the longest section of the Latin
Mass “Dies Irae / Day of Wrath,” I
modified it to mean, Day of Peace, and
coupled it with “The Great Liberation,”
the partial title of the Bardo Thodol,
the original name of what we call the
Tibetan Book of the Dead (which liter-
ally translates into, The Great Libera-
tion Through Hearing in the Between
State, referring to helping the dying
let go by whispering prayers into their
ears).

6. Pretan (definition): In Buddhism, an
unresting ghost tortured incessantly by
hunger and thirst.

7. Ema Hoh! Is the Tibetan expression
and Sanskrit word conveying the joy
and wonder of reaching realization,
the Aha! moment, the jewel in self-
discovery. Essentially the expression of
an epiphany.

8. Memento Mori (definition):
Remember your mortality.

9. Almost all of the text sung by vigilers
are adapted from the Cantares Mexi-
canos, and Romances de los Señores
de la Nueva España, two essential
compilations of pre-Columbian Aztec
poetry on life and death, originally
in the Nahuatl language, all called
Flowersongs. They are commonly
performed as call-and-response poems.
I consulted translations by John Curl,
among others.

10. In Zoroastrian belief, Khvarana
(Sanskrit) is a person’s state of grace,
their highest calling. Rather than con-
cretely suggest reincarnation (Tibetan
Buddhism) or heaven/hell (Christian-
ity), I suggest a different kind of return/
thereafter.

11. Antilamentation is adapted from a
longer poem by Mary Elizabeth Frye.

— Niloufar Talebi © 2015
Funeral Song
Sugar for Your Wounds
The Light

There's a funeral in this town every week
There's a funeral in this town every week
Coz nothing lasts forever
And forever is for keeps
There's a funeral in this town every week

There's a funeral in this town every hour
There's a funeral in this town every hour
The wake is in the darkness,
Coz there's no electric power
But there's a funeral in this ghost town every hour

Sugar for Your Wounds

Everybody wants to know
What is love?
Why the earth spins on its axis? So
In the end there will be silence
Don't be blinded
Coz the stone that the builder refused could be the cornerstone.
One step on the long road
Out of the valley of dry bones.
For every measure in the race,
And all the hardships that we face.
Quote the golden rule it's sugar for your wounds.
What is hateful to yourself
Do not do to your fellow man.
And what we fail to comprehend
May not be ours to understand.

The Light

Shimmering rainbow
Now I dissolve
Where spirit dwells
In radiant light
My Lord takes delight
The light, the light, the light...
Listen

Oh, understand him in your lifetime
Or, how will you recognise him?
Oh, understand him in your lifetime
To recognise
Hiye-hoi-ye
I am Luminosity
Shimmering
I am free
Shimmering
Like water to the seed
and sunlight to the leaf
an ending is the lead
these roots to nourish me
so infinitely holy
as mother begins me
so Father completes me
He is my breath and holy

LIBRETTO—OUROBOROS
By Nathaniel Bellows

Ouroboros
Does this mean there is no end?
A life will fold
as time extends
I stand above
the world you're in
a loss a life
regained again

Can you find me where you are?
Outside the earth
beyond the stars
the ring of clouds
the serpent's arc
the ancient child
to stop to start

It had no need for eyes
no ears no foot or face
it moved within itself
an inward turning shape.
I saw the curving spine
I heard the jaw release
devouring itself
an endless hungering

The scales split under fang
the gag and pull of throat
what once was out
now goes in
the tail the tongue
engulfed

A sun bestows its heat
a whorl of stars its ice
rings will ring it round
in bands of stone in flight.
You sang the song of life
the underpin of death
joined in seamless cloth
that wrap us all like breath

What distance from this place we know?
What world beyond this cobalt globe?
Where time unwinds
where pain is eased
and life repeats
in wreaths of leaves

Should I believe you will return?
The loyal dove
the ruined fern
coled cord
arrive return
oh wondrous way
all circular
Salutes

the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation

for its support of women composers in the Next Wave Festival
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