

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Guerilla Opera Opens their 15th Anniversary Season with Stories from Ellis Island**

BOSTON, MA (September 7, 2021) - At the opening of their 15th Anniversary Season, Guerilla Opera presents a live production of *ELLIS*, a world premiere multimedia and immersive opera, composed and with electronic sound design by Gabriele Vanoni, libretto by Ewa Chrusciel, and with video installation and stage direction by Laine Rettmer.

*ELLIS* runs for two performances only on Saturday and Sunday, October 2 & 3, 2021 at 7:00PM in Boston's National Historic Landmark, the Old South Meeting House. Tickets are now on sale and are \$45.00 for general admission. Discounts are available for patrons with disabilities as well as students. Purchase tickets online at [guerillaopera.org/eventcal/ellis](http://guerillaopera.org/eventcal/ellis) or by calling the Guerilla Opera box office at 617-286-6307.



*Soprano and Artistic Director, Aliana de laGuardia in "ELLIS", April 2021. Photo by Jeffrey Means.*

*ELLIS* breathes life into forgotten voices of our past through true stories from Ellis Island and the

recorded voices of immigrant storytellers from audio interviews collected in the “Ellis Island Oral Histories.” These recordings are incorporated into the electronic sound design of the opera. *ELLIS* further explores themes of clashing of cultural identities, artifacts immigrants brought to this country, and the acceptance or intolerance of different cultures through emotional stories of migration.

Guerilla Opera’s production brings together a multicultural cast to embody these true stories from our nation’s past, while Rettmer’s larger-than-life video projections transport audiences through time. The audience experiences a literal journey to communally explore how we are all wanderers in our lives searching for a sense of identity and place in the face of the unfamiliar.

The cast features Guerillas Aliana de la Guardia (soprano) and Brian Church (baritone), joined by Bizhou Chang (soprano), Taka Komagata (tenor), and Andros Zins-Browne (dancer) in their Guerilla Opera debut. The self-conducted instrumental ensemble includes Lilit Hartunian (Violin), Stephen Marotto (Cello), Philipp Stäudlin (Saxophone), and Mike Williams (co-founder and percussionist).

The production and creative team includes Laine Rettmer (Stage Director/Video Artist), Nicholas O’Leary (Associate Director/Dramaturg), Nuozhou Wang (Associate Director/Video Effects), Pamela Hersch (Projections Designer), Maxx Finn (Lighting Design), Tae Kim (Pianist), Sarah Schneider (Artistic Projects and Production Manager), Keithlyn Parkman (Production Coordinator), and Julia Noulin-Mérat (Artistic Advisor).

*ELLIS* is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Haverhill Cultural Council, a local agency funded by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency, Michael and Sharon Mollerus, and Pentucket Bank, developed with our partners at the Haverhill Art Walk, HC Media, Trinity Parish in Newton Centre, The Gloucester Stage and Revolutionary Spaces, and with special thanks to José Carlos Ibañez Olvera (Compañía Nacional Ópera Contemporanea), theatre KAPOW, Ovation Theatre Company, and Best Western Merrimack Valley.



### Accessibility

Guerilla Opera’s productions of *ELLIS* require some walking and may include the use of stairs. The production can accommodate most accessibility needs. Please choose GROUP A if you are experiencing difficulty with mobility and require assistance.

Guests are encouraged to call or email Guerilla Opera’s Box Office at 617-286-6307 or [boxoffice@guerillaopera.org](mailto:boxoffice@guerillaopera.org) to disclose accessibility needs before attending any live event.

## **COVID-19 Safety**

Guerilla Opera is committed to helping stop the spread of COVID-19. All guests must be fully vaccinated or provide a negative COVID test taken within 72 hours of any live performance. Guests will be asked to show their vaccination card or test results and a government issued ID prior to entering any event ticketed by Guerilla Opera. A photo of a vaccination card is acceptable.

Guerilla Opera requires all performers, staff members, ushers, stagehands and vendors to be fully vaccinated and/or provide a negative COVID test taken within 72 hours of any in-person event. Masks are required for all guests and program staff, regardless of vaccination status, per City of Boston guidelines.

## **Other Events**

### ***ELLIS: Chapter One, Raysel's Story at the Haverhill Art Walk***

Saturday, September 11, 2021 at 6:30PM

G.A.R. Park, 108 Main St, Haverhill, MA 01830

Guerilla Opera presents a free immersive presentation of scenes featuring the true story of Raysel Luba from the multimedia chamber opera based on stories from Ellis Island. A Nazi concentration camp survivor, she journeys across the sea with her unborn child, only to face an unexpected and heartbreaking decision.

The cast for *ELLIS: Chapter One, Raysel's Story* features Aliana de la Guardia (soprano), Brian Church (baritone), Andros Zins-Browne (dancer), Stephen Marotto (Cello) and Mike Williams (percussion).

Guerilla Opera's journey begins in G.A.R. Park on Main Street in Haverhill. Admission is free and guests can sign up for reminders and further directions at [guerillaopera.org/eventcal/ellis-chapter-one](https://guerillaopera.org/eventcal/ellis-chapter-one).

The Haverhill Art Walk is an outdoor and indoor event occurring on the second Saturday of the month from May - September. It highlights local businesses, forgotten alleyways, and underutilized spaces with Plein air painting, exhibitions, demonstrations, and music performances.

This is a wandering performance that requires audiences to walk in an outdoor location. Guerilla Opera requires all audiences to be masked for the indoor portion of this performance.

ELLIS: Chapter One, Raysel's Story is supported by the Haverhill Cultural Council, a local agency funded by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency and Pentucket Bank, and with special thanks to the Best Western Merrimack Valley, HC Media, and the Haverhill Art Walk.

### ***Pre-Concert Conversation with the Creators of ELLIS***

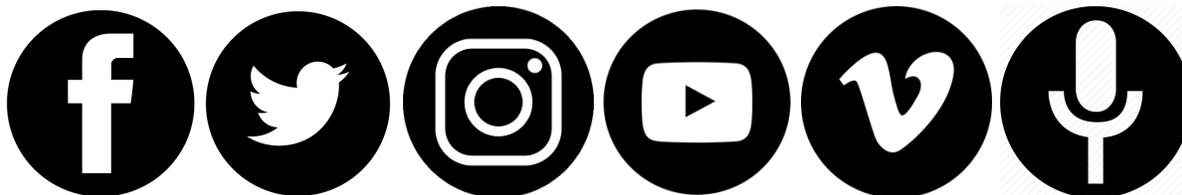
Saturday, October 2, 2021 at 6:15PM

Free with purchase of admission

Join in a conversation with composer, Gabriele Vanoni and members of the creative team from ELLIS directly preceding the evening's performance. This event is included with purchase of admission and will be held at the Old South Meeting House.

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#### CONNECT WITH US



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#GOseason15 #ellisopera

#### WHO WE ARE

Guerilla Opera is one of Boston's most exciting young companies creating brave new works. Founded in 2007, the ensemble has accumulated a repertoire of 40 new works, which continues to grow, by the most exciting composers of our generation. In daring performances, they have garnered a national reputation for innovative contemporary opera, with The Boston Globe raving that "radical exploration remains the cornerstone of everything it does."

This artist-led ensemble wields a mission to commission and envision new experimental works that are custom-tailored to their artists; champion cutting-edge music; immerse audiences in profound experiences; be a model for creative authenticity and inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA); and inspire, influence and amplify emerging generations of artists.

Their vision is to generate a unique body of work that ferociously confronts the status quo, eschews antiquated and stereotypical traditions of the art form of opera, examines stories through culturally focused and contemporary lenses, and brings new music to new audiences. ([guerillaopera.org](http://guerillaopera.org))

#### **Press Opening/Open Dress Rehearsal (Friday, October 1, 2021, 7:00p.m.)**

Guerilla Opera invites reviewers and members of the press to attend their invite-only final dress rehearsal of ELLIS on Friday, October 1, 2021, 7:00p.m in the Old South Meeting House in Boston, MA. Contact Alexis Peart directly at [boxoffice@guerillaopera.org](mailto:boxoffice@guerillaopera.org) to secure admission.

## ARTIST BIOS



**Gabriele Vanoni (Composer)** is an Italian composer, currently living in the Boston area. He completed a Ph.D. in Music Composition at Harvard University, under the guidance of Julian Anderson, Chaya Czernowin and Hans Tutschku. His music has been performed in several prestigious venues and festivals, such as Carnegie Hall (Weill Hall), Biennale di Venezia, ManiFeste, Moscow Conservatory, Royaumont Voix Nouvelles, June in Buffalo, IRCAM, Wellesley Composers Conference, NYU, BIT Teatergarasjen in Bergen and Accademia Chigiana di Siena, among many others. Likewise, various soloists and ensembles have now been involved in performing his music, including members of the Ensemble Intercontemporain, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Talea Ensemble, Moscow Studio for New Music Ensemble, Ensemble L'arsenale, Mario Caroli, Diotima Quartet, Les Cris de Paris, Nouvel

Ensemble Moderne, and many more. Besides his activity as a composer, Gabriele Vanoni served as the artistic director and founder of Suggestioni, a festival of Italian Music in United States, and holds a degree in Business for the Arts, Culture and Communication at Bocconi University. He is currently Assistant Professor in Composition at Berklee College of Music. Recent and upcoming commissions include a multimedia work with Ensemble Parallax for the New York Encounter, and a recording project with flutist Orlando Cela. He lives with his wife and children in Stoneham. ([www.gabrielevanoni.com](http://www.gabrielevanoni.com))

**Ewa Chrusciel (Librettist)** is a poet, teacher and translator. She has published eight books: three of poems in English: *Of Annunciations* (Omnidawn 2017), *Contraband of Hoopoe* (Omnidawn 2014), *Strata* (Emergency Press 2009, reprinted by Omnidawn in April 2018); three in Polish: *Tobołek*, *Sopiłki*, *Furkot*, as well as in Italian *Contrabbando di Upupe* with Edizioni Ensemble. She also published a book of *Selected Poems* by Jorie Graham in co-translation with Milosz Biedrzycki. She has translated selected books by Jack London, Joseph Conrad, I.B. Singer and selected poems of Kazim Ali, Lyn Hejinian, Cole Swensen and other American poets into Polish. She is an Associate Prof. of Humanities at Colby-Sawyer College.



**Laine Rettmer (Stage Director and Video Artist)** is a North American visual artist and opera director. Their work explores performance, gender, desire, and methods of social control. Rettmer's work has been presented nationally and internationally at the Vizcaya Museum; Manifesta; MoMA Public, curated by Mel Logan and Jakob Boeskov; the Museum of Fine Art, Boston; Massachusetts Institute of Technology Museum for the exhibition, *Hot Steam*; the Illuminus Festival; the Boston Independent Film Festival; the Yuan Art Museum; Yve Yang Gallery; Perkins and Ping; Present Company; NADA NY, NADA

Presents; and AREA gallery, among others.

Rettmer's opera productions have been praised as “wickedly smart” and “devastatingly funny” by The New York Times, and “not only profound but also shattering” by the Observer. Their, Barber of Seville, was named one of the top 10 classical music productions of 2014 by the New York Times and La Bohème one of the best operas of the decade by the Observer. For four years Rettmer was the resident stage director for the New York based company LoftOpera, with whom their last production, Macbeth, received a Freddie Award for Best New Production and was nominated for Best Director. Rettmer has also worked extensively on new opera with such companies as New York City Opera, Ecce Ensemble, Guerrilla Opera, and Rhymes with Opera. They are currently on the Artistic Advisory Board of On-Site Opera.

Recent awards include a National Endowment for the Arts Grant and a MAP Fund grant for the collaborative opera, Standby Snow: Chronicles of a Heat Wave, an Art Alliance Fellowship from HFBK Hamburg, a research fellowship from the Center for Arts Design and Social Research, and residences at Skaftfell Center for Visual Arts in Iceland, Robert Wilson's Watermill Foundation on Long Island, and MassArt's Brant Gallery. In addition to teaching performance and digital media in the Sculpture Department at RISD, Rettmer has served as a residential scholar at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They were a Post Graduate Fellow at Tufts University in Video and Digital Media. They hold a BFA in stage direction from New York University and an MFA in digital media from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts. ([lainerettmer.com](http://lainerettmer.com))



**Nuozhou Wang (Associate Director & Video Effects)** is a Chinese filmmaker, sculptor, and video artist who graduated from Rhode Island School of Design in 2020. Her work, featuring women characters invariably, explores class, beauty, and transitional space. She has engaged in the production of works presented at the Museum of Modern Art, Pioneer Works, and Art Basel. Currently working at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, she is a new member of Guerilla Opera associated with the creation of Ophelia's Life Dream. ([wangnuozhou.com](http://wangnuozhou.com))

**Nick O'Leary (Associate Director & Dramaturg)** is a New York based director of theater and live events. Born and raised in New England, he has developed new work with The American Repertory Theater (MA), Guerilla Opera (MA), Actors Theatre of Louisville (KY), The Flea Theater (NY), The Museum of the Moving Image (NY), Exquisite Corpse Company (NY), The 24 Hour Plays (NY), Dacha Theatre (WA), Sinking Ship Creations (NY), as a guest artist at Dartmouth College (NH), and more. Nick is also a designer and creator of games and interactive experiences. His work with Tiltfactor Laboratory has focused on developing games and live interactive experiences designed to effect social change, combat gender bias, and



facilitate the sourcing and organization of archival images for public institutions. (nickoleary.com)



**Aliana de la Guardia (Artistic Director & Soprano)** is a multifaceted artist-producer that has garnered acclaim for her “dazzling flights of virtuosity” (Gramophone) in “vocally fearless” performances that are “fizzing with theatrical commitment” (The Boston Globe). A voracious interpreter of repertoire old and new, this Cuban-American artist enjoys a multifaceted career as a vocalist, actor, educator, and entrepreneur in New England and beyond. A co-founding artist and now Artistic Director of Guerilla Opera, she has produced many world premiere operas with roles tailor-made for her ferocious stage presence. Specializing in new music and garnering skills as a theater artist she is especially fit for premiering

new experimental operas, genre-bending performance art, devised works, intimate performances and film projects. She has enjoyed new music and new opera collaborations featuring today’s most eminent composers with American Lyric Theater, Beth Morrison Projects, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Boston New Music Festival, Dinosaur Annex, Enigma Chamber Opera, Ludovico Ensemble, Monadnock Music, New Gallery Concert Series, the PARMA Festival, Transient Canvas, and Winsor Music, among others.

She was recently selected as a protégée for OPERA America’s Women’s Opera Network Mentorship Program for Women in Opera, paired with Lee Anne Myslewski from the Wolf Trap Foundation, as well as the recipient of a Public Art Learning Fund grant from the New England Foundation for the Arts to pursue mentorship with the renowned Double Edge Theatre. She is the owner and founder of Dirty Paloma Voice Studio in Haverhill, MA, treasurer of Granite State National Association of Teachers of Singing, and was on the 2020 Haverhill Multicultural Festival planning committee. Aliana has a BM in vocal performance, emphasis in opera and an MM, vocal performance from the Boston Conservatory [at Berklee], and additional studies with SITI Company and New Repertory Theater.

([guerillaopera.org/aliana-de-la-guardia](http://guerillaopera.org/aliana-de-la-guardia))

**Bizhou Chang (soprano)** returned to Pensacola Opera in the 2020-2021 season to sing the role of Micaëla in Carmen, and will make her film debut as Mimì in an innovative film version of La Bohème with More than Musical, Opera Omaha and Tri Cities Opera, which is expected to be released in April



2021. She will make her debut as Mimì in La Bohème with Opera Columbus in May 2021. Ms. Chang was an Artist in Residence at Pensacola Opera for their 2019-2020 season, where she performed Zerlina in Don Giovanni and covered Leonora in Il Trovatore. Ms. Chang’s operatic repertoire spans from Baroque to Contemporary, including Cio Cio San in Madama Butterfly with Janiec Opera Company at Brevard Music Center, Countess Almaviva in Le Nozze di Figaro with Miami Music Festival, Fiordiligi in Così fan tutte, Tatyana in Eugene Onegin, Magda Sorel in Menotti’s The Consul, Madame Lidoine in Dialogues des Carmélites, and the title role in Alcina at Boston

Conservatory at Berklee. Ms. Chang appeared as soloists and concert recitalists in collaboration with

prestigious orchestras, such as Brevard Symphony Orchestra and Pensacola Symphony Orchestra. An advocate of new music, Ms Chang has premiered works with Guerilla Opera, and Boston Conservatory Composer Recital Series, including the leading roles in Li Yu and Cassandra. Ms Chang is a finalist of the prestigious Teatro all Scala Academy of Lyric Opera Competition and a finalist of the XVI International Tchaikovsky Competition. She received her Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance and Artist Diploma in Opera Performance from Boston Conservatory at Berklee under the tutelage of Kathryn Wright. Ms. Chang is a native of Anshan, China. ([bizhouchang.com](http://bizhouchang.com))

**Taka Komagata (tenor)** brings his earnest vocal style to classical music internationally. His distinctive voice and genuine interpretation bring new life to his repertoire. Currently, as a Resident Artist at the Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio of the Hawai'i Opera Theatre, he starred as Bastien in a studio version of Mozart's Bastien und Bastienne. He recently made a Japanese debut at Asakusa Kyugeki theater in Tokyo as the male lead in an original Christmas musical, I'll Be Home for Christmas. Mr. Komagata co-founded Balcony Series, an artistic troupe delivering timeless classical compositions to unsuspecting listeners through impromptu performances. The series builds bridges between everyday



life and the experience of classical music by catering to audiences who would otherwise not seek out the genre. Balcony Series has appeared at Boston landmarks such as the Prudential Center, MIT, and the Stillman Willis House. He also has a great passion for contemporary music and has worked with renowned contemporary composers. He recently performed the role of Mr. Foster in Timothy Peterson's The Séance with the Hartford Opera Theater and the role of Friend in a virtual production of Felix Jarrar's The Fall of the House of Usher. Recent engagements include Rinuccio (Gianni Schicchi) in Bulgaria, Don Ottavio (Don Giovanni) in Canada, Ferrando (Così fan tutte), King Kasper (Amahl and the Night Visitors), Baron Zsupán (Countess Maritza), Le Surintendant des plaisirs (Cendrillon), and the title role of Der Zwerg. ([takakomagata.com](http://takakomagata.com))

**Brian Church (baritone)** is a busy and varied career in the Boston performing arts scene. A longtime member of the Choir at King's Chapel and the Cantata Singers as well as a frequent guest performer with Callithumpian Consort, Brian has been a strong proponent of contemporary music. Performances have included SoundIcon, Boston Musica Viva, Dinosaur Annex, Boston Modern Orchestra Project,



Firebird Ensemble, NEC Shivaree and many others. In 2013, he performed the Speaker's part in Lachenmann's "...zwei Gefuhl" as part of the Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music. He has also performed the vocalist parts for Roger Reynolds' "Submerged Memories" and "The Palace". Brian has performed Peter Maxwell Davies' rigorous "8 Songs For a Mad King" with both Callithumpian and Collage New Music. The most recent performance was selected as "Most Exciting Contemporary Classical Concert" in the Boston Phoenix' 2009 Year In Review. This past year, Brian has performed as a substitute member of the Grammy Award-winning vocal octet Roomful of Teeth in concerts in Boston,

NYC, Seattle, Portland and Carlsbad, CA. Brian enjoys a long-standing relationship with Guerilla

Opera. He premiered the roles of Joe Biden/Joe the Plumber in Curtis Hughes' "Say It Aint So, Joe", Clem in Rudolf Rojahn's "Bovinus Rex", and Darren in Adam Roberts' "Giver of Light". He also performed as the Doctor in Copeland Woodruff's restaging of Rojahn's "Heart Of A Dog", in performances in Boston, Memphis and upstate New York. This past fall, he premiered two roles in four different stagings of "Ouroboros" (Rojahn) and "Rarebit" (Hughes) as part of the "Let's Make A Sandwich" project. Brian teaches Voice, Beginning Piano, Guitar and Bass at Music 101 Studios in Melrose. He is also the father of two boys, Elias and Quentin. For 11 years, he played bass and sang in the avant-noise punk group Tristan Da Cunha. This past August he released his first solo album, "The Third Came First".

**Andros Zins-Browne (Choreographer and Dancer)** is an artist working at the intersection of performance and dance. His work extends choreographic notions to interact with dancers, non-dancers, singers, objects, and texts. Central to these pursuits is the exploration of the body as material and immaterial, a site of exchange between embodied images and somatic experience. *Already Unmade*—an unmaking of his own choreographic archive—was shown at the ICA, London; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai; and FondationGalleries Lafayette, Paris. Over the past several years, he presented several remixes of existing works by other artists:

*Jérôme Bel, 1995* (commissioned by e-Flux and KADIST Foundation); *See-Saw* by choreographer Simone Forti (the Museum of Modern Art, New York); and *The Tony Cokes Remixes* (10th Berlin Biennial). In collaboration with artist Karthik Pandian, Zins-Browne created *Atlas Unlimited*, an ongoing series of exhibitions weaving together stories of migratory movement, destruction, and re-construction through sculpture and vocal performance (most recently featured at the PERFORMA19 Performance Biennial, New York). In 2021, his work was commissioned by Danspace Project and Triple Canopy. He is the recipient of grants and awards from the Goethe Institute, the Flemish Cultural Ministry, NYSCA, and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

