

GUERRILLA OPERA *presents...*

GIVER *OF* LIGHT

Music and libretto by ADAM ROBERTS
Directed by ANDREW EGGERT



A NEW OPERA *based on the life of* RUMI

**“SOMETIMES, IT TAKES A PUNK-ROCK MENTALITY TO
BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO A 350-YEAR-OLD ART FORM ”** —*The Boston Phoenix*

Giver of Light

music and libretto by A D A M R O B E R T S

A Guerilla Opera Production
Encore Viewing - February 18, 2021 - March 18, 2021

The Ensemble

Jonas Budris	John
Aliana de la Guardia	Elena / Mean Kid
Brian Church	Darren
Jennifer Ashe	Brian / Susan
Amy Advocat	Clarinets
Kent O'Doherty	Saxophone
Mike Williams	Percussion
Javier Caballero	Cello
Rudolf Rojahn	Electronics

Production Staff

Andrew Eggert	Stage Director
Anıl Çamcı	Electronics Composer
Julia Noulín-Mérat	Set Designer
Tlálóc López-Watermann	Lighting Designer
Neil Fortin	Costume Designer
Giselle Ty	Assistant Director
Nicole Angell	Stage Manager
Anita Shriver	Props Master
Mark DiGiovanni	Technical Director
Liz Sherrier	Assistant Set Designer
Keithlyn Parkman	Assistant Stage Manager
Callan Bideau	Assistant Costume Designer
Tae Kim	Rehearsal Pianist
Holly Gordon	Graphic Designer

Administration

Aliana de la Guardia	General Manager* / Artistic Director
Julia Noulín-Mérat	Director of Design and Production* / Artistic Advisor
Mike Williams	Co-Artistic Director* / Artistic Advisor
Rudolf Rojahn	Co-Artistic Director*
Sarah Borgatti	Development Assistant*
Keithlyn Parkman	Production Coordinator

* denotes 2013 administration at the time of this production

Synopsis

Giver of Light is an American tale of transcendence, based on the true life events of the 13th century Sufi mystic poet, Rumi.

ACT I

PRELUDE:

Singers, acting as a Greek chorus, stand around the stage and recite: "If we would taste one sip of an answer, we could break out of this prison for drunks."

SCENE 1:

Elena is at home preparing dinner. John enters and they discuss their day. John talks about work and yoga, and Elena relates her experience of having taken Brian to the bus stop for his first day of fifth grade to find that a new, strange bus driver is driving the school bus. John is disturbed by Elena's account of the bus driver and decides that he will take Brian to school the following day to check out the bus driver himself.

SCENE 2:

It is the following morning. The singers assemble in chorus formation as in the prelude and shout repeatedly, "To the bus stop!" John and Brian break away from the formation and head to the bus stop. When they arrive, the bus pulls up and John locks eyes with Darren. John immediately feels the impact of his connection to Darren, but when he asks, "Who are you?" Darren responds with simple statements such as "I'm Darren, the bus driver," leaving John hungry to learn more about this mysterious character. John manages to take Darren's phone number before Brian boards the bus and Darren drives away.

SCENE 3:

John sits alone at home. He struggles with the intense feelings that have arisen within him upon meeting Darren. John sings an aria about his life and situation. At the end of his aria, Elena enters, interrupting, and asks him if he is crying. John claims he is not, that he may be catching a cold, and changes the subject, telling Elena about his meeting with the bus driver. John assures Elena that he will interrogate the bus driver to make sure that Brian is safe.

SCENE 4:

Darren is at home meditating. After several minutes, Darren's phone rings which cuts through the trance-like state Darren had entered. Darren picks up the phone to find John on the other line, with Elena standing close by, listening in. John claims that he is calling because he'd like to ask Darren a few questions since Darren will be driving his son to school every day; but John has ulterior motives, and after asking a few filler questions in order to show Elena that he is in fact investigating Darren, John asks Elena to get him a drink so that she will leave the room. Alone now, John confesses that he had an emotional breakdown after meeting Darren and is confused by his reaction. Darren asks John if it might be easier to discuss this in person, and they pick a time when John can come over to Darren's house. They hang up, and Darren wonders if John might be the one he's been seeking, a fellow giver of light.

SCENE 5:

A few days have passed. John is seen approaching Darren's house. John knocks on the front door, but there is no answer. John pushes on the door to find that it is unlocked and enters the house. He hears a strange sound, and turns the corner to find Darren meditating. Darren looks at John and pulls him into the meditation, and they enact a wordless ritual that leads to an emotional/spiritual breakthrough for John.

ACT II

PRELUDE:

Two sopranos, not in character, sing a wailing duet full of longing and intensity. When they finish, the chorus sings a reserved, melancholic vocalise.

SCENE 1:

Elena is on the phone with her girlfriend Susan. John and Darren are seen periodically on another part of the stage, still meditating. Elena complains to Susan that John has been spending a lot of time with this strange guy, and Susan wonders if John might be gay. Elena reacts strongly against this notion, but when they hang up, Elena is clearly disturbed. Elena sings an aria, questioning all that she thought was secure in her life.

SCENE 2:

Elena and John are seated at home, eating dinner. Elena states that she's noticed that John has been spending a lot of time with Darren, which is strange considering that they both originally had thought that Darren was weird, if not dangerous. John defends Darren, and tries to explain his experience of spending time with him, but Elena appears not to be convinced. Elena stands up and walks over to John, trying to seduce him in an effort to reaffirm his sexual orientation and her sense of security, but John will not have sex with her, and offers no explanation. Elena is clearly hurt.

SCENE 3:

Brian and another, the Mean Kid, are seen riding the bus to school. The Mean Kids taunts Brian, calling John a fag. Brian defends his father and the kids fight. Darren stops the bus and throws the Mean Kid off the bus, but stops Brian before he can leave, asking him if he is alright. Darren attempts to comfort Brian by stroking his cheek, and just at that moment Elena enters, seeing a confusing scene in which it appears to her that her son is being molested. She grabs Brian and flees.

SCENE 4:

John comes home to find Elena fuming, asking him where he's been. John explains that he went to meet Darren, but that Darren was not there. Elena tells John that his sweet Darren is in fact a child molester, and that he touched Brian. The reality of the situation slowly dawns on John, who realizes that his wife has called the cops on Darren. Elena attempts to comfort John by saying that Darren was no good for John anyway and that it's better that Darren has been taken away. John is furious and runs into his room, closing the door so that he can be alone, screaming, "No!" John is hurt and confused. Can he trust his wife? Can he trust the experiences he had with Darren? John calls the police station to see if he can speak directly with Darren, but Darren is no longer there. Griefstricken, John stills his mind and meditates, recalling the experiences he had with Darren. But the conflict with Elena is not yet resolved: she knocks on the door, screaming at John, asking him how it could be that she told him that his son was molested and he ran into his room. She tells him to get his priorities straight and to pack his bags and leave. John, Brian, and Elena sing an impassioned trio, all trying to simultaneously relay their points of view. Elena demands to know the truth of what happened, if John and Darren in fact slept together. John also demands to know what happened with Brian and why Elena called the police. But then John softens and tells Elena and Brian that he loves them, and that he's ready to explain what happened. John opens his mouth to speak, but what comes out is poetry, not a clear

C r e a t i v e T e a m

Adam Robert's (composer and librettist) music has been performed internationally by ensembles such as the Arditti Quartet, the JACK Quartet, le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, the Callithumpian Consort, Earplay, fellows of the Tanglewood Music Center, the Boston Conservatory Wind Ensemble, Transient Canvas, violist Garth Knox, Guerilla Opera, and at festivals such as Wien Modern (Vienna), Tanglewood, the Biennale Musique en Scene (Lyons), and the 2009 ISCM World Music Days (Sweden).

Awards for Roberts' music include a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Fromm Commission, the Benjamin H. Danks Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Leonard Bernstein Fellowship from the Tanglewood Music Center, among others. Roberts' commissioners include the Tanglewood Music Center, Guerilla Opera, Transient Canvas, and andPlay duo.

Roberts' music has been called "a powerful success," "arresting," and "amazingly lush," (the Boston Musical Intelligencer), "an attractive mix of the familiar and exotic," and "otherworldly" (Boston Classical Review), and "invigorating" with a "persistent melodic urge" (American Academy of Arts and Letters citation).

Roberts obtained a Bachelor's degree in composition from the Eastman School of Music in 2003 and a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2010. Roberts' primary mentors include David Liptak, Augusta Read Thomas, Julian Anderson, and Chaya Czernowin. Roberts currently serves as Assistant Professor of Composition at Kent State University.

Roberts' first portrait disc, "Leaf Metal," was released on Tzadik Records in 2014. Other recordings of Roberts work can be found on the New Focus Recordings and Lila Müzik labels.

Anıl Çamcı (electronics composer) is an Assistant Professor of Performing Arts Technology at the University of Michigan. His work investigates ways of worldmaking through multimedia artworks and research in the areas of virtual reality, human-computer interaction, and electronic music. Previously, he worked at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he led research projects on interaction design and immersive audio in virtual reality contexts, and Istanbul Technical University, where he founded the Sonic Arts Program. He completed his PhD at Leiden University in affiliation with the Institute of Sonology in The Hague, and the Industrial Design Department at Delft University of Technology. Çamcı's research and artistic work has been featured in leading journals and conferences. He has been granted several awards, including the Audio Engineering Society Fellowship, ACM CHI Artist Grant, and NIME Best Installation Prize.

Andrew Eggert (director) is an opera stage director and dramaturg based in Chicago and New York City. He has recently directed *La descente d'Orphée aux enfers* with Gotham Chamber Opera (2014); the Dallas Opera production of *Tod Machover's Death and the Powers* (2014; forthcoming DVD); *Alcina* at the Napa Music Festival (2014); the US premiere of *Clemency* by James MacMillan for Boston Lyric Opera (2013); and *Bluebeard's Castle* starring Samuel Ramey for Opera Omaha (2013). He enjoyed a longstanding relationship with Chicago Opera Theater where he directed *Mosè in Egitto* (2010) and *La Tragédie de Carmen* (2009), and served eight seasons as an assistant director beginning in 2002. He is a regular collaborator of stage director Diane Paulus having served as Associate Director on a number of projects including the world premiere of *Death and the Powers* at the Opéra de Monte Carlo, as well as US performances at the American Repertory Theater and Chicago Opera Theater; *Die Zauberflöte* at Canadian Opera Company; and Gotham Chamber Opera's production of *Il mondo della luna* at the Hayden Planetarium. In 2015, he will serve as Associate Director of *Crossing* by Matthew Aucoin in its world premiere production at the A.R.T. As an assistant director, he has worked with notable directors including David Schweizer, Kenneth Cazan, Lillian Groag, Tazewell Thompson, Andrei Serban, Francisco Negrin, and James Robinson. He has been guest director at Princeton University and the Yale Baroque Opera Project, and has worked with the young artist programs of Glimmerglass Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and Wolf Trap Opera. His new production of *Mourning Becomes Electra* was selected as a winner of Opera America's 2009 Director-Designer Showcase. As a dramaturg, he has worked with Rebecca Taichman on Telemann's *Orpheus* and Michael Counts on *Mose in Egitto*, both for New York City Opera. Dr. Eggert is a graduate of Yale University and earned his PhD in Historical Musicology at Columbia University, where he also has earned an MA and MPhil in Historical Musicology. He was appointed Head of Opera at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University beginning in 2013-14.

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