

Chautauqua Opera Company in collaboration with the Logan Chamber Music Series

Song From the Uproar

A concert performance with film

Music by **Missy Mazzoli** • Libretto by **Royce Vavrek** • Film by **Stephen Taylor**



Missy Mazzoli



Royce Vavrek



Abigail Fischer

Performance Monday, August 8 at 5 p.m. – Norton Hall

Premiere Performance Beth Morrison Productions, The Kitchen, NYC (2012)

There are innumerable ways in which this afternoon's performance would not be possible but for the support of Kay Logan. The Logan Chamber Series is of course an anchor for the arts at Chautauqua. But the effect that Kay has had on the entire Chautauqua community is unmistakable. One can see it and feel it everywhere.

Kay was the first Chautauquan my predecessor Jay Lesenger met when he was being considered to lead Chautauqua Opera, and he speaks of the formidable first impression she made with great fondness. And while it is a special gift from Kay that makes this performance of "Song From the Uproar" possible in my first season leading the company, I was never able to meet her in person. We dedicate today's performance to the memory of Kay Logan, in celebration of her life and the profound influence her life had, and will continue to have, on the arts and music at the Chautauqua Institution.

— Steven Osgood

PERFORMERS

Isabelle

Abigail Fischer+

Vocal Ensemble

Laura Soto-Bayomi*
Emily Michiko Jensen*
Kelly Clarke*
Anthony Ciaramitaro*
Ryan Stoll*

NOW Ensemble

Alex Sopp, Flute
Alicia Lee, Clarinet
Mark Dancigers, Electric Guitar
Michael Mizrahi, Piano
Logan Coale, Double Bass

+ Chautauqua Opera Debut
* 2016 Chautauqua Opera Young Artist

CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION

Conductor	Steven Osgood
Assistant Conductor	Jeremy Gill
Lighting Designer	Michael Baumgarten
Sound Designer	Garth MacAleavey
Coach/Accompanist	Miriam Charney
Diction Coach/Supertitles	Allison Voth
Stage Manager	Catherine Costanzo

CREDITS

Concert materials furnished by G. Schirmer Inc.

SYNOPSIS

Isabelle Eberhardt was born in 1877 in Geneva, Switzerland. At age 21, after the death of her father, mother and brother in quick succession, she travelled alone to Algeria. She dressed as a man, converted to Islam and joined a Sufi order, roamed the desert on horseback and fell in love with an Algerian soldier. After surviving an attempted assassination and a failed suicide pact with her lover, Isabelle drowned in a desert flash flood at age 27. Her journals were salvaged from the wreckage. This is her song.

COMPOSER'S NOTES

"On days when I have no money I am a vagabond on the road, enjoying the reflections of gold and scarlet sunset on the white dunes. The grave alone can rob me of such wealth, not man. If I am allowed the time it takes to write the odd fragment of a description, it may even survive in the minds of some." (Isabelle Eberhardt, 1901)

In 2004, I picked up a copy of Isabelle Eberhardt's journals in a Boston bookstore and opened it at random to the above passage. The fearlessness in these words (all the more bold coming from a Swiss woman in the Victorian era), the utter strangeness of the journals as a whole, and the raw candor of Isabelle's voice captivated me that day, and went on to haunt me for years.

Our understanding of Isabelle Eberhardt's life will always be incomplete, cobbled together from fragments of a journal pulled out of a flood, sporadic recollections from people who knew her or pretended to have known her, and the few articles and short stories she published. I felt that an opera about her life should be similarly fragmented—an evocation of her dreams and thoughts rather than a straightforward narrative. I began to imagine what was left unwritten in her journals, how it felt to wander alone through the desert dressed as a man, how it felt to be one of the only Europeans to witness Sufi religious ceremonies, and how it felt to fall deeply in love but struggle to maintain a fiercely independent lifestyle. I came to believe that a woman as progressive as Isabelle Eberhardt deserved a story unmoored from any specific period in history, a world where distorted guitars, stuttering electronic voices and abstract films could find a home in her fantasies and dreams.

Without a role model, Isabelle Eberhardt forged a life unlike anyone else's, and remained true to herself under unimaginably difficult circumstances. She has been alternately demonized and lionized in the 112 years that have passed since her death, but I feel that as a 21st-century audience we are finally equipped to understand the complexity and weight of her story.

—Missy Mazzoli

NOW ENSEMBLE

"...the formal elegance of chamber music with a pop-honed concision and rhythmic vitality" —Time Out New York

"NOW... imports a catchy inflection to classical forms... Striking a balance between the old and the new has rarely sounded this good." —Newsweek

NOW Ensemble is a dynamic group of performers and composers dedicated to making new chamber music for the 21st century. With a unique instrumentation of flute, clarinet, electric guitar, double bass, and piano, the ensemble brings a fresh sound and a new perspective to the classical tradition, infused with the musical influences that reflect the diverse backgrounds of its members. Having recently celebrated ten years together as an ensemble, they have brought some of the most exciting composers of their generation to national and international recognition. In recent seasons, NOW has performed at the Apples and Olives Festival in Zurich, Switzerland, Town Hall Seattle, Da Camera Houston, Lincoln Center, and the Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concert series. Upcoming projects for 2016-17 include premieres of new works by composer Judd Greenstein, Dawn of MIDI's Qasim Naqvi, and Rome Prize winner Sean Friar, through collaborations with Art of Élan, UCLA, the Tutti Festival, and Carnegie Hall. nowensemble.com

ABIGAIL FISCHER

Hailed as "riveting" by *The New York Times*, mezzo-soprano Abigail Fischer's recent highlights include Mrs. X.E. in the world premiere of Yu Dun's *Angel's Bone* in New York City's Prototype Festival, *Salome* (Boston Symphony Orchestra); *Messiah* (Kansas City Symphony, Charlotte Symphony); *St. Matthew Passion* (Duke Concert Choir); Hindemith's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* (New York Choral Society, at Carnegie Hall); Mahler's Symphony No. 3 (Santa Rosa Symphony); Péter Eötvös' *Angels in America* (Los Angeles Philharmonic); George Benjamin's *Upon Silence* and works of Vivaldi (Orchestra of St. Luke's); Peter Lieberson's *Neruda Songs* (Columbus Symphony Orchestra); Respighi's *Il tramonto* (St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble); and Mother in Stefan Weisman's *The Scarlet Ibis* (Prototype Festival). Ms. Fischer's recordings include Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* with Boston Baroque, Kamran Ince's *Judgement of Midas*, and Mazzoli's *Song from the Uproar*. AbigailFischer.com