

Hydrogen Jukebox

Music by **Philip Glass**, Text by **Allen Ginsberg**



Cara Consilvio

Performances Thursday, July 27 and Tuesday, August 1 at 4 p.m.

Premiere Performance Spoleto Music Festival, Charleston, SC, 1990

It takes a village to produce an opera. When you are producing two operas simultaneously, every individual in that village needs to be working at the very top of their game. And at the end of every day, reports of everyone's activities—rehearsal records, prop requests, production decisions and questions, pages staged, rehearsal plans for the following day—are generated in and distributed by the Stage Management Office.

The strands of lights that bathe the Stage Management Office have been only rarely extinguished this summer. And while the rehearsal days may range from "solid" to "exciting and productive", our stellar team is always wearing bright smiles, and offering unflagging support. We are a lucky company, and I would like to dedicate these performances of *Hydrogen Jukebox* to Anna Reetz, Patricia Garvey, Miriam Michaels, and our seemingly fearless Production Stage Manager Catherine Costanzo.

— Steven Osgood



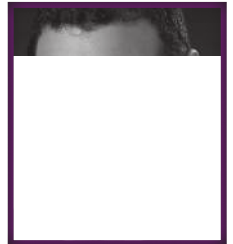
Chelsea Friedlander



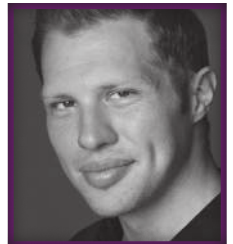
Helen Hassinger



Natalie Rose Havens



Eric Wassenaar



Mario Diaz-Moresco



Evan Ross

CAST

Soprano 1

Chelsea Friedlander*

Soprano 2

Helen Hassinger*

Mezzo

Natalie Rose Havens*

Tenor

Eric Wassenaar*

Baritone

Mario Diaz-Moresco*

Bass

Evan Ross*

* 2017 Chautauqua Opera Young Artist

CHAUTAUQUA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Woodwinds

Wildy Zumwalt
(Soprano Sax)

Daniel Spitzer
(Soprano/Tenor Sax,
Bass Clarinet)
Emma Moon
(Flute)

Keyboards

Steven Osgood
Emily Jarrell Urbanek

Percussion

Brian Kushmaul
Thomas Blanchard

CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION

Conductor

Steven Osgood

Stage Director

Cara Consilvio

Lighting/Video Designer

Michael Baumgarten

Set Designer

Caleb Wertenbaker

Costume Designer

Anthony
Paul-Cavaretta

Wig/Makeup Designer

Martha Ruskai

Coach/Accompanists

Emily Jarrell Urbanek

Diction Coach/Supertitles

Allison Voth

Technical Director

John P. Woodey

Properties Master/Scenic Artist

Theresa Pierce

Stage Manager

Catherine Costanzo

Lead Assistant Stage Manager

Anna Reetz

Assistant Stage Managers

Patricia Garvey
Miriam Michaels

CREDITS

Orchestral materials furnished by G. Schirmer
Rental Library

Scenery constructed by Local #266 I.A.T.S.E.

Lighting provided by Advanced Production Group

Costumes constructed by the Chautauqua Opera
Costume Shop

Molach Animation by Alex Charner

Video Photography by Kat Croft, Greg Emetaz, Cara
Consilvio, Alex Charner

NOTES FROM THE MAESTRO

The music of Philip Glass has been important to me for decades. His film scores for *Powaqqatsi*, *Koyaanisqatsi*, and *Mishima* were staples on my iPod back when my iPod was a Walkman. And his trilogy of early operas *Einstein on the Beach*, *Akhmatov*, and especially *Satyagraha* were key players in my decision to pursue a career in opera in the first place. So when the invitation came from Fort Worth Opera to conduct their 2011 production of *Hydrogen Jukebox* I leapt at the chance—even though I knew nothing of the piece past its title. Once I had been through the tremendous experience of that Fort Worth production, I knew I simply HAD to conduct it again! And what better place to revisit *Hydrogen Jukebox* than at Chautauqua Institution?

Hydrogen Jukebox, the one-of-a-kind collaboration between Philip Glass and Allen Ginsberg, gives throbbing, pulsing, sometimes screaming voice to America in the late 20th century. It is frighteningly relevant to our country today in 2017. *Hydrogen Jukebox* lay dormant for close to 20 years after its premiere, but it has found its place in the repertoire now, and I am delighted that it is a cornerstone of our 2017 season!

— Steven Osgood

NOTES FROM THE COMPOSER

"In 1988, I accepted an invitation from Tom Bird of the [Vietnam Veterans Ensemble Theater Company] to perform at a benefit for the company. I happened to run into Allen Ginsberg at St. Mark's bookshop in New York and asked him if he would perform with me. We were in the poetry section, and he grabbed a book from the shelf and pointed out *Wichita Vortex Sutra*. The poem, written in 1966 and reflecting the anti-war mood of the times, seemed highly appropriate for the occasion. I composed a piano piece to accompany Allen's reading, which took place at the Shubert Theater on Broadway.

Allen and I so thoroughly enjoyed the collaboration that we soon began talking about expanding our performance into an evening-length music-theater work. It was right after the 1988 presidential election, and neither Bush nor Dukakis seemed to talk about anything that was going on. I remember saying to Allen, if these guys aren't going to talk about the issues then we should.

By the spring of 1989 we had invited designer Jerome Sirlin to join us in a series of meetings, mainly in Allen's East Village apartment, in which we picked through his collected works to find a coherent 'libretto.' Jerome began a series of drawings that would eventually form the sets and drops. Later on we were joined by director-choreographer Ann Carlson, who began discussing with us the staging of the work.

By this time we had arrived at a scenario based on eighteen poems. Together they formed a 'portrait' of America, at least in our eyes, that covered the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s. It also ranged in content from highly personal poems of Allen's to his reflection on social issues: the anti-war movement, the sexual revolution, drugs, Eastern philosophy, environmental awareness—all issues that seemed 'counter-cultural' in their day. Now, in the late '80s, they seemed to have become more 'mainstream' and yet, because of the power of Allen's poetry, still with their youthful energy intact. Ann chose to stage the work by using the six

vocal parts to represent six archetypal American characters—a waitress, a policewoman, a businessman, a priest, a mechanic and a cheerleader.

The American Music Theater Festival in Philadelphia hosted a series of performances early in the Spring of 1990, and the premiere of the finished work took place at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, in June of the same year. The small music ensemble of keyboards, winds and percussion with the six singers made for a music-theater ensemble which, along with Martin Goldray, the original music director, was able to tour the U.S. the following season. Taking this piece on tour completed something important. Allen and I have traveled around this country a lot. The piece is about that, and taking this on the road was in a way taking it back to the places where it was born. We've taken it to many different cities, and people recognize it—perhaps they see themselves in the portrait."

— Philip Glass

NOTES FROM THE POET

"Philip Glass and I were influenced by Indian music, philosophy and meditation forms—particularly Buddhist, since we're both Buddhist practitioners. So we're moved to make a work that penetrates many psychological worlds at once, quite a large audience.

Ultimately, the motif of *Hydrogen Jukebox*, the underpinning, the secret message, secret activity, is to relieve human suffering by communicating some kind of enlightened awareness of various themes, topics, obsessions, neuroses, difficulties, problems, perplexities that we encounter as we end the millennium.

So this 'melodrama' is a millennial survey of what's up—what's on our minds, what's the pertinent American and Planet News. Constructing the drama, we had the idea of the decline of empire, or Fall of America as 'empire,' and even perhaps the loss of the planet over the next few hundred years. We made a list of things we wanted to cover—Philip and I and Jerome Sirlin, the scenarist—common questions. There was of course Buddhism, meditation, sex, sexual revolution—in my case awareness of homosexuality and Gay lib. There was the notion of corruption in politics, the corruption of empire at the top. There are the themes of art, travel, East-meets-West and ecology, which is on everyone's mind. And war, of course, Peace, Pacifism.

The title *Hydrogen Jukebox* comes from a verse in the poem HOWL: '...listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox...' It signifies a state of hypertrophic high-tech, a psychological state in which people are at the limit of their sensory input with civilization's military jukebox, a loud industrial roar, or a music that begins to shake the bones and penetrate the nervous system as a hydrogen bomb may do someday, reminder of apocalypse.

Having decided the topics, we then found texts that covered them, and put a mosaic or tapestry together. So the drama is interlinked, hooked together thematically, though it's not a 'linear' story. Maybe more like a slow motion video."

— Allen Ginsberg