

Dreams of Water Beyond One's Depth

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concert; laboratory performances; audio recordings; video recordings; song cycle; chamber ensemble

Updates

June 25, 2017 : **Dreams of Water Beyond One's Depth**

Posted by: [Joan La Barbara](#)

I'm thrilled that we received support for this project! We presented "The Wanderlusting of Joseph C." at Roulette on May 24th, performing 5 of the 6 songs in this song cycle inspired by the life and work of Joseph Cornell, featuring Ne(x)tworks musicians [Miguel Frasconi (glass, flute, synth); Shelley Burgon (harp); Stephen Gosling (piano) and Christopher McIntyre (trombone)] with the fabulous singers Lauren Flanigan, Mario Diaz-Moresco and Julia Meadows, guest cellist Bryan Hayslett and video projections by Kurt Ralske. I'll keep updating as we move forward.

I'd also like to add short bios for collaborators Monique Truong and Lauren Flanigan (see below):

A Vietnamese American novelist and essayist, Monique Truong is based in Brooklyn, New York. Her first novel, *THE BOOK OF SALT* (2003), was a national bestseller, a New York Times Notable Fiction book, and the recipient of the New York Public Library Young Lions Fiction Award, among other honors. Her second novel, *BITTER IN THE MOUTH* (2010), received the Rosenthal Family Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and was named a best fiction book of the year by Barnes & Noble and Hudson Booksellers. Most recently, Truong was a 2012 Visiting Writer at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies and 2010 Guggenheim Fellow. Her essays have been published in the New York Times, Washington Post, and numerous national magazines. A graduate of Yale University and Columbia University School of Law, Truong is also an intellectual property attorney. Additional information may be found at www.monique-truong.com.

Lauren Flanigan is very happy to be back on stage after an 8 years hiatus when she was diagnosed with Sudden-Senso-Neural Hearing Loss and Meniere's Disease. Called "the thinking-man's diva" by TIME, her career includes performances of 100 different operas, 10 world premieres, eleven CDs, 5 Live from Lincoln Center telecasts, and 1 major motion picture. Lauren is also the founder of Music and Mentoring House, Inc. (MMH) a NYS not-for-profit mentoring through education, leadership, musical opportunity and community service.

Overview

"Dreams of Water Beyond One's Depth" is the concept for an opera inspired by the lives and work of two iconic artists: the sculptor/filmmaker Joseph Cornell and the writer Virginia Woolf. In developing this work, I plan a series of performances to explore the materials in front of audiences because this has always served to elucidate elements of the work that do not arise alone in the studio or in closed rehearsals. Audience reactions are extremely revealing. In collaboration with Vietnamese American novelist Monique Truong, who created the libretto for my new choral work "A Murmuration for Chibok" honoring the young girls kidnapped from their school in Nigeria. I am developing a song cycle with chamber ensemble. The first performance will be May 24, 2017 at Roulette Intermedium in Brooklyn, NY and will include 6-7 songs from the cycle. Each will explore an aspect of the protagonists or of persons who had major impact on their lives. Members of Ne(x)tworks form the core ensemble with additional guest musicians and singers. I also plan a series of laboratory performances developing individual scenes or following threads of individual storylines to take place in front of audiences. These will be audio and videotaped so that they may become part of the fabric and texture of "sonic atmospheres", layered soundscapes forming the underlying form and foundation of what I intend as a full opera. Presenters will be invited to attend these and a website will be set up to keep the audience informed of ongoing developments and upcoming events.

Monique and I have met with Courtenay Casey, Director of Artistic Planning at National Sawdust in Brooklyn, which is committed to hosting and supporting 4 of these lab performances. I have also met with Mimi Lien, who created a memorable set design for a set of scenes for an early production of "WoolfSong" at ISSUE Project Room. Mimi has agreed to participate in the ongoing development of "Dreams of Water Beyond One's Depth" and also suggested JACK performance space in Brooklyn as an additional venue for the lab performances. I have begun discussions with singers including Lauren Flanigan, Mario Diaz-Moresco, Gelsey Bell and Paul Pinto about their potential involvement.

Overview: The Whisperer reveals parallel worlds, divided by a "waterwall," in which Joseph, an artist, and Virginia, a writer, create and dream. A Father (Virginia's) and Mother (Joseph's) hover in their respective worlds, causing emotional trauma, blurring childhood and adulthood.

Betrayal: A half-brother abuses Virginia, causing lifelong fears, visions and unseen voices. A Young Girl, whom Joseph adores and to whom he gives his precious boxes as playthings, suddenly grows up and steals his art-boxes on the behest of her lover.

Consequences: Virginia sees monsters in mirrors and hears voices. Joseph obsesses over "innocent" ballerinas and actresses, following them in life and in letters.

Solace: Virginia imagines a time machine, powered by river currents. Joseph imagines the sea offering him "gifts" for his collection cabinet.

These ideas will be further developed in the lab presentations to the public.

Project-related Media

"Storefront Diva: a dreamscape"

Pianist Kathleen Supove plays my notated lyrical lines, fragmented chords, plucking, strumming, striking flat palms and rolling Baoding balls over the strings, sometimes singing, all overlaid upon recorded layers of bowed piano,

thunder, rain, water, breathing, modified bells, crows and voices, inspired by Joseph Cornell's imagery: notations of his dreams: "bell maiden, rain coming down in sheets, night sky, 7 crows helter-skeltering in rapid flight, raucous on the raw March air, Debussy playing piano through spacious window". (recorded 2016)

MADE BY



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A Murmuration for Chibok

This is the working (in-progress version) score for "A Murmuration for Chibok", music by Joan La Barbara, lyrics by Monique Truong, showing the collaborative work of the composer and librettist for this project. Indications for solo and tutti section are not all indicated here and "claves" were changed to "slap-stick" in final version. Also rhythmic notation for some of the girls' names was later changed to better reflect accurate pronunciation.



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Start and End Date

05/17/2017 - 06/15/2018

Location

New York, New York

Updates (1 RECENT)

Last Updated [June 25, 2017](#)

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Project Created By

[Joan La Barbara](#)

New York, New York

Joan La Barbara, composer, performer, sound artist and actor is renowned for developing a unique vocabulary of experimental and extended vocal techniques (multiphonics, circular singing, ululation, and glottal clicks, her “signature sounds”) influencing generations of other composers and singers. Awards, prizes and Fellowships: Foundation for Contemporary Arts John Cage Award (2016); Premio Internazionale Demetrio Stratos;...

