

kallisti
presents

An Evening of
One Act Operas

“LA VOIX HUMAINE”

Music: Francis POULENC

Lyrics: Jean COCTEAU

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La Voix Humaine
Francis Poulenc

Dryer • Drawers
Tom Johnson

May 10, 12 & 13, 2017

@ 7:00 pm

Conrad Prebys Music Center
Experimental Theater



UC San Diego
ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Music

kallisti

An evening of one-act operas

May 10, 11 & 12, 2017 – 7 p.m.
Experimental Theater, Conrad Prebys Music Center

Dryer

Tom Johnson

Lauren Jones, soprano
Jonathan Nussman, baritone/stage direction
Ran Duan, piano

Drawers

Tom Johnson

Kirsten Wiest, soprano
Jonathan Nussman, stage direction
Ran Duan, piano

Pause

La voix humaine

Music by Francis Poulenc
Libretto by Jean Cocteau

Hillary Jean Young, soprano
Kyle Adam Blair, piano

Susan Narucki, Director Poulenc
Celeste Oram, Assistant Director
Jessica C. Flores, Lighting design
Annie Le, Costume Design

Synopsis

Dryer: A man is catching fish and hanging them up, one by one, on a clothes drying rack. A woman is watching him and wondering why.

Drawers: A woman has lost her thimble. She tries to find it.

La voix humaine: Paris, approximately 1960. A woman only referred to as “she” (elle) is in the living room of her apartment, waiting for the phone to ring. The phone is a party line, which means that she must break through the conversations of many other people in order to have her call connected. She is waiting for her lover to call her. Over the course of the conversation, she relives the joys of their relationship even as she knows that the relationship has come to an end. Her lover asks that his love letters to her be returned to him; he reminds her that he is going to be married to someone else. She wonders where he is and what he is doing. The calls are often interrupted; at one point she asks the operator to put the call through to his home again, and discovers, through talking to his butler, Joseph, that her lover has not been calling from his home. When they are reconnected, she begs him to be honest with her, even as she reveals that she has been lying to him about an attempted suicide. As she learns that he plans to honeymoon in Marseille, she asks him not to stay in the hotel where they would often go as a couple. The telephone is the cord that connects them and she struggles to sever that connection forever.

Producer’s Note

We are pleased to present **Dryer** and **Drawers**, two short operas of American composer Tom Johnson. Born in Colorado in 1939, Johnson studied composition privately with Morton Feldman. He was part of the vital New York music scene from the mid-1960’s until he moved to Paris in 1983, where he still resides.

Johnson is generally considered to be a minimalist composer; he works with simple modular forms, limited scales, and generally reduced materials. However, one shouldn’t infer that these compositional methods result in a limited range of musical expression. Johnson’s *The Four Note Opera* (1972) an hour-long work for four voices and piano which utilizes only four pitches in different octaves is an hilarious and supremely effective send-up of operatic conventions; it has been performed regularly, worldwide.

Dryer and *Drawer*, dating from 1978, are part of a series called *Shaggy Dog Operas*. Johnson spoke about them: “I had always loved the Americans tradition known as ‘shaggy dog stories,’ those repetitive stories that take a very long time to tell until they finally end with some dumb punch line, usually a simple word play or an ironic remark, so my next operatic attempt, in 1978, went in that direction. The result was five chamber operas, about 15 minutes each, which I staged myself in a small loft space in Lower Manhattan.”

Stage director Jonathan Nussman offers this insight into the two works: “In these two short operas, Johnson sets into motion simple compositional processes that unfold and aggregate gradually, generating ever-expanding circles of musical material. In much the same way, the thoughts, words and actions of our nameless characters are subjected to the same rigorous rules, hindering each other’s ability to communicate and perform their simple tasks.”

He continues, “In this production, our characters exist in a world whose logic is comprehensible only to them, if at all, as they each contend with a basic question whose answer is humorously obvious. As each piece progresses steadily forward to its inevitable punchline, it is the maddeningly mechanical (and somewhat magical) processes by which these characters arrive at their conclusions that bring wonder and meaning to their endlessly circular existence.”

Written in 1958, Poulenc’s *La voix humaine* seems on the surface to be an artifact of another era. The opera takes us back to a time that is now unthinkable, in which individual subscribers shared one phone line. Private, intimate conversations were subject to constant disruption; they took place through heavy phones tethered to the wall. But then, as now, (at least in Skype-free settings), the nuances of the human voice in what is paramount; it is in this context that *La voix humaine* is a timeless masterpiece.

What do we learn about the nameless *Elle* over the course of the opera? She is at the end of a five year affair, and that her lover has promised to call her once more before he marries another woman. We are left to imagine what her lover is saying; “Yes, I have courage” she says “I did not know I could be so strong.” She does not blame him, she seems to understand the price that she has paid for her passion. We quickly learn that she is lying. And yet, she is desperate for truth - to tell the truth and to elicit the truth from him, no matter how awful it may be. Cocteau’s libretto mines the depths of the psychological and emotional complexity of the situation, presenting the protagonist’s fear, longing and despair.

Poulenc’s music brings the nuances of this forty-five minute conversation into focus in an extraordinary way. His vocal writing reflects the capacity of the voice to embody infinite shades of emotional expression. The surrounding accompaniment is beautifully balanced, in order to give the conversation the space and weight that it would have as it naturally unfolds. Poulenc’s vocal writing is rooted in the classical bel canto tradition; his compositional language is neither experimental nor revolutionary. Yet his remarkable understanding of the complexity and capacity of the classically trained singing voice is quite rare; with *La voix humaine*, he illuminates the human voice - and the human heart - in a singular and precious way.

In closing, I would like to thank the extraordinary performers Hillary Jean Young and Kyle Adam Blair for accepting the challenge of presenting this work as a duo, without conductor. I am immensely proud of their efforts.

-Susan Narucki

kallisti

Established by soprano Susan Narucki at the University of California, San Diego in 2009, ***kallisti*** offers San Diego audiences exceptional performances of rarely heard works for voice in an intimate setting. *kallisti* creates remarkable collaborations between singers from UC San Diego’s Graduate Program in Contemporary Music Performance and distinguished guest artists in a wide range of repertoire that celebrates the extraordinary beauty and power of the singing voice.

Now in its eighth season, *kallisti* has presented a wide range of repertoire, ranging from unusual chamber operas to rarely heard vocal chamber music. *kallisti* has also been featured with the La Jolla Symphony

(Berio: *Sinfonia*), and on the Green Umbrella Series at the Los Angeles Philharmonic (Reich: *Music for 18*), both under conductor Steven Schick. *kallisti* presented the San Diego premiere of Viktor Ullman's 1943 chamber opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* in a critically acclaimed production that has been viewed over 4000 times worldwide on Vimeo. Other highlights for include the world premiere of leading American composer Anthony Davis' opera *Lear on the Second Floor* and the West Coast premiere of Pascal Dusapin's *To Be Sung* led by Jullian Pellicano. *kallisti* has also presented San Diego premieres of music by Italian modernists Luigi Dallapiccola, Niccolò Castiglioni, Salvatore Sciarrino and introduced audiences to the genius of Baroque composer Barbara Stozzi. *kallisti* is housed at the Department of Music at the University of California at San Diego and receives support from the University of California, as well as private donations from individuals. www.kallisti-ensemble.com

Bios:

SUSAN NARUCKI (Producer/Director - La Voix Humaine) With luminous tone and distinctive artistry, American soprano Susan Narucki has earned international acclaim for three decades. She has been a featured soloist with the Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Netherlands Opera, San Francisco Symphony, MET Chamber Ensemble, on the Great Performers Series at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall with conductors such as Boulez, Levine, Salonen, Tilson Thomas, de Leeuw and Knussen. A dedicated advocate of the music of our time, Ms. Narucki has given over one hundred world premieres, and has enjoyed close collaborations with composers including Andriessen, Kurtág, Carter, Dusapin and Crumb. Her extensive discography includes both a Grammy Award and Grammy Nomination for Best Classical Vocal Performance.

Over the past ten years, Ms. Narucki has been a driving force in creative projects that put modern music at the center of public discourse. She has earned major grants from the Creative Capital Foundation, the MAP Fund for the Performing Arts, UC MEXUS and the National Endowment for the Arts. She commissioned the critically acclaimed *Cuatro Corridos* (2013), a chamber opera that addresses human trafficking across the U.S.-Mexican border. *Cuatro Corridos* has had over a dozen performances in the United States and Mexico and has been broadcast multiple times on CANAL 22, Mexico's art and culture broadcasting network. Ms. Narucki is currently producing *Inheritance*, a chamber opera that focuses on gun violence in America, which features music by Lei Liang. It is scheduled to premiere in Fall, 2018 at UC San Diego. Ms. Narucki serves as Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego, where she leads the ensemble *kallisti*.

JONATHAN NUSSMAN (Stage Director) is a baritone whose varied interests include opera, theater, and art song, with a special emphasis on music from the 20th and 21st centuries. Appearances include Opera Boston, Guerilla Opera, Juventas New Music Ensemble, Intermezzo and Boston Modern Orchestra Project as well as featured appearances with the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra, Bohdi Tree Concerts, the La Jolla Symphony and *soundSCAPE* New Music Festival. In addition to originating prominent roles in nearly twenty world premiere operas and theatrical works, he has performed extensively in more traditional repertoire, with notable roles including Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Count Almaviva (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Larry Foreman (*The Cradle Will Rock*), and Sid (*Albert Herring*). Originally from Charlotte, North Carolina, Jonathan is now pursuing a doctoral degree in experimental vocal performance at UC San Diego, where he studies under Phillip Larson.

A musician attracted to many genres, soprano **LAUREN JONES** (Dryer) engages in many different performance settings such as opera, songwriting, contemporary and experimental music, jazz, and improvisation. Primarily trained in operatic singing, she has performed roles such as “Cis” in Benjamin Britten’s *Albert Herring*, “Yum-Yum” in Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Mikado*, and “Papagena” in Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*. She has had many songwriting projects, the most prominent being the Birmingham, AL based folk music group *The Steele Sisters*. Also an improviser, she recently performed in Stephanie Richards’ *Phantom Station* Conduction Series. Other recent performances in contemporary chamber works include premieres of Tiange Zhou’s hEARt for Voice and Piano and Joseph Bordeaux’s *Scratching*, as well as Luciano Berio’s *Sinfonia* with UC San Diego’s graduate vocal ensemble *kallisti* and the La Jolla Symphony Orchestra. Currently, she is collaborating in hOlie luna, a project by dancer/choreographer Aurora Lagattuta, which will be premiered at Highways Performance Space in Los Angeles June 16-17. Lauren is currently pursuing her Master’s degree in Contemporary Vocal Performance at UC San Diego.

As featured in the Wall Street Journal and New York Times, soprano **KIRSTEN ASHLEY WIEST** (Drawers) is “unforgettable” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*) with her “bright, dazzling vocal technique” (*San Diego Story*). An avid performer of new works, Kirsten is committed to the continuous evolution of classical vocal music. She has captured the attention of many composers, resulting in world premiere performances and close collaborations, with composers James Erber, Rand Steiger, Jeffrey Holmes, and Veronika Krausas, and conductors Steven Schick, Olivier Kaspar, Yuga Cohler, and Christopher Rountree, among many others. Kirsten has sung as a soloist with the Grammy-winning Partch ensemble, La Jolla Symphony and Chorus, YMF Debut Orchestra, MiraCosta Symphony, the Industry, wild Up new music collective, UCSD’s Palimpsest, CalArts New Century Players Ensemble, and Chapman University’s New Music Ensemble. She is a featured soloist in the LA Philharmonic’s commissioned installation, NIMBUS, and has recorded for multiple interactive online operatic experiences by composers Alexandra Hayes, Kyle Rowan, and others. Operatic roles include La Princess in Ravel’s *L’enfant et les sortilèges* (Perigueux, France), Polly Peachum in Weill’s *Threepenny Opera* (San Diego CA), and Mabel in Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Pirates of Penzance* (Fort Worth, TX). Currently a DMA candidate at UCSD under the instruction of Grammy award-winning soprano Susan Narucki, Kirsten holds an MFA from California Institute of the Arts and a BM cum laude from Chapman University’s Conservatory of Music, where she was awarded the New Music Award for her outstanding commitment to the performance of contemporary works. More info at: www.kirstenashleywiest.com

Soprano **HILLARY JEAN YOUNG** (Elle) was born in Grand Forks, British Columbia. As a homeschooler, they developed an interest in music and voice at a young age, beginning their post-secondary studies at the age of 16. From the studio of Nancy Hermiston, Hillary received their Masters of Music in Opera from the University of British Columbia in May, 2014. Hillary has received several prestigious scholarships and awards, including the Roberto and Mary Wood Scholarship, the San Diego District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Encouragement Award, the LA Songfest New Music Fellowship, and second place in the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus Young Artists Competition. Hillary has appeared as a soloist with the UBC Symphony Orchestra, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and the La Jolla Symphony Orchestra. Hillary has participated in several summer vocal programs such as LA SongFest 2015, the Vancouver International Song Institute, the Centre for Opera Studies in Sulmona, Italy, and UBC Opera’s own tours to Ontario and the Czech Republic. Hillary’s operatic experience includes roles such as Cis in Britten’s *Albert*

Herring, First Wood Sprite in Dvořák's *Rusalka*, the title role in Janáček's *Přihody lišky Bystroušky*, and La Modista in Rota's *Il cappello di paglia di Firenze*. In addition, their interpretation of Jenny in Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* was hailed as "showing both the acidity and the humanity at the core of this work" (UT San Diego). Hillary is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music Performance at the University of California, San Diego under the tutelage of Susan Narucki.

KYLE ADAM BLAIR (Pianist) is a pianist, vocal coach, and music director in the San Diego area, specializing in the performance of American contemporary music. His focuses include the performance of new works in collaboration with composers and the performance of works from the middle-to-late 20th century. As a soloist, Blair is set to release his first solo album soon, entitled *Palm Sunday*. The album consists of five solo piano works by noted American composer Stuart Saunders Smith; one of which, the title track *Palm Sunday*, was commissioned by Blair in 2012. As a collaborative pianist, Blair has most recently performed with violinist Mark Menzies at the soundON Festival, and also as one of six soloists with Renga SD in a performance of Pierre Boulez's mammoth *Répons*. In his earlier years in California, He was named a New Music Fellow for SongFest 2014 at The Colburn School (Los Angeles), where he collaborated with soprano Tiffany DuMouchelle and other vocalists, performing in numerous concerts and master classes with noted performers Lucy Shelton, Susanne Mentzner, Sanford Sylvan, Rudolf Piernay, and pianists Craig Rutenberg, Lisa Stepanova, and Kathleen Tagg.

Blair actively pursues opportunities to collaborate in theatrical realms. He has been involved with productions of *The Threepenny Opera* (UCSD Music/*kallisti*, music director/pianist), *The Cherry Orchard* (UCSD Theatre and Dance, music director/composer/pianist), and premieres of *Casagemas* (Wagner New Play Festival, music director), *Borealis* (WNPF, composer), *Movers and Shakers* (music director/pianist), and most recently *Though It May Shift* (UCSD Theatre and Dance, composer/pianist/vocalist/mover).

Blair is currently a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Contemporary Music Performance at UC San Diego under the mentorship of Aleck Karis.

Composer and pianist **RAN DUAN** was born in China and began studying music at the age of seven. He holds a bachelor's degree from Oberlin Conservatory majoring in both composition and piano. He studied under Professor Lewis Nielson for composition and Professor Lydia Frumkin for piano. He has participated in master classes and lessons with Helmut Lachenmann, Chaya Czernowin, Steven Takasugi, Jonathan Harvey and Rebecca Saunders. Ran is currently a Ph.D. student at UC San Diego studying composition with Professor Chinary Ung.

CELESTE ORAM is a composer currently undertaking a PhD in composition at UCSD. In Auckland, New Zealand, where she grew up, Celeste served as director and musical director for youth, student, and community theatre productions, including Britten's *The Little Sweep*, Menotti's *The Old Maid and the Thief*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, *Nonsense*, and *The Musical of Musicals: The Musical!*. Celeste also directed and produced her original chamber opera, *The Electrical Eclipse*, at the University of Auckland in 2012. Celeste presently serves as Assistant Director of the San Diego Women's Chorus.

ANNIE LE (Costume Design) is a second-year MFA Costume Design student at the Department of Theater and Dance, UC San Diego. Her design credits include: College of the Holy Cross - Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Spring Awakening the Musical; Hanover Theatre - Oklahoma!, Footloose; Ballet Arts Worcester - Mother Ginger (The Nutcracker), Peter and the Wolf. She has previously worked with The Huntington Theatre (Boston), Richard Fisher Performance Arts Center (Bard College) and has gone on tour with the I Made Bandem (Balinese Art Festival). She served as costume designer for *kallisti's* 2016 production of *Noon at Dusk*.

JESSICA C. FLORES, lighting designer, joined the Department of Music staff in 2011. In her capacity as Production Manager, she supervises live event operations and coordinates production personnel support and technical logistics for performances and recordings for over 250 events a year at the Conrad Prebys Music Center, Mandeville Auditorium, and Warren Lecture Hall Recording Studios.

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Production Credits

Department of Music

Rand Steiger, Chair
Barbara L. Jackson, MSO
Linda Higgins, Fiscal Manager
Elizabeth Cuevas, Fiscal Assistant
Jessica C. Flores, Production Manager
Andrew Munsey, Recording Engineer
Nicholas Serafini, Recording Assistant

Meghan Roos, Promotions Manager
Jennifer Bewerse, Promotions Design
Jordan Morton, Program Associate

Light board operator/calling stage manager: Daniel Barbarita
Projections operator: Nhuxuan Ho
Stage manager: Rita Navarro
Followspot Operator: Ester Gherzi

Department of Music stage and front-of house crew:
Chenyang Yu, Yasushi Tsuyama, Kenji Sommers,
Dung Luong, Kimberley Vazquez, Cory Banh,
Diego Gomez, Erika Morozumi, Sakumaru Streets,
Sungchan Kim, Laura Furtado, Jing Yu Weng,
Linwei Lu and Thea Lauren Reyes

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