



Kathleen Battle in Concert

METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024, 5PM

The Metropolitan Opera

2023–24 SEASON

METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024, 5PM

Kathleen Battle SOPRANO

Bridget Kibbey HARP

Chico Pinheiro GUITAR

CONCEIVED AND ARRANGED BY

Robert Sadin

Program

HENRY PURCELL (c. 1659–95)

Music for a while

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759)

O, sleep, why dost thou leave me? (*Semele*)

HENRY PURCELL

Man is for the woman made

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

Seligkeit

Nacht und Träume

An die Laute

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–47)

Neue Liebe

Auf Flügeln des Gesanges

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)

Mandoline

REYNALDO HAHN (1874–1947)

Si mes vers avaient des ailes

INTERMISSION

Program CONTINUED

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS (1887–1959)

Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5

Ária (Cantilena)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Toccatà and Fugue in D minor (Adaptation for harp by Bridget Kibbey)

FERNANDO OBRADORS (1897–1945)

Del cabello más sutil (*Canciones Clásicas Españolas*, Vol. 1)

JOAQUÍN RODRIGO (1901–99)

De los álamos vengo, Madre (*Cuatro madrigales amatorios*)

JAIME OVALLE (1894–1955)

Azulão (Arr. Robert Sadin)

JAYME SILVA (1908–70)

NEUZA TEIXEIRA (1979–2024)

O Pato

TRADITIONAL

Ain't That Good News (Arr. Robert Sadin)

Heaven Is One Beautiful Place (Arr. Hall Johnson)

SPECIAL THANKS

Joel Martin, piano

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

AMP Worldwide

LIGHTING DESIGN

John Froelich

MET TITLES

Lily Arbisser

Cecilia Sparacio

A Message from Kathleen Battle

My relationship with Robert Sadin—mentor, conductor, coach, producer, arranger—spans five decades, since my student days at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

Not long ago, Robert said to me, “You should be with young people.” He told me all about two wonderful musicians—harpist Bridget Kibbey and guitarist Chico Pinheiro.

Robert first met with Bridget and Chico and suggested repertoire he envisioned as perfect vehicles for the three of us. He introduced the material to them over several arduous sessions. Later, I joined them for rehearsals. Robert has an uncanny knack for making the music come alive! The result of his reimagining this music with Bridget, Chico, and me was instantly so infectious, joyous—even magical—that we knew we had the makings of something special.

My unique relationship with Peter Gelb also spans decades—throughout his remarkable tenures at Sony Classical, CAMI Video, and the Metropolitan Opera. He conceived and produced projects for me: *Baroque Duet* with Wynton Marsalis, *Spirituals in Concert* with Jessye Norman, and *A Carnegie Hall Christmas* with Frederica von Stade, Wynton Marsalis, and André Previn.

While at Sony, Peter collaborated with Robert, who produced and arranged my albums *Grace* and *So Many Stars* (Grover Washington, Jr., Cyrus Chestnut, Christian McBride, and so many others).

So, thanks to the visionary Peter Gelb, what a wonderful opportunity it is to follow up our memorable 2016 Met performance, *Underground Railroad: A Spiritual Journey*, with this special concert.

May you feel the joy that we all had in preparing this music!

Program Notes

The music publisher Henry Playford wrote that Henry Purcell “had a peculiar Genius to express the energy of English Words, whereby he mov’d the Passions of all his Auditors.” We can hear that genius in “Music for a while,” from Purcell’s incidental music for John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee’s play *Oedipus* in the early 1690s. The aria tells us that music has the power to charm us in life, and yet, we are not fully content until Alecto (one of the three Furies) frees the dead, including us. At that time, the snakes that serve as venomous hair for the Furies will drop from her head, and Purcell plays wittily with their descent. This composer was addicted to ground basses (a type of variation in which a bass line or a harmonic pattern is repeated over and over while the upper parts shift and change above it) of the sort heard here.

Handel’s *Semele* of 1744 veers closer to opera than oratorio, whatever its English words. The mortal woman Semele sings “Oh sleep, why dost thou leave me?” in Act II, Scene 2, after Cupid has visited her in dreams and before the chorus of Loves and Zephyrs ushers in her godly lover, Jupiter (whose wife, Juno, sees to it that Semele is burnt to a crisp by divine fire at the end). Mortals in the 21st century are just as susceptible as ancient gods to the beauty of this aria.

The second wave of English Restoration comedy in the 1690s shared much of the ribald tone of its earlier manifestations, once the Puritan strictures were past. Thomas Scott’s *The Mock Marriage* of 1695, for which Henry Purcell contributed three songs, is one example both of the traditionally bawdy fare and the swing to morality that would follow the Restoration. The verbal jousts feature equal frankness from both men (“Women were born to be subdu’d: In vain / They strive t’oppose the nobler Creature Man: / Their own Desires at length will make ‘em yield ...”) and women (“... but you Men in matters of Love, are like humoursome Children, who cry for this or that Gewgaw for the present ...”), but it all ends in a celebration of virtuous marriage. The merry ditty “Man is for the woman made” is from the fourth of five acts; one need not be an accredited Freudian to understand the barrage of sexual metaphors.

From Schubert’s 600-plus songs, we hear three in sharply contrasting moods, beginning with “Seligkeit,” a lilting dance song with a sly twist. The singer praises the joys of heaven for two stanzas, but when he declares “as the Church Fathers taught us,” we suspect irony in the offing. Sure enough, in the final stanza, the singer declares that he would rather remain eternally on earth, where his beautiful Laura smiles at him.

The Romantics believed that when day’s tumult is past, we can become attuned to the living, breathing universe and the cosmological clock of Time. In Schubert’s “Nacht und Träume,” we first hear measured oscillation as the harmonies mystically breathe, while the singer’s entrance—a sustained tone on “Heil”—is one of the most unforgettable in all of Schubert. In mid-song, the music melts from B major (the world of night) to G-major and C-major harmonies (the realm of dreams); the effect is magical. And finally, in “An die Laute,” the

accompaniment evokes the lute of a young man serenading his sweetheart. Schubert would have known Mozart's "Deh, vieni alla finestra" from *Don Giovanni*, and he must have relished creating his own instrumental strumming and a serenader sweeter than the rapacious Don Juan, although he relishes the neighbor boys—presumably unsuccessful in their suits—jealousy.

The persona of Mendelssohn's "Neue Liebe" watches a procession of elves and their queen ride by at breakneck speed in the accompaniment and wonders whether the sight portends new love or death. It is the latter: The Romantic "horror chord" sounds at the word "Tod" ("Death"), telling us that the persona dies as the fairies exit the scene. Mendelssohn, famous for his "fairy music," creates virtuosic horn fanfares, horses' hooves, and bells, while the singer's vocal line leaps in panic, follows the supernatural motion as if hypnotized, and finally slows down as, dying, she asks her terror-stricken last question.

According to some, Mendelssohn's "Auf Flügeln des Gesanges" is too straightforward for Heine's ironic twitting of Romantic poets' attraction to India. But Mendelssohn does nothing musically with the poet's leaping gazelles, Ganges shores, and lotus flowers because he recognized that Heine's backdrop is actually a Biedermeier drawing room whose persona (a poor poet) sings a fashionable parlor song to the middle-class German girl he desires.

Gabriel Fauré's exquisite serenade "Mandoline," with its plucked accompaniment, evokes the bygone world of the 17th-century painter Antoine Watteau, of courtiers longing for love, and playing at it, in the midst of silken formality and aristocratic restraint. And it is humbling to learn that Reynaldo Hahn was 13 years old when he composed "Si mes vers avaient des ailes" to words by the French Romantic Victor Hugo, who wrote exquisite small poems as well as epic novels. The silken rustling in the accompaniment, the marvelously expressive leaps, the tender harmonic inflection at the very end: This is the essential Hahn.

Heitor Villa-Lobos's 1938 "Ária (Cantilena)" comes from the *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5, one of nine suites fashioned as a fusion of Brazilian pseudo-folk and popular music with counterpoint in the style of Bach. It begins with a wordless vocalise, the reminiscences of Bach including a "walking bass" and a rising chromatic bass line that leads to a reprise of the opening passage. The shifting meters throughout this utterly exquisite melody are hardly Bach's wont, however.

Bach's famous Toccata and Fugue in D minor was unknown until an undated manuscript copy by one Johannes Ringk was discovered and first published in 1833 through the efforts of Mendelssohn, its first performer in 1840. The Toccata (meaning "touch piece," designed to show off virtuosic finger work) exhibits the so-called stylus phantasticus, or freely improvisatory style, beginning with ominous/menacing unharmonized octaves, bone-rattling figuration broken by dramatic pauses, and two prestissimo (as fast as you can play it) passages. (No wonder this work appears in horror movies such as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*).

ALSO ON STAGE



KEN HOWARD/MET OPERA

GEORGES BIZET

CARMEN

NEW PRODUCTION

Declared “a *Carmen* that felt alive” by *The Washington Post*, Carrie Cracknell’s exhilarating modern-day production returns following a celebrated run in the winter. Mezzo-soprano Clémentine Margaine brings her acclaimed portrayal of the title role back to the Met, alongside soprano Ailyn Pérez, tenor Michael Fabiano, and bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green. Diego Matheuz conducts.

APR 25, 29 MAY 3, 9, 13, 18, 22, 25mat

Tickets from \$25 | metopera.org

Program Notes (CONTINUED)

All this drama is followed by a virtuosic fugue and a coda marked "Recitative," with dramatic shifts from very slow to very fast. This work has been arranged for everything from flaming piano to concert band; we hear it today in an arrangement for harp.

Fernando Obradors, who was born and died in Barcelona, was a brilliant arranger of Spanish folk music and is best known for his volumes of *Canciones Clásicas Españolas*. The lover in "Del cabello más sutil," from the first volume, wants to bind his sweetheart to him with strands of her silken hair, and to be a jug so that he can kiss her when she drinks from it. A limpid and exquisite melody is accompanied by arpeggiated waves, rising and falling like waves of passion.

Blind from three years old, Joaquín Rodrigo studied with Paul Dukas in Paris and was encouraged by none other than Manuel de Falla, a giant of Spanish music. We hear both the French and the Spanish influences in "De los álamos vengo, Madre," an olden poem in which a girl tells her mother about meeting her lover under the poplar trees. In this light, fleet music, we hear the breezes blowing through the poplar branches and the dance-like swaying of an exhilarated young woman in love.

Jaime Ovalle was a poet, composer, and minister of finance in Brazil. His best known work is his captivating song "Azulão," a modinha (a genre of Brazilian art song established in the 18th and 19th centuries) sung by a young boy who lives on the arid plain in Brazil's interior highlands; his sweetheart has gone away, and the lad dispatches a bluebird to tell her how much he misses her.

A beloved Portuguese bossa nova song, "O Pato" (with interspersed onomatopoeic quacking) was written in 1948 by Jayme Silva and Neuza Teixeira, with text by João Gilberto added in 1960. A duck and a drake dance a samba, then are joined by a goose and a swan, before all four take a comic tumble into the lake.

We end the program with two traditional spirituals. Hall Johnson, the arranger of "Heaven Is One Beautiful Place," was an extraordinary musician, involved with spirituals his entire life. Educated at the Juilliard School and the University of Pennsylvania (among other institutions), he taught himself to play the violin after hearing a recital by Frederick Douglass's grandson, Joseph Henry.

—Susan Youens

Susan Youens is Professor Emerita of Music at the University of Notre Dame and has written eight books on the music of Franz Schubert and Hugo Wolf.

About the Artists



Kathleen Battle

Soprano Kathleen Battle's luminous voice has been called "without qualification, one of the very few most beautiful in the world" (*The Washington Post*). Yet beyond the glory of her singing, in a career filled with countless accolades, honors, and major milestones, what has perhaps distinguished her most is her almost magical ability to create an unwavering emotional bond between herself, her music, and her audience.

Through her natural gifts, innate intelligence, and hard work, Miss Battle's soaring voice has carried her to the heights of the classical music

world. Indeed, throughout a remarkable career that has brought her to the stages of the world's leading opera houses and major concert halls, critics have never tired of rhapsodizing over her limpid, unmistakable sound. In quite poetic terms, they have compared it to "the ethereal beauty of winter moonlight" (*The Washington Post*), "a paradoxical meeting of earth and sky" (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*), and "cream from a miraculous, bottomless pitcher" (*The New York Times*).

The range of Miss Battle's repertoire spans three centuries from the Baroque era to contemporary works. She has enjoyed some of her greatest successes in the opera house in repertoire ranging from Handel to Strauss. For her Covent Garden debut as Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, she became the first American to be honored with a Laurence Olivier Award for Best Performance in a New Opera Production. She has similarly distinguished herself as one of our generation's finest interpreters of Mozart, Rossini, and Donizetti. In the words of critic Tim Page, "Miss Battle's natural territory is music of sweetness, serenity, and girlish ecstasy. Within this repertoire, she is all but unequalled."

In recital, Miss Battle, winner of five Grammy Awards, has mesmerized audiences around the globe with her unique artistry and vocal beauty. Of her Carnegie Hall recital debut, *Newsday* declared, "In an age when the vocal recital has practically gone the way of the dinosaur, this was a thrilling case for its return." *The Australian* echoed the sentiment of critics around the world, saying, "The Sydney Opera House has played host to any number of great singers ... but it's unlikely there has ever

been (or perhaps ever will be) a performance to match the recital American soprano Kathleen Battle gave.”

Miss Battle’s gifts as a singer extend beyond the realm of classical music. Her work as a great interpreter of spirituals is documented on a joint recital with Jessye Norman, *Spirituals in Concert* (Deutsche Grammophon). Her pure emotional power in this music of joy and sorrow cuts through all cultural boundaries. As Vienna’s *Kurier* put it, “Kathleen Battle sang so beautifully in the spiritual ‘Heaven Is One Beautiful Place,’ she came pretty close to heaven.” Miss Battle was joined by leading jazz musicians for her first crossover album, *So Many Stars* (Sony Classical). She can also be heard singing the title song in the Zhang Yimou film *House of Flying Daggers*.

Miss Battle drew considerable attention with the world premiere of *Honey and Rue*, a song cycle with music by Oscar- and Grammy-winning composer André Previn and lyrics by Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Toni Morrison, commissioned for Miss Battle by Carnegie Hall on the event of their 100th anniversary. Since then, she has performed the work with leading orchestras and in recital throughout the world.

Miss Battle has established herself as a distinguished recording artist through a wide range of releases encompassing complete opera, concert, choral, and solo albums on all major labels. Her performance of the title role in the DG recording of Handel’s *Semele*, with Marilyn Horne, Samuel Ramey, and John Nelson conducting, earned her a fifth Grammy Award. This recording commemorates a now legendary concert performance of Handel’s masterpiece, starring Miss Battle and virtually the same cast as the recording, which created such a sensation that Carnegie Hall recognized it as one of its 100 milestones during its centennial year.

Miss Battle has made immeasurable contributions as an ambassador for classical music, performing for presidents and dignitaries, and attracting diverse new audiences through television broadcasts of her operas and concerts, as well as through appearances on popular network talk shows. Her performance on the PBS telecast of the Metropolitan Opera’s 1991 season-opening gala won her an Emmy Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement in a Classical Program on Television.

Praised for the keen intelligence, which informs her musical sensitivity, Miss Battle earned both her bachelor and master degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She has been awarded 11 honorary doctoral degrees. In honor of her outstanding artistic achievements, Miss Battle was inducted into the NAACP Image Award Hall of Fame and, in 2002, into the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame. She was the first recipient of the Ray Charles Award, bestowed upon her by Wilberforce University.

ALSO ON STAGE



EVAN ZIMMERMAN / MET OPERA

KEVIN PUTS / LIBRETTO BY GREG PIERCE

THE HOURS

Kevin Puts's moving adaptation of Michael Cunningham's acclaimed novel and the Oscar-winning film returns following a sold-out run last season. The superstar trio of sopranos Renée Fleming and Kelli O'Hara and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato reprise their portrayals of the opera's three heroines, with Kensho Watanabe conducting a vivid staging by Phelim McDermott.

MAY 5mat, 10, 15, 18mat, 21, 24, 28, 31

Tickets from \$25 | metopera.org



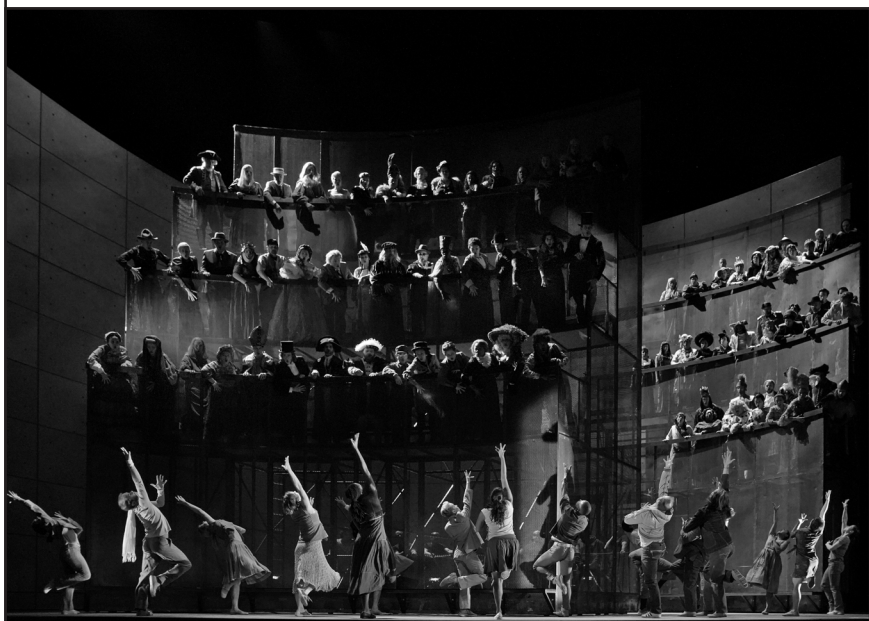
Bridget Kibbey

Extraordinary harpist Bridget Kibbey, called “the Yo-Yo Ma of the harp” by *Vogue*, is in demand for her virtuosic and soulful performances that transcend her instrument. At ease crossing classical, global, and jazz genres, Kibbey dives deep into historic narratives—from the Baroque to the French Belle Époque to Persian modes to nuevo Latino traditions and beyond—while resonating within the vanguard of the new. Through it all, Kibbey is illuminating

the powerful expressive range of the concert harp to new audiences worldwide. Her chameleonic tendencies at the harp and curatorial strengths find her performing with a growing rolodex of curation-meets-performance appearances. According to *The New York Times*, “she made it seem as though her instrument had been waiting all its life to explode with the energetic figures and colors she was getting from it.”

Kibbey, who recently made her solo NPR Tiny Desk debut, is a winner of a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, a Salon de Virtuosi SONY Recording Grant, the Premiere Prix at the Journées de la Harpe Competition in Arles, France, and is the only harpist to win a place in the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s Bowers Program. She has toured and recorded with luminaries including Plácido Domingo, Dawn Upshaw, and Gustavo Santaolalla for SONY Records and Deutsche Grammophon, and, her own solo debut album, *Love Is Come Again*, was named one of the Top Ten Releases by *Time Out*. Kibbey most recently released her newest solo record, *Crossing the Ocean*, a virtuosic set of newly commissioned works by an international set of composers, synthesizing their native folk music with the contemporary, for Pentatone Records.

ALSO ON STAGE



KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK

ORFEO ED EURIDICE

After headlining sold-out performances of Philip Glass's *Akhnaten*, countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo stars as Gluck's mythic hero, sharing the stage with sopranos Ying Fang and Elena Villalón. Christian Curnyn conducts an exuberant production by legendary choreographer Mark Morris.

MAY 16, 19 mat, 23, 25, 30 **JUN** 3, 5, 8 mat

Tickets from \$25 | [metopera.org](https://www.metopera.org)



Chico Pinheiro

Born in São Paulo, Brazil, and currently based in New York City, Grammy-nominated guitarist Chico Pinheiro is today one of the major creative forces in contemporary Brazilian music and jazz, both as instrumentalist and composer. He started playing the guitar at age six and began to work as a studio guitarist when he was 13. With highly acclaimed albums as a leader, including two Grammy-nominated albums, as well as many awards

earned as instrumentalist and composer, he has been listed in *DownBeat* Magazine's Annual Critic's Poll as a rising star in the guitar category multiple times. He is also a constant and celebrated presence at all of the major jazz festivals around the globe.

In addition to his solo work, he has collaborated with a diverse array of artists, including Herbie Hancock, Brad Mehldau, Dave Grusin, Kenny Werner, Dianne Reeves, Kurt Elling, Danilo Pérez, Nnenna Freelon, Bob Mintzer, Brian Blade (IJD), Ron Carter, Chris Potter, John Patitucci, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Plácido Domingo, the Israeli Chamber Orchestra, the Bob Mintzer Big Band, the Paris Jazz Big Band, the Swiss Jazz Orchestra, the Danish Radio Big Band, the Seasons Guitar Quartet with Anthony Wilson, Julian Lage and Steve Cardenas, Esperanza Spalding, Joyce, Ivan Lins, Rosa Passos, Dori Caymmi, Danilo Caymmi, João Donato, Johnny Alf, Chico César, Ed Motta, César Camargo Mariano, Elza Soares, Luciana Souza, Monarco, Mark Turner, Tom Scott, Joe Lovano, Terri Lyne Carrington, Eddie Gomez, Gary Novak, Lee Ritenour, Abraham Laboriel, Paulinho da Costa, Sammy Figueroa, Cachaíto Lopez (Buena Vista Social Club), Roberto Fonseca, Ari Hoenig, Claudio Roditi, Duduka da Fonseca, Peter Erskine, and Giovanni Hidalgo.



Robert Sadin

Robert Sadin has distinguished himself in a remarkably wide range of musical idioms as conductor, arranger, and producer. He is respected for his singular vision—his ability to create music that blends the different storytelling qualities of classical, jazz, and folkloric music into a seamless and organic entity.

He conceived, arranged, and produced *Gershwin's World*, featuring Herbie Hancock with guest artists Stevie Wonder, Kathleen Battle, Joni Mitchell, and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. This widely acclaimed album won three Grammy Awards, was named Album of the Year in the *DownBeat* readers' poll and critics' poll, and was named jazz album of the year in Japan and Germany.

His album *Art of Love* (Deutsche Grammophon) features Milton Nascimento, Natalie Merchant, and Brad Mehldau in a celebrated far-ranging reinterpretation of the music of Machaut. It was named world music album of the year in Canada. He produced and conducted Wayne Shorter's *Alegria*, which won the Grammy Award for best instrumental jazz album. He conducted the Carnegie Hall tribute to Wayne Shorter as well numerous orchestral performances throughout the country.

Mr. Sadin collaborated with Sting on *If on a Winter's Night* (Deutsche Grammophon), presenting a broad range of songs, including music of Purcell, Bach, Kentucky ballads, and old English folk songs. It was a worldwide bestselling album. He arranged and produced *Encanto del Mar* (Sony), featuring Plácido Domingo in Mediterranean songs, ranging from Morocco to Israel to Catalonia.

Mr. Sadin and Kathleen Battle have enjoyed a long, exceptionally fruitful collaboration. Their albums, *So Many Stars* and *Grace* (Sony), a broad array of arrangements, and a wide range of concerts have all emerged from their close association. Future projects include an orchestral recording featuring Chico Pinheiro and an evening presenting Lionel Loueke with orchestra and guest African musicians.