

Lincoln Center's

white light festival

October 18–November 15, 2017

SPECIAL EDITION

PLAYBILL

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Welcome to the White Light Festival, Lincoln Center's annual exploration of the performing arts' power to illuminate our interior and communal lives. In 2017 we shine a light on faith and delve into its many forms, both religious and secular. The festival's centerpiece this year illustrates one particularly historic expression of faith: *The Psalms Experience* is a monumental project featuring four internationally acclaimed choirs performing, across 12 concerts, settings of all 150 psalms by 150 composers. There is no better expression of belief, hope, and doubt than the Psalms, ageless poems that ask hard questions of ourselves and of the divine.

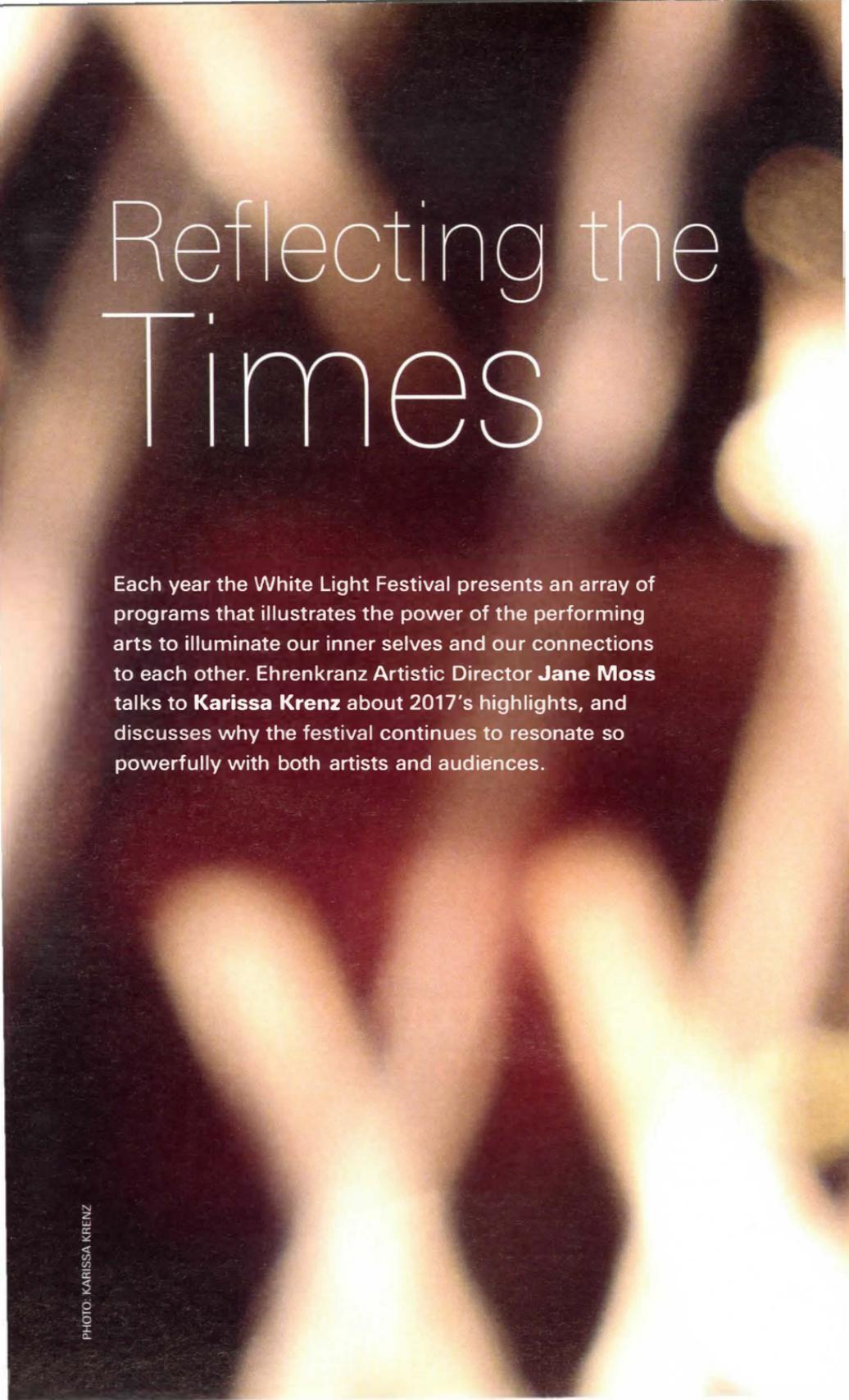
The White Light Festival's many other offerings begin with superb interpretations of Monteverdi's three genre-defining operas led by John Eliot Gardiner. The iconic Persian love story *Layla and Majnun* is brought to life by choreographer Mark Morris in collaboration with the Silk Road Ensemble. Early music visionary Jordi Savall explores the musical interchanges that emerged from one of the most egregious of human pursuits in *The Routes of Slavery*. And Meredith Monk looks to the future by joining with the Young People's Chorus of New York City in *Dancing Voices*, a celebration of movement and the human voice.

As we do every year, we encourage you to continue the discussion beyond the concert hall. The essays and articles in this special *Playbill* highlight some of the subjects addressed throughout the festival. Our White Light Conversation will delve into faith's many forms; we introduce *The Psalms Experience* with a panel of experts on the subject; and artist discussions throughout the festival offer insight into the creative process. Finally, we invite you to engage and connect with the artists and fellow audience members during the post-performance White Light Lounges.

It has been eight years since the first White Light Festival, and it's incredible to see how its themes and ideas are even more powerful and resonant now than when we began. We hope the festival continues to remind us how much wisdom and solace art can provide humanity—especially in challenging times.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Moss".

Jane Moss
Ehrenkrantz Artistic Director
and White Light Festival Director



Reflecting the Times

Each year the White Light Festival presents an array of programs that illustrates the power of the performing arts to illuminate our inner selves and our connections to each other. Ehrenkrantz Artistic Director **Jane Moss** talks to **Karissa Krenz** about 2017's highlights, and discusses why the festival continues to resonate so powerfully with both artists and audiences.



Karissa Krenz: *The White Light Festival looks a little different this year, as it features the multipart special focus *The Psalms Experience*. Could you talk a bit about that?*

Jane Moss: *The Psalms Experience* is a significant and unusual part of this year's White Light Festival. It presents settings of all 150 psalms, by 150 different composers, in 12 concerts, sung by four major international choirs in four different venues across New York City. It seems an especially apt subject right now because the Psalms represent comfort, nourishment, and hope during uncertain and challenging times—and no one would characterize our current era as normal and predictable.

The Psalms are an exceptional literary and spiritual resource for both the secular and religious reader. Though they were written within an expressly Jewish context as part of the Hebrew Bible, and integrated into later Christian traditions, their subject matter spans the entire range of human emotion: hope, gratitude, love, abandonment, frustration, despair, rage, vengeance, and so forth. One should remember that the Psalms is the only book in the Bible where humans are speaking to God, rather than the other way around, with our litany of complaints, expectations, and hope. The humanity latent in the Psalms is further amplified by their poetic structure and literary achievement. As a result, they have been read, absorbed, and championed by readers, artists, composers, and scholars from all walks of life with widely differing beliefs. To highlight the inherent literary nature of the Psalms, we will be giving audiences a variety of translations, including one that captures the unique cadences of the ancient Hebraic poetry, and another that seeks to evoke our desire for transcendence.

REFLECTING THE TIMES



It is also remarkable what a rich source of inspiration the Psalms have offered throughout history to religious adherents, to secular seekers, and, most important, to artists. The composers represented in *The Psalms Experience* span more than 1,000 years of music, including a few we have commissioned, which will bring the poetry and meaning of the Psalms into our own times.

Is there, as in the past, another overall focus binding this year's White Light Festival offerings together?

When we started working on *The Psalms Experience*, it led me to think more about faith in general, and how it functions as a power in people's lives. Looking at faith seems especially important when one is living in dark times. Throughout the festival we are delving into not only religious faith, but also secular varieties, like faith in love, faith in a better future, faith in one's

self, and most important for us, faith in the transformative power of art. The latter is most conspicuously evident in our closing program, Jordi Savall's *The Routes of Slavery*. We are also dedicating this year's White Light Conversation to an exploration of the many different kinds of faith.

The artistic exploration of faith seems especially reflected in the vocal music you've programmed this year.

There is indeed a lot of extraordinary vocal artistry present in this year's festival, highlighting our commitment to vocal works and performance. Lincoln Center is *the* major presenter of world-class international choirs in New York City. We have also become deeply involved with amateur singing, which reveals singing's unique contribution to human empowerment and community building.

The festival opens with *Monteverdi: The Birth of Opera*, with John Eliot



Mark Morris Dance Group and the Silk Road Ensemble

PHOTO: SUSANA MILLMAN

Gardiner and his famed Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists performing the composer's three surviving operas. In these particularly virtuosic hands, it's an exceptional way of hearing groundbreaking works of art that mark the beginning of opera as a form.

We're also presenting two concerts with the Swedish Radio Choir, perhaps the most acclaimed choir in the world today. It first joins the Swedish Chamber Orchestra for Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, one of the Western repertoire's great choral works, and then performs an a cappella evening of insightful, ethereal contemporary European music.

Then we have singer and composer Meredith Monk, whose creations embody the definition of transcendence in manifold ways. Her *Dancing Voices* features the Young People's Chorus of New York City, which is a wonderful manifestation of our commitment to developing new cadres of amateur singers.

The art of the human voice is also a feature in both of this year's dance presentations.

Yes. *Layla and Majnun*, choreographed by Mark Morris, is a collaboration with the Silk Road Ensemble, and among musicians from numerous traditions, it features the exquisite Azerbaijani vocal duo Alim Qasimov and Fargana Qasimova. Based on an ancient Persian story similar to *Romeo and Juliet*, it is somewhat of a departure for Mark. It's a beautiful illumination of how influences from diverse cultures can inspire a remarkable singular creation.

And choreographer Jessica Lang has created a production of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* featuring countertenor Anthony Roth Constanzo, soprano Andriana Chuchman, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. It's somewhat larger in scale than Jessica's usual projects, and embodies the way dance enhances the beauty and meaning of music.

Jessica Lang's *Stabat Mater*

PHOTO: ©KARL CADEL/COURTESY OF GLIMMERGLASS FESTIVAL

What insight can you share about some of the additional programming?

Conor Lovett of Gare St. Lazare Ireland returns, performing *The Beckett Trilogy*, a one-man show adapted from three of Samuel Beckett's novels. Conor is probably unmatched in his ability to make Beckett's prose come to life, as if you're seeing a play.

We love presenting Beckett as part of White Light, because even though he frequently explores the despair or nothingness at the center of human experience, his art is expressing the transcendence that lies within us. One tends to think of the White Light Festival as being about elevation, but it really is about the entire spectrum of human experience.

Additionally, the Emerson String Quartet performs late quartets by Beethoven and Shostakovich, offering a compelling message about how these composers, up to their dying day, were creating art that would endure for centuries beyond their lifetime.

We have keyboard programs that will also have strong resonance for White Light audiences: Steven Osborne performs Messiaen's two-hour solo piano tour-de-force *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*. Messiaen was a devout Catholic whose religious convictions shaped just about everything he wrote, and this piece is undeniably a work of faith and about gazing at the divine via music. And Jenny Lin marks Ukrainian composer Valentin Silvestrov's 80th birthday, looking at his art through the lens of his forerunners like Mozart and Chopin. We often forget that contemporary composers, unlike earlier generations, face the intimidation of a rich history of their predecessors—for example, Bach did not have Beethoven and Mozart preceding him. This program artfully contrasts the past and the present in revealing ways.

There's video artist Lynette Wallworth and organist Bernard Foccroulle's *Darkness and Light*, juxtaposing an array of



IMAGE: LYNETTE WALLWORTH

powerful organ works with imagery inspired by nature. Having the natural world as a presence in the festival is important, too, because nature is frequently a source of enormous succor, transcendence, and uplift for people.

Finally, could you tell me about the closing program, Jordi Savall's *The Routes of Slavery*?

The Routes of Slavery focuses on the musical exchanges that emerged from the heinous practice of slavery. Jordi Savall and artists from a range of musical traditions trace the history of the African slave trade, looking at the music surrounding and evolving from the cross-fertilization of different cultures. It vividly demonstrates that art can be transformative even in the most dire and deplorable of circumstances. The power of music—and the power of song in particular—offers significant psychic salvation even under the most extreme circumstances of oppression.

As a whole, the festival this year seems to illustrate how imperative the arts are.

It is stunning how the world has changed so dramatically in the eight years since we started the White Light Festival. Its themes are even more powerful to people in our current unsettled times. The perspective, insights, emotional nourishment, and the sense of community that artistic expression offers are more essential than ever. And to be offered sublime creations that represent the highest level of human achievement is reassuring in a time when genuine discourse and communication is being debased daily. As always with the White Light Festival, it is a privilege to reveal the unique power of the arts to illuminate the many dimensions of the human experience—like a wondrous lamp appearing on a dark road. ■

Karissa Krenz is a freelance editor, writer, and creative professional. She is the editor of the White Light Festival *Playbill*.

Lincoln Center's

white light festival

October 18–November 15, 2017

Thursday–Saturday, October 26–28, 2017, at 7:30 pm

Sunday, October 29, 2017, at 3:00 pm

Layla and Majnun (New York premiere)

Mark Morris Dance Group

Mark Morris, *Choreographer and Director*

Silk Road Ensemble

Alim Qasimov, *Majnun*

Fargana Qasimova, *Layla*

Howard Hodgkin, *Scenic and Costume Design*

James F. Ingalls, *Lighting Design*

Music composed by Uzeyir Hajibeyli and arranged by

Alim Qasimov, Johnny Gandelsman, and Colin Jacobsen

Libretto based on the poem *Leyli and Majnun* by Muhammad Fuzuli

Dancers: Mica Bernas, Sam Black, Durell R. Comedy, Rita Donahue, Domingo Estrada, Jr., Lesley Garrison, Lauren Grant, Sarah Haarmann, Brian Lawson, Aaron Loux, Laurel Lynch, Dallas McMurray, Brandon Randolph, Nicole Sabella, Christina Sahaida*, Billy Smith, Noah Vinson

This program is approximately 70 minutes long and will be performed without intermission.

Please join the artists for a White Light Lounge following the performances on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

* apprentice

(Program continued)

This presentation of Mark Morris Dance Group's *Layla and Majnun* is made possible in part by endowment support from the American Express Cultural Preservation Fund.

Endowment support for the White Light Festival presentation of Mark Morris Dance Group is provided by Blavatnik Family Foundation Fund for Dance.

These performances are made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

Rose Theater

Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall

Please make certain all your electronic devices are switched off.

WhiteLightFestival.org

American Airlines is the Official Airline of Lincoln Center

Nespresso is the Official Coffee of Lincoln Center

NewYork-Presbyterian is the Official Hospital of Lincoln Center

Artist Catering provided by Zabar's and Zabars.com

Layla and Majnun is made possible, in part, through the MMDG New Works Fund with support from the Friends of MMDG, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, the Howard Gilman Foundation, Ellsworth Kelly Foundation, Elizabeth Liebman, a special grant from The Henry Luce Foundation, PARC Foundation, Poss Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Trust for Mutual Understanding.

Funding has also been provided by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Layla and Majnun is a Mark Morris Dance Group/Cal Performances, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California production in association with Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York, New York; Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Chicago, Illinois; Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.; Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, College of Fine + Applied Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Meany Center for the Performing Arts, Seattle, Washington; Melbourne Festival, Victoria, Australia; Sadier's Wells, London, England; and University Musical Society of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Love and Death, the original painting by the late Howard Hodgkin on which his scenic design for *Layla and Majnun* is based, will be on view through November 3 at Gagosian on West 24th Street.

UPCOMING WHITE LIGHT FESTIVAL EVENTS:

Wednesday–Thursday, November 1–2, at 7:30 pm in the Rose Theater

Stabat mater (New York premiere)

Jessica Lang Dance

Jessica Lang, director and choreographer

Orchestra of St. Luke's

Speranza Scappucci, conductor

Andriana Chuchman, soprano

Anthony Roth Costanzo, countertenor

MOZART: Divertimento in F major

PERGOLES! Stabat mater

November 1–11

The Psalms Experience (U.S. premiere)

Choir of Trinity Wall Street

Netherlands Chamber Choir

Tallis Scholars

Norwegian Soloists' Choir

150 psalms. 150 composers. 4 choirs. 12 concerts.

Visit PsalmsExperience.org for full concert schedule.

Thursday, November 9 at 7:30 pm at Church of the Ascension

Darkness and Light (U.S. premiere)

Bernard Foccroulle, organ

Lynette Wallworth, video

Works by BACH, BUXTEHUDE, MESSIAEN,

GRIGNY, ALAIN, TOSHIO HOSOKAWA, BERNARD

FOCROULLE, and SOFIA GUBAIDULINA

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit WhiteLightFestival.org. Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or to request a White Light Festival brochure.

Visit WhiteLightFestival.org for full festival listings.

Join the conversation: #WhiteLightFestival

We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

MEDLEY OF AZERBAIJANI MUSIC: BAYATI SHIRAZ*

Kamila Nabiyeva, *Mugham Vocals*
Miralam Miralamov, *Mugham Vocals*
Rauf Islamov, *Kamancheh*
Zaki Valiyev, *Tar*

LAYLA AND MAJNUN

Music by Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885–1948),
arranged by Alim Qasimov, Johnny Gandelsman, Colin Jacobsen
Sung in Azerbaijani with English supertitles

Choreography and Direction: Mark Morris
Scenic and Costume Design: Howard Hodgkin
Lighting Design: James F. Ingalls
Set realized by: Johan Henckens
Costumes realized by: Maile Okamura

CAST

Layla: Fargana Qasimova, *Mugham Vocals*
Majnun: Alim Qasimov, *Mugham Vocals*
Rauf Islamov, *Kamancheh*; Zaki Valiyev, *Tar*; Kojiro Umezaki, *Shakuhachi*;
Jin Yang, *Pipa*; Shane Shanahan, *Percussion*; Georgy Valtchev, *Violin*;
Xiaofan Liu, *Violin*; Max Mandel, *Viola*; Karen Ouzounian, *Cello*;
Shawn Conley, *Bass*

Act I: Love and Separation

Layla: Mica Bernas *Majnun:* Dallas McMurray

Sam Black, Lesley Garrison, Lauren Grant, Sarah Haarmann, Brian Lawson,
Aaron Loux, Laurel Lynch, Christina Sahaida, Billy Smith, Noah Vinson

Act II: The Parents' Disapproval

Layla: Nicole Sabella *Majnun:* Domingo Estrada, Jr.
Layla's Parents: Lauren Grant, Noah Vinson
Majnun's Parents: Christina Sahaida, Billy Smith

Mica Bernas, Sam Black, Lesley Garrison, Brian Lawson, Dallas McMurray,
Brandon Randolph

Act III: Sorrow and Despair

Layla: Laurel Lynch *Majnun:* Aaron Loux

Mica Bernas, Domingo Estrada, Jr., Lauren Grant, Sarah Haarmann, Brian Lawson,
Dallas McMurray, Nicole Sabella, Christina Sahaida, Billy Smith, Noah Vinson

(Program continued)

Act IV: Layla's Unwanted Wedding

Layla: Lesley Garrison *Majnun*: Sam Black *The Husband*: Durell R. Comedy
Layla's Parents: Lauren Grant, Noah Vinson

Domingo Estrada, Jr., Sarah Haarmann, Aaron Loux, Nicole Sabella,
Christina Sahaida, Billy Smith

Act V: The Lovers' Demise

Layla: Mica Bernas, Nicole Sabella, Laurel Lynch, Lesley Garrison
Majnun: Dallas McMurray, Domingo Estrada, Jr., Aaron Loux, Sam Black
Layla's Parents: Lauren Grant, Noah Vinson
Majnun's Parents: Christina Sahaida, Billy Smith

*These performances are presented in loving memory of Howard Hodgkin,
a great artist and friend.*

*** Medley of Azerbaijani Music: Bayati Shiraz**

All pieces in this medley are based on the melodic patterns of Bayati Shiraz, which is one of the major mughams of Azerbaijani music. The composition proceeds from the melancholic and sad music expressions toward the upbeat and playful closing piece; such development is highly typical for Azerbaijani traditional music. The medley opens with the famous Azerbaijani folk song "I have watered the street," which is about a girl who is waiting for her beloved and wishing that they never be separated. The second part of this composition features the actual mugham Bayati Shiraz where both singers and instrumentalists demonstrate their ability to improvise. The song "You have been apart from me" is a closing part of the medley. Alibaba Mammadov (b. 1929), Azerbaijani mugham singer, composed this song following all the rules and stylistic features of the traditional songs known as tasnifs. Tasnif is a romance-like lyrical song that is usually performed within mugham composition. This medley, therefore, features three vocal genres of traditional music of Azerbaijan, such as mugham, folk song, and tasnif.

Synopsis

Layla and Qays are in love from childhood but are not allowed to unite. Qays (called Majnun, which means "possessed") is perceived to be mad in his obsession with Layla. Layla is married off to another and Majnun becomes a hermit, devoting himself to writing verses about his profound love of Layla. Although they attempt to meet, they die without ever realizing a relationship.

Please turn to page 9 for the full libretto and to page 68 for an article on the love story of Layla and Majnun.

Into the Divine: The Music of *Layla and Majnun*

By Aida Huseynova

At the age of 23, the composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885–1948) put Azerbaijan—and himself—on the map of music history with his *Leyli and Majnun*. This opera was the first piece of composed music created in Azerbaijan, premiering in 1908 in Baku (then part of the Russian Empire, now the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan). Azerbaijanis have revered their first national composer and his work ever since. For decades, every season at the Azerbaijan State Opera and Ballet Theater has opened with *Leyli and Majnun*. Each Azerbaijani singer appreciates the honor and responsibility of participating in these productions, and audiences throughout the country enjoy broadcasts of the performances.

Nearly a century after the Baku premiere, Hajibeyli's opera found a new life half a world away thanks to the Silk Road Ensemble under the artistic direction of Yo-Yo Ma. In 2007, the group created a chamber arrangement of Hajibeyli's work that was entitled *Layla and Majnun*, following the pronunciation of the heroine's name in Arabic culture, in which this ancient legend had originated. From 2007 to 2009, the arrangement was a highlight of the ensemble's repertoire, delighting large audiences around the world.

The rich multicultural potential of Hajibeyli's opera perfectly resonates with Silkroad, the cultural organization Yo-Yo Ma founded to house the Silk Road Ensemble. Silkroad envisions music as a global phenomenon, with musical forms, genres, and styles serving as bridges across time and between cultures. Azerbaijani opera offers many possibilities for such musical and cultural synthesis. In *Leyli and Majnun*, Hajibeyli combined Western opera with

two artistic treasures of Central Asia and the Middle East: the story of Layla and Majnun and the genre of *mugham*.

The ill-fated lovers Layla and Majnun are often compared to Romeo and Juliet, although their story in oral tradition predates Shakespeare's play by more than a thousand years. Layla and Majnun have been celebrated in tales by Turks, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Pakistanis, and Afghans. Known in many poetic renditions, their story also has inspired works of visual art, literature, cinema, and music. It is not accidental that Hajibeyli chose the poetic setting of the Azerbaijani poet and philosopher Muhammad Fuzuli (1483–1556). Written in the Azerbaijani language, Fuzuli's work is one of the most famous versions of this ancient legend.

Musical interpretations of the legend of Layla and Majnun appear in diverse genres and national traditions, attesting to the tale's enduring popularity. Hajibeyli's opera—the first piece of composed music to set this ancient story—was based on *mugham*, the quintessential genre of traditional Azerbaijani music. *Mugham* is a branch of the large *maqam* tradition cultivated in the Middle East and Central Asia. An improvised modal music, *mugham* historically has been performed by a *mugham* trio that consists of a singer playing *gaval* (frame drum) and two instrumentalists playing *tar* (lute) and *kamancheh* (spike fiddle). *Mugham* remains a precious part of the traditional music heritage of Azerbaijan. Since the early 20th century, *mugham* also has become the main source of creative inspiration and experimentation for Azerbaijani composers. In 1977, Azerbaijani *mugham* was one of the 27 musical selections put in *Voyagers I and II*. Sent beyond our solar system, these American spacecraft carried this music as a testament to the emotional life of human beings. In 2003, UNESCO recognized Azerbaijani *mugham* as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Throughout its long history, the *mugham* genre has attracted many outstanding performers in Azerbaijan. Among them is Alim Qasimov, who occupies a unique and honorable place in Azerbaijan's national music history. Qasimov is revered as a National Treasure of Azerbaijan, and he also has enjoyed substantial acclaim abroad. In 1999, Qasimov won the International IMC-UNESCO Music Prize—a highly respected award that previously had been bestowed on Dmitry Shostakovich, Leonard Bernstein, Olivier Messiaen, Daniel Barenboim, Munir Bashir, and Ravi Shankar, among others. Qasimov possesses an in-depth knowledge of *mugham*. At the same time, he is renowned for his innovative approach to tradition and his openness to experimentation. This is why it is no surprise that Qasimov initiated the idea of a new embodiment of Hajibeyli's old "*mugham* opera."

Qasimov shared his vision with members of the Silk Road Ensemble and received a positive response. He was intimately familiar with Hajibeyli's *Leyli and Majnun*, as he had been involved in its productions in the Azerbaijan State Opera and Ballet Theater in the 1980s. For his Silkroad work, Qasimov selected the portions of Hajibeyli's score that focus on Majnun's solo and duet scenes with Layla, the heroine, whose role was performed by Fargana Qasimova, Qasimov's daughter and student, now a highly reputed *mugham* singer on her own. Qasimov also included choral and ensemble episodes, along with instrumental interludes. Based on these selections, Silk Road Ensemble members Johnny Gandelsman and Colin Jacobsen, both violinists, created a score.

In the interpretation of the Silk Road Ensemble, the story of Layla and Majnun is presented in a condensed version: the three-and-a-half-hour-long opera is compressed into an hour-long chamber piece. Hajibeyli's five acts are rearranged into six

parts. These changes have resulted in a reordering and even an omission of many operatic episodes. Ultimately, the Silk Road Ensemble's alterations highlight the story's time-honored messages. The legend of Layla and Majnun has a strong Sufi component, with the love between a man and a woman being seen as a reflection of love for God. The death resulting from separation from one's beloved is a supreme fulfillment, as it takes the individual into the divine. In Hajibeyli's opera, this idea was conveyed through the chorus "Night of Separation," which opens and concludes the work. These episodes can be compared to the Chorus in Greek tragedies, which comments on events before they occur in the narrative. Reconstituting the Chorus as a cello solo, both at the beginning and at the end of the piece, is one of the new arrangement's most insightful interpretations: the lonely melody of the cello sounds as the voice of eternity.

The new arrangement of Hajibeyli's opera has created a different balance between Western and Eastern traits. In Hajibeyli's opera, these two components mostly are kept separate: the symphony orchestra plays all episodes of composed music and remains silent during the *mughams*. Only the *tar* and *kamancheh* accompany singers during *mugham* episodes. In the new version, however, the role of the ensemble—with *tar* and *kamancheh* included—is crucial throughout the entire piece, and both the improvised and written parts of the composition are firmly integrated.

Layla and Majnun is a constantly changing and developing project. Every performance is unique, and it is impossible to take a snapshot of this work. Yo-Yo Ma called this a "part of the thrill" and described the project as "perhaps the finest example of group intelligence at work" (*New York Times*, March 1, 2009). A reviewer of a performance by the Silk Road Ensemble noted, "*Layla and Majnun* was the apex of

the program. Classical music making rarely achieves this combination of spontaneity and superb craftsmanship" (*Washington Post*, March 14, 2009).

Indeed, this composition is a result of collective effort and is imbued with the spirit of improvisation. Hajibeyli was aware of the large cultural span of his project, in terms of its musical and literary contents. However, Hajibeyli limited the cultural, aesthetic, and stylistic scope of the opera to the context of his native culture. In so doing, he reflected the social and cultural expectations of early 20th-century Azerbaijan as well as his own professional experience (or rather, its absence, as *Leyli and Majnun* was Hajibeyli's first work). The Silk Road Ensemble has expanded the cultural reach of Azerbaijani opera deep into the Middle East and Central Asia. No less importantly, they have increased the Western elements in Hajibeyli's score, creating a work of

global East-West significance. The new musical arrangement of *Layla and Majnun* is a respectful and highly artistic transformation of Hajibeyli's "mugham" opera, now shaped by creative energies coming from diverse cultural, stylistic, and temporal sources.

Aida Huseynova has a PhD in musicology and teaches at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Her publications include Music of Azerbaijan: From Mugham to Opera (Indiana University Press, 2016). Huseynova also serves as a research advisor for Silkroad under the artistic direction of Yo-Yo Ma. Her numerous awards include an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant (2016) and a Fulbright scholarship (2007–08).

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Libretto

Layla and Majnun

Libretto by Uzeyir Hajibeyli (based on the poem by Muhammad Fuzuli)

Translation by Aida Huseynova and Isabelle Hunter

1. LOVE AND SEPARATION

Majnun:

My soul is on fire because we are apart
I want to join my beloved
My heart is heavy because I am alone
I want to see my beloved
I feel like a nightingale that cries in pain,
trapped in a cage
I want a flower garden.

Layla:

My heart has been breaking since I was overcome by love
What kind of sorrow is this?
I do not have the strength to describe the sorrow in my heart
I cannot bear being apart from you

Majnun:

Seeing your face—as lovely as the sun—has made me weak
I cannot be still
My only wish is to perish in the world of love
I thank God that my wish is granted
I have no more desire

Layla:

My true love knows my heart is breaking
He knows what sadness lives in my heart
There is no need for me to explain my grief
He knows every sliver of sorrow in my heart

Majnun: Yes, I know

Layla: Yes, he knows

Majnun: Yes, I know

Layla and Majnun:

Your movements tantalize me
Your smile—like a flower—makes me weep
Your sweet scent renders me motionless
Your tousled hair drives me mad

2. THE PARENTS' DISAPPROVAL

Both:

You fell in love, desperately in love
And your love is mixed with sadness and grief

Majnun:

Father and Mother—my soul, my spirit
Father and Mother—my heart
How could I know that falling in love with Layla
would turn out this way?
What could I say, what could I do?
I cannot control this love
I'm powerless—I have no strength
I can only worship this one idol
until the very end of my life

Layla:

Mother, Father—it's not my fault that I went to school
I've never done anything to disobey you
I swear this was not my intention
I just wanted to be a carefree schoolgirl
Don't say any more
Have mercy and stop tormenting me

Majnun:

Father, Mother, my love will drive me mad.

3. SORROW AND DESPAIR

Majnun:

Dear God, let me be at peace with my troubles
Let me feel the despair of my love
Have mercy on me in my grief
Let me feel even more despair for my love

Layla:

Your eyes are closed, your heart is broken
Your mind tortured, and your legs are bound
You are burning from head to toe
And your heart smolders

Majnun:

I yearn to feel this sorrow as long as I live
I need this sorrow because this sorrow needs me
I will not surrender
I will not be called unfaithful

Layla:

I am as faithful as you are
Maybe even more so

You are on fire only at night
While I am on fire night and day

Both:

Like Fuzuli, I am inspired. Please, God, let me be.

4. LAYLA'S UNWANTED WEDDING

Majnun:

Why are you in the garden with a stranger
Enjoying yourself, bestowing favors on him?
How could you break your word?
Did you forget about our vows? How cruel!

Layla:

No, no, my soul mate, please listen to me
If this were up to me I would never want anyone but you
Fate has dealt me a cruel blow
I don't know how this happened

Majnun:

What did I do to make you turn away from me?
How could you choose a stranger to share your grief and happiness?
Is this what you call love?
You are cruel! You broke our vows!

Layla:

God, what torture! What agony!
I was burning with love for you. Now I know the torture of being apart.

Majnun:

So this is your loyalty, Layla?
Can someone who is unfaithful be loved?

5. THE LOVERS' DEMISE

Layla:

The wheel of fate has not turned the way I wanted
It has not cured the pain of separation
My beloved gave me so much pain
My heart is filled with suffering that has no remedy
My beloved promised to love me forever,
But he forgot about his vows and about our love.

Majnun:

True love means sacrificing one's life for his beloved
A soul that has not been given to a beloved is a wasted soul
Lovers want to be together
But separation brings them joy forever.

Meet the Artists

MICHAEL SHEEHAN



Mark Morris

Mark Morris was born on August 29, 1956, in Seattle, where he studied with Verla Flowers and Perry Brunson. In the early years of his career, he performed with the companies of Lar Lubovitch, Hannah Kahn, Laura Dean, and Eliot Feld, as well as the Koleda Balkan Dance Ensemble. He formed the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) in 1980, and has since created over 150 works for the company. From 1988 to 1991 he was director of La Monnaie, and in 1990 he founded the White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Mr. Morris has created 22 ballets since 1986, and his work has been performed by companies worldwide, including American Ballet Theatre, Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, and the Royal New Zealand and San Francisco Ballets. He began conducting performances for MMDG in 2006 and has since conducted at Tanglewood Music Center, Lincoln Center, and BAM. He served as music director for the 2013 Ojai Music Festival. He also works extensively in opera, directing and choreographing productions for the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, English National Opera, and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, among others.

Mr. Morris was named a MacArthur Fellow in 1991 and has received 11 honorary doctorates to date. He has taught at the University of Washington, Princeton University, and Tanglewood Music Center. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, and has served as an advisory board member for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. Mr. Morris has received the Samuel H.

Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement, the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society, the Creativity Foundation's Laureate Prize, the International Society for the Performing Arts's Distinguished Artist Award, the Cal Performances Award of Distinction in the Performing Arts, the Orchestra of St. Luke's Gift of Music award, and a 2016 Doris Duke Artist Award. In 2015 Mr. Morris was inducted into the Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney Hall of Fame at the National Museum of Dance. He opened the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn in 2001.



Alim Qasimov

Alim Qasimov (Majnun, mugham vocals) is a prominent mugham singer who has been named a Living National Treasure of Azerbaijan. He has been passionate about mugham since his early childhood, but only started pursuing a career in music at age 19, after various jobs as an agricultural worker and driver. Mr. Qasimov studied at the Asaf Zeynalli Music College and the Azerbaijan University of Arts. His teacher was well-known mugham singer Aghakhan Abdullayev. Mr. Qasimov perceives and presents mugham not only as an ancient art and a part of Azerbaijan's musical and cultural heritage but also as a constantly developing tradition. His performing style is unique, combining deep knowledge of centuries-old rules of mugham with challenging innovations, willingly juxtaposing mugham with other music styles, such as jazz and contemporary composition. He was awarded the IMC-UNESCO International Music Prize in 1999 in recognition of his musical contributions to world peace. Past winners of this prize have included Yehudi Menuhin, Ravi Shankar, Olivier Messiaen,

and Daniel Barenboim. Mr. Qasimov's numerous awards also include the title of the People's Artist of Azerbaijan, the highest artistic rank in the country. On his 50th birthday in 2007, the president of Azerbaijan awarded Mr. Qasimov the Medal of Glory.



Fargana Qasimova

Fargana Qasimova (Layla, mugham vocals), Alim Qasimov's daughter and protégée, is an accomplished mugham singer. Her father has been the major influence in her life and career. Ms. Qasimova grew up with sounds of mugham and verses from the classical poetry of Azerbaijan and from the age of four, often performed along with her father at home and first joined him on tour at age 16. She studied mugham at the Azerbaijan National Conservatory and has earned recognition as a master of mugham, performing frequently with Qasimov in both Azerbaijan and abroad. In 1999, *Love's Deep Ocean*, a CD featuring Qasimov and Ms. Qasimova, was released by Network Medien in Frankfurt, Germany. Ms. Qasimova made her first appearance as a soloist in 2002 at the Women's Voices Festival in Belgium.

Mark Morris Dance Group

The Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) was formed in 1980 and gave its first performance that year in New York City. The company's touring schedule steadily expanded to include cities around the world, and in 1986 it made its first national television program for the PBS series *Great Performances: Dance in America*. In 1988, MMDG was invited to become the national dance company of Belgium and spent three years in residence at La Monnaie, returning to the U.S. in 1991 as one of the world's leading dance companies. Based in Brooklyn, MMDG maintains strong ties to WhiteLightFestival.org

presenters in several cities, most notably its West Coast home, Cal Performances in Berkeley, California, and its Midwest home, the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. MMDG also appears regularly in New York, Boston, Seattle, and Fairfax. The company has performed at New York City Center's Fall for Dance Festival, regularly performs at Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart and White Light Festivals, and collaborates yearly with BAM on performances and master classes. From the company's many London seasons, it has received two Laurence Olivier Awards and a Critics' Circle National Dance Award for Best Foreign Dance Company.

MMDG regularly collaborates with renowned musicians, including Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax, Stephanie Blythe, and jazz trio The Bad Plus, as well as leading orchestras and opera companies, including the London Symphony Orchestra, Metropolitan Opera, and English National Opera. The company also frequently works with distinguished artists and designers, including costume designers Martin Pakledinaz and Isaac Mizrahi, painters Robert Bordo and the late Howard Hodgkin, and set designers Adrienne Lobel and Allen Moyer. MMDG's film and television projects include *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, *Falling Down Stairs*, two documentaries for the U.K.'s *South Bank Show*, and PBS's *Live from Lincoln Center*. In 2015 Morris's signature work, *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, had its national television premiere on PBS's *Great Performances*.

Silk Road Ensemble

Founded by cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 1998, Silkroad creates music that engages difference, sparking radical cultural collaboration and passion-driven learning to build a more hopeful world. The musicians of the Grammy Award-winning Silk Road Ensemble represent dozens of artistic traditions and countries, from Spain and Japan to Syria and the U.S.

The ensemble is a musical collective that appears in many configurations and settings, from intimate groups of two and three in museum galleries to rousing complements of 18 in concert halls, public squares, and amphitheatres. Silkroad musicians are also teachers, producers, and advocates. Off stage, they lead professional development and musician training workshops, create residency programs in schools, museums, and communities of all sizes, and experiment with new media and genres to share Silkroad's model of radical cultural collaboration.

Mica Bernas

Mica Bernas, originally from Manila, Philippines, received her training at the Cultural Center of the Ballet Philippines Dance School. She later joined Ballet Philippines as member of the corps de ballet, performing as a soloist from 2001 to 2006. Since moving to New York in 2006, Ms. Bernas has worked with Marta Renzi's Project Company, Armitage Gone! Dance, Gallim Dance, Barkin/Selissen Project, and Carolyn Dorfman Dance (2007–13). She was a guest artist with the Limón Dance Company, performing at the 2013 Bienal Internacional de Danza de Cali in Bogota, Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Theater, and at the Joyce Theater for the company's 70th anniversary in 2015. Ms. Bernas also teaches at the Limón Institute and has been on the faculty of BIMA at Brandeis University since 2011. She joined the Mark Morris Dance Group as an apprentice in January 2017 and became a company member in August 2017.

Sam Black

Sam Black is originally from Berkeley, California, where he began studying tap at age nine with Katie Maltsberger. He received his bachelor of fine arts degree in dance from Purchase College, and currently teaches Mark Morris Dance Group master classes and Dance for PD. He first appeared with MMDG in 2005 and became a company member in 2007.

Durell R. Comedy

Durell R. Comedy, a native of Prince George's County, Maryland, began dancing at age six with Spirit Wings Dance Company. He graduated magna cum laude from George Mason University, receiving his bachelor of fine arts degree in dance performance in 2008. Since then, he has performed at the Metropolitan Opera and worked with Troy Powell and Kyle Abraham, among others. Mr. Comedy was a member of the Limón Dance Company from 2009 to 2015, performing principal and soloist roles. He has also worked as a soloist dancer with the Baltimore Opera and was a principal dancer and dance captain with Washington National Opera from 2013 to 2014. He was a former fellowship student at the Ailey School and an adjunct faculty member at George Mason University's School of Dance in 2014. Mr. Comedy began working as an apprentice with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2015 and became a company member in 2016.

Shawn Conley

Shawn Conley (bass), born in Honolulu, won a position with the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra (now known as the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra) while in high school before going on to earn degrees in music performance from Rice University. Mr. Conley won the Jazz Division of the 2009 International Society of Bassists' Double Bass Performance Competition, was a semifinalist in the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Bass Competition, and received a Wagoner Scholarship. He has performed with Sting, Peter Gabriel, Yo-Yo Ma, and Emanuel Ax, among others. He teaches at the Hawaii Contrabass Festival and regularly performs with Hot Club of Detroit, NOW Ensemble, and The Knights.

Rita Donahue

Rita Donahue was born and raised in Fairfax, Virginia and attended George Mason University. She graduated magna cum laude in 2002, receiving a bachelor of arts degree in English and a bachelor of

fine arts degree in dance. Ms. Donahue danced with Craig Patterson's Bopi's Black Sheep and joined the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2003.

Domingo Estrada, Jr.

Domingo Estrada, Jr., a native of Victoria, Texas, danced ballet folklórico through his church for 11 years. He earned his bachelor of fine arts degree in ballet and modern dance from Texas Christian University and worked with the late Fernando Bujones. During his undergraduate studies, he attended the American Dance Festival and performed *Sky Light*, a classic work by choreographer Laura Dean. He debuted with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2007 and became a company member in 2009.

Lesley Garrison

Lesley Garrison grew up in Swansea, Illinois and received her early dance training at the Center of Creative Arts in Missouri and Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan. She studied at the Codarts Rotterdam in the Netherlands and holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from Purchase College. She first performed with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2007 and became a company member in 2011. Ms. Garrison teaches at The School at the Mark Morris Dance Center and Dance for PD.

Lauren Grant

Lauren Grant, honored with a New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" award for her career with the Mark Morris Dance Group, has danced with MMDG since 1996, appearing in over 60 of Morris's works. She stages Morris's repertory on his company, at universities and conservatories, and teaches ballet and modern technique for the Dance Group, The School at the Mark Morris Dance Center, Jessica Lang Dance, Liz Gerring Dance Company, Ballet Preljocaj, and at schools and universities around the globe. Her writing has been published in the journal *Dance Education in Practice* and in *Dance Magazine* and *InfiniteBody*. She

also serves as a panelist for the New York State Council on the Arts. Ms. Grant holds a bachelor of fine arts degree in dance from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and is currently pursuing her master of fine arts degree in dance at Montclair State University, where she is also an adjunct professor and a member of the National Honor Society for graduate and professional students. She is a recipient of the prestigious American Association of University Women Career Development Grant, the Sono Osato Scholarship for Graduate Studies, and the Caroline Newhouse Grant—all in support of her academic pursuits.

Sarah Haarmann

Sarah Haarmann grew up in Macungie, Pennsylvania and received training at the Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts under the direction of Kimberly Maniscalco. She graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of fine arts degree in dance from Marymount Manhattan College in 2012. Ms. Haarmann has had the pleasure of performing with Pam Tanowitz Dance, Jessica Lang Dance, Dylan Crossman Dans(c)e, Pat Catterson, Denisa Musilova, and Bill Young. She joined the Mark Morris Dance Group as an apprentice in January 2017 and became a company member in August 2017.

Rauf Islamov

Rauf Islamov (kamancheh) was born in Baku, Azerbaijan and studied kamancheh at the Asaf Zeynally Music College, the Azerbaijan National Conservatory, and received his master's degree from the Azerbaijan State University of Culture and Arts. He has toured widely with the Alim Qasimov Ensemble.

Brian Lawson

Brian Lawson began his dance training in Toronto at Canadian Children's Dance Theatre. There he worked with choreographers David Earle, Carol Anderson, and Michael Trent. Mr. Lawson spent a year

studying at Codarts Rotterdam in The Netherlands and graduated summa cum laude in 2010 from Purchase College, where he was also granted the President's Award for his contributions to the dance program. Mr. Lawson has had the pleasure of performing with Pam Tanowitz Dance, Dance Heginbotham, and Nelly van Bommel's NØA Dance, among others. He joined the Mark Morris Dance Group as an apprentice in 2011 and became a company member in 2013.

Xiaofan Liu

Xiaofan Liu (violin) has established himself as an exciting and highly sought-after young musician. Mr. Liu received the Jules C. Reiner Violin prize at the Tanglewood Music Center, and has performed under the baton of such conductors as Christoph von Dohnányi, Charles Dutoit, and Andris Nelsons, among others. As an avid chamber musician and soloist, Mr. Liu has appeared at venues such as Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Jordan Hall (Boston), Seiji Ozawa Hall and Koussevitzky Music Shed (Lenox, Massachusetts), National Theater & Concert Hall (Taiwan), and at the Kennedy Center in 2015, where he performed alongside Yo-Yo Ma in celebration of Seiji Ozawa's lifetime achievements. He began his violin studies at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing before moving to California to attend Idyllwild Arts Academy. Mr. Liu received his bachelor's degree from the New England Conservatory as the last student of the late Masuko Ushioda. Mr. Liu is currently pursuing his master of music degree at the New England Conservatory under the tutelage of Boston Symphony Orchestra concertmaster Malcolm Lowe.

Aaron Loux

Aaron Loux grew up in Seattle, Washington, and began dancing at the Creative Dance Center as a member of Kaleidoscope Dance Company, a youth modern dance ensemble. He began his classical training at the Cornish Preparatory

Dance Program and received his bachelor of fine arts degree from The Juilliard School in 2009. He danced at the Metropolitan Opera and with ARC Dance Company before joining the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2010.

Laurel Lynch

Laurel Lynch began her dance training at California's Petaluma School of Ballet. She moved to New York to attend The Juilliard School, where she performed works by Robert Battle, Margie Gillis, José Limón, and Ohad Naharin. After graduation, Ms. Lynch danced for Dušan Týnek Dance Theatre, Sue Bernhard Danceworks, and Pat Catterson. She joined the Mark Morris Dance Group as an apprentice in 2006 and became a company member in 2007.

Max Mandel

Max Mandel (viola) is an acclaimed chamber musician. Comfortable in many styles and genres, the Canadian violist's current group affiliations include the Silk Road Ensemble, FLUX Quartet, The Knights, Metropolitan Museum Artists in Concert, Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, Smithsonian Chamber Players, Caramoor Virtuosi, Blarvuster, Class Notes, and I FURIOSI Baroque Ensemble. Having founded the string quartet Metro Strings, Mr. Mandel has forged his dedication to chamber music through his collaborations with colleagues and teachers such as Lorand Fenyves at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Mr. Mandel has been guest principal of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Camerata Bern (Switzerland), Camerata Nordica (Sweden), and the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra. He is also a frequent guest of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra.

Dallas McMurray

Dallas McMurray is from El Cerrito, California and began dancing at age four, studying jazz, tap, and acrobatics with Katie Maltzberger and ballet with Yukiko

Sakakura. He received a bachelor of fine arts degree in dance from the California Institute of the Arts. He has performed with the Limón Dance Company, in addition to appearing in works by Jiří Kylián, Alonzo King, Robert Moses, and Colin Connor. Mr. McMurray performed with the Mark Morris Dance Group as an apprentice in 2006 and became a company member in 2007.

Miralam Miralamov

Miralam Miralamov (mugham vocals, understudy) was born in the Shamakhi district of Azerbaijan. He studied at the Asaf Zeynally Music College in Baku, Azerbaijan and in 2012 joined the Azerbaijan National Conservatory, where he is a member of the graduate program. Mr. Miralamov studied with such outstanding masters of Azerbaijani mugham as Alim Qasimov and Zabit Nabizade. In 2011 he was awarded first prize at the Mugham competition held by the Azerbaijan State Television company and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. In 2013 Mr. Miralamov won both the National and International Mugham Competition and frequently appears as a soloist on Azerbaijan National Television. He has introduced Azerbaijani mugham to audiences in Canada, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Norway, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Ukraine, and the U.S., among other countries.

Kamila Nabiyeva

Kamila Nabiyeva (mugham vocals, understudy) was born in the Khanagah village in the Ismayilli district of Azerbaijan. In 2004 Ms. Nabiyeva became a winner at the International Children's Mugham Festival held by the Kainat Youth Center. She studied at the Baku Humanitarian College and in 2014 began attending the Azerbaijan State University of Culture and Arts, where she studies with renowned Azerbaijani female mugham performer Gulyanag Mammadova. In 2011 she was awarded at the Mugham competition held by the Azerbaijan State Television company and the

Heydar Aliyev Foundation and frequently appears as a soloist on Azerbaijani National Television. Ms. Nabiyeva has introduced Azerbaijani mugham to audiences in Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Macedonia, Russia, Sweden, Ukraine, and the U.S., among other countries.

Karen Ouzounian

Karen Ouzounian (cello) approaches music-making with a deeply communicative and passionate spirit. She is a founding member of the Aizuri Quartet, currently the quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and former quartet-in-residence at the Curtis Institute of Music, Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, and the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia. Ms. Ouzounian's commitment to adventurous repertoire and the collaborative process has led to her membership in the Grammy-nominated, self-conducted chamber orchestra A Far Cry, and the critically-acclaimed new music collective counter)induction. Additionally, she has performed with such ensembles as The Knights, Trio Cavatina, IRIS Orchestra, and as guest principal of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia.

Brandon Randolph

Brandon Randolph began his training with Carolina Ballet Theater in Greenville, South Carolina, under the direction of Hernan Justo. At age 14, he was accepted into the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, where he studied with Stanislav Issaev and Robert Barnett. Mr. Randolph received his bachelor of fine arts degree in dance from Purchase College in 2012. There he had the opportunity to perform with Dance Heginbotham, as well as repertory by Stephen Petronio, Lar Lubovitch, Paul Taylor, and George Balanchine. Mr. Randolph began working with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2013 and became a company member in 2014.

Nicole Sabella

Nicole Sabella is from Clearwater, Florida, where she studied at the Academy of Ballet Arts and the Pinellas County Center for the Arts at Gibbs High School under Suzanne B. Pomerantzeff. In 2009 she graduated from Philadelphia's University of the Arts, earning her bachelor of fine arts degree in dance and the Outstanding Performance in Modern Dance Award. She was a performer with Zane Booker's Smoke, Lilies and Jade Arts Initiative. Ms. Sabella first performed with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2013 and became a company member in 2015.

Christina Sahaida

Christina Sahaida grew up in Pittsburgh and began her early dance training at the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School. In 2012 she graduated with honors from Butler University, receiving a bachelor of fine arts degree in dance performance. She has worked with Ballet Quad Cities, Texture Contemporary Ballet, and most recently the Big Muddy Dance Company in St. Louis. Ms. Sahaida joined the Mark Morris Dance Group as an apprentice in July 2017.

Billy Smith

Billy Smith grew up in Fredericksburg, Virginia and attended George Mason University under a full academic and dance talent scholarship. He graduated magna cum laude in 2007 and received achievement awards in performance, choreography, and academic endeavors. While at George Mason, he performed the works of Mark Morris, Paul Taylor, Lar Lubovitch, Doug Varone, Daniel Ezralow, Larry Keigwin, Susan Marshall, and Susan Shields. Mr. Smith's own piece *3-Way Stop* was selected to open the 2006 American College Dance Festival Association Gala at Ohio State University, and his original choreography for a production of *Bye Bye Birdie* garnered critical praise. He is an actor as well; regional theater credits include Tulsa in *Gypsy*, Mistoffelees in *Cats*, and Dream Curly in *Oklahoma!* Mr. Smith danced with

Parsons Dance from 2007 to 2010. He joined the Mark Morris Dance Group as a company member in 2010.

Shane Shanahan

Shane Shanahan (percussion) is a percussionist, composer, and arranger who has combined his studies of drumming traditions from around the world with his background in jazz, rock, and Western art music to create a unique and highly sought-after style. In addition to being an original member of the Silk Road Ensemble, he has performed with Bobby McFerrin, James Taylor, Aretha Franklin, Philip Glass, Alison Krauss, Chaka Khan, and Deep Purple, among others, and has appeared multiple times at the White House playing for former President and Mrs. Obama. He frequently hosts workshops and clinics at the world's leading universities and museums and serves as one of the Silk Road Ensemble's learning advisors to help design and implement residencies, workshops, and education programs.

Kojiro Umezaki

Kojiro Umezaki (shakuhachi) is a Japanese-Danish performer and composer originally from Tokyo. He is renowned as a virtuoso of the shakuhachi, but his work also encompasses traditional and technology-based music mediated by various forms of electronics. His recent commissioned works and producer credits include those for Brooklyn Rider, Joseph Gramley, Huun-Huur-Tu, and the Silk Road Ensemble. Mr. Umezaki is currently associate professor of music at the University of California, Irvine, where he is a core faculty member of the Integrated Composition, Improvisation, and Technology (ICIT) group.

Zaki Valiyev

Zaki Valiyev (tar) was born in Ganja, Azerbaijan. He studied at the Ganja Music College and received a bachelor's degree from the Azerbaijan National Conservatory. He is a member of the Alim Qasimov Ensemble, with whom he has toured extensively.

Georgy Valtchev

Georgy Valtchev (violin) has appeared as soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician throughout the U.S., Europe, and Asia. Originally from Bulgaria, he came to the U.S. in 1992 as a scholarship student of Dorothy Delay and Masao Kawasaki at The Juilliard School, where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees. As a soloist, he has been heard with orchestras in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, and New York, and in Bangor, Bulgaria, and Japan. Since 2011, Mr. Valtchev has been a guest concertmaster of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. As a chamber musician he has appeared at such venues as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Kennedy Center, London's Barbican Centre, and the Guangzhou Opera House in China, among others. He has been featured in such festivals as Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, Sofia Music Weeks, Varna Summer International Music Festival in Bulgaria, and Båstad Chamber Music Festival in Sweden. He is a founding member of Bulgarian Concert Evenings in New York.

Noah Vinson

Noah Vinson is originally from Springfield, Illinois, and received his bachelor of arts degree in dance from Columbia College Chicago. He was recognized by *Dance Magazine* as an upcoming talent in 2009 and assisted Mark Morris in the creation of his most recent work for Houston Ballet, *The Letter V*, which premiered in May 2015. He began dancing with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2002 and became a company member in 2004.

Jin Yang

Jin Yang (pipa) was born in Datong, China, and began studying pipa at age nine. In 1995 she was admitted to the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she received both her bachelor and master of arts degrees. Before relocating to the U.S., she served as a pipa instructor at the Wuhan Conservatory of Music. Ms. Yang has received many awards, including first prize in the TianHua Cup national youth traditional

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music competition (1997), and the silver award at the Chinese Golden Bell Awards for music. She has performed in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, France, the U.S., Britain, Japan, and the Philippines. In 2010 she was the only mainland Chinese pipa performer selected (by Wu Man) to participate in a workshop led by the Kronos Quartet and Wu Man at Carnegie Hall. Ms. Yang served as visiting scholar at Kent State University from 2013 to 2014 and currently lives in Pittsburgh.

Howard Hodgkin

Howard Hodgkin (1932–2017, scenic and costume design) studied at the Camberwell College of Arts and the Bath School of Art and Design in the U.K. In 1984 he represented Britain at the Venice Biennale and won the Turner Prize the following year. He was knighted in 1992 and made a Companion of Honour in 2003. An exhibition of his work, *Paintings 1975—1995*, organized by the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, opened in 1995 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and toured to museums in Fort Worth and Düsseldorf, and to London's Hayward Gallery. In 2006 a retrospective opened at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, traveling to the Tate Britain and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.

Born in London and evacuated to the U.S. during the second World War, Hodgkin first worked in the theater in 1981, when he designed the set and costumes for Richard Alston's *Night Music* with the Ballet Rambert. They later collaborated on *Pulcinella*, which was filmed by the BBC and released on DVD. For the Mark Morris Dance Group, he designed the sets for *Rhymes with Silver* (1997), *Kolam* (2002), and *Mozart Dances* (2006). His artwork is represented by Gagosian Gallery and has been exhibited in New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Rome, and London. Hodgkin was passionate about India and Indian art for most of his life. Toronto's Aga Khan Museum exhibited Hodgkin's paintings in

the exhibition *Inspired by India* along with Indian miniatures from his collection in 2015. *After All*, an exhibition of his prints, was featured at the Alan Cristea Gallery in London in 2016. Hodgkin died March 9, 2017 in London.

James F. Ingalls

James F. Ingalls (lighting design) has designed several productions for the Mark Morris Dance Group, including *Mozart Dances*, *Romeo and Juliet: On Motifs of Shakespeare*, *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, and *Dido and Aeneas*. For Mark Morris, he has designed *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Metropolitan Opera; *King Arthur* at English National Opera; *Sylvia*, *Sandpaper Ballet*, *Maelstrom*, and *Pacific* at San Francisco Ballet; and *Platée* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and New York City Opera. Mr. Ingalls's designs for dance include *The Nutcracker* for Pacific Northwest Ballet; *The Sleeping Beauty*, choreographed by Alexei Ratmansky, for Ballet Company of Teatro alla Scala and American Ballet Theatre; Twyla Tharp's 50th anniversary tour; *Celts*, choreographed by Lila York for Boston Ballet; and *Sea Lark and Death and the Maiden* for Paul Taylor Dance Company. Mr. Ingalls's work in theater includes *Desdemona*, directed by Peter Sellars at UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance and at the Melbourne and Sydney Festivals; *DruidShakespeare*, directed by Garry Hynes on tour in Galway and at the Lincoln Center Festival. He often collaborates with Melanie Ríos Glaser and The Wooden Floor in California.

Uzeyir Hajibeyli

Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885–1948) was an Azerbaijani and Soviet composer, conductor, scientist, publicist, playwright, teacher, translator, and social figure. He is recognized as the founder of Azerbaijani notated music and composer of its first opera. Hajibeyli was born into an educated family in a village near Shusha in mountainous Karabagh. The town's rich traditions in the performing arts played a special role in his

musical education. Hajibeyli was educated at an Azerbaijani-Russian school. He then studied at the Gori Teachers Seminary in Georgia in 1899–1904. At the seminary, he mastered the major works of classical music and learned to play the violin. He arranged folk music for the student choir and performed in the choir himself. In 1908 *Leyli and Majnun*, the first of seven operas and three musical comedies, premiered in Baku. He based the libretto on the poem *Leyli and Majnun* by the 16th-century Azerbaijani poet Muhammad Fuzuli. The music fused traditional Azerbaijani music and European classical opera, creating a new musical genre that merged eastern and western culture and set a new direction for Azerbaijani music.

White Light Festival

I could compare my music to white light, which contains all colors. Only a prism can divide the colors and make them appear; this prism could be the spirit of the listener. —Arvo Pärt. Now in its eighth year, the White Light Festival is Lincoln Center's annual exploration of music and art's power to reveal the many dimensions of our interior lives. International in scope, the multidisciplinary festival offers a broad spectrum of the world's leading instrumentalists, vocalists, ensembles, choreographers, dance companies, and directors, complemented by conversations with artists and scholars and post-performance White Light Lounges.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Festival, Lincoln

Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of

the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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Mark Morris Dance Group/Silk Road Ensemble



Mica Bernas



Sam Black



Durell R.
Comedy



Shawn Conley



Rita Donahue



Domingo
Estrada, Jr.



Lesley
Garrison



Lauren Grant



Sarah
Haarmann



Rauf Islamov



Brian Lawson



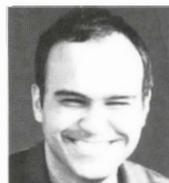
Xiaofan Liu



Aaron Loux



Laurel Lynch



"Max" Mandel



Dallas
McMurray



Miralam
Miralamov



Kamila
Nabiyeva



Karen
Ouzounian



Brandon
Randolph



Nicole
Sabella



Christina
Sahaida



Billy Smith



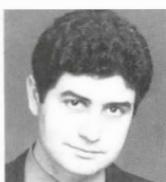
Shane
Shanahan



Kojiro
Umezaki



Zaki Valiyev



Georgy
Valtchev



Noah Vinson



Jin Yang

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WhiteLightFestival.org

Thanks to Maxine Morris.

Sincerest thanks to all the dancers for their dedication, commitment, and incalculable contribution to the work.

Major support for the Mark Morris Dance Group is provided by American Express, Anonymous, Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners, LLP, Morley and Frederick Bland, Booth Ferris Foundation, Allan and Rhea Bufferd, Suzy Kellems Dominik, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Judith R. and Alan H. Fishman, Shelby and Frederick Gans Fund, Isaac Mizrahi and Arnold Germer, Howard Gilman Foundation, Sandy Hill, Ellsworth Kelly Foundation, Elizabeth Liebman, The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation, Suzanne Berman and Timothy J. McClimon, McDermott, Will & Emery, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Meyer Sound/Helen and John Meyer, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Ellen and Arnold Offner, Sarabeth Berman and Evan Osnos, PARC Foundation, Poss-Kapor Foundation, Diane Solway and David Resnicow, Resnicow + Associates, Jennifer P. Goodale and Mark Russell, Margaret Conklin and David Sabel, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Iris Cohen and Mark Selinger, The SHS Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Jane Stine and R.L. Stine, The White Cedar Fund, and Friends of MMDG.

Additional support provided by The Amphion Foundation, Inc., Arnow Family Fund, Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc., Bossak/Heilbron Charitable Foundation, Joseph and Joan Cullman Foundation for the Arts, Inc., The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Estée Lauder Companies, ExxonMobile Corporate Matching Gift Program, Google Matching Gift Program, The Charles and Joan Gross Family Foundation, Guggenheim Partners Matching Gifts, The Harkness Foundation for Dance, Marta Heflin Foundation, IBM Corporation Matching Gifts Program, JP Morgan Chase, Kinder Morgan Foundation, Leatherwood Foundation, The Henry Luce Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Materials for the Arts, Megara Foundation, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, Harris A. Berman and Ruth Nemzoff Family Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts, New Music USA, New York Life Foundation, Wilhelmina Parris, FLP, The L. E. Phillips Family Foundation, Jerome Robbins Foundation, Rolex, Billy Rose Foundation, Inc., San Antonio Area Foundation, Schneer Foundation, SingerXenos Wealth Management, Trust for Mutual Understanding, and Viad Corp.

The Mark Morris Dance Group is supported in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, Mayor Bill de Blasio, Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams, Council Member Helen Rosenthal, the New York City Department for the Aging, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Mark Morris Dance Group is a member of Dance/USA and the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance.

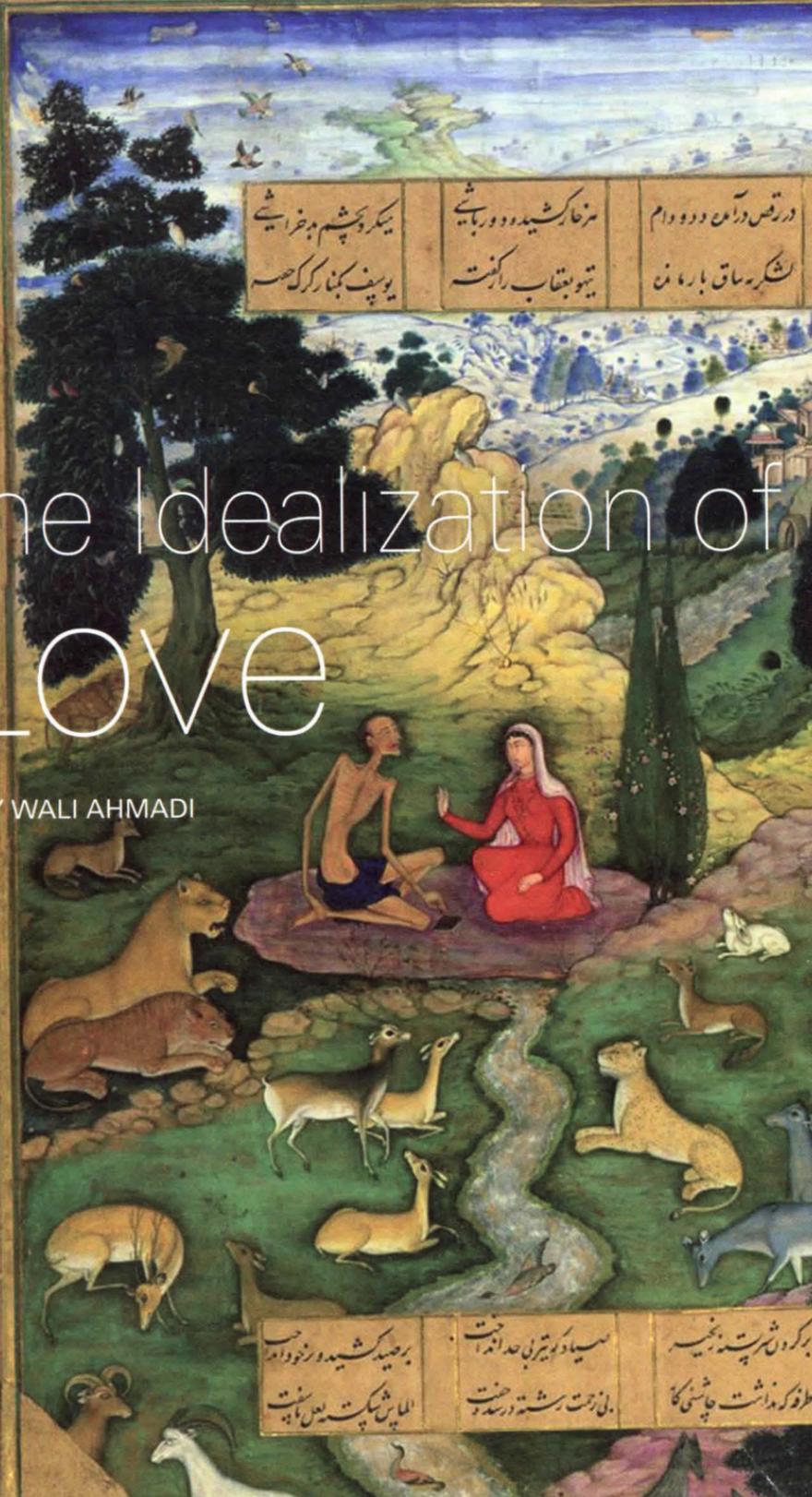
Layla and Majnun ©2016 Discalced, Inc.

در قاص در آمن دو دو ام	مر خاکشیده و دور با شے	بیکر و چشم به خراشے
مشکر سماق بارمان	تیو بقاب را گنفت	یوسف کبنا کر که حس

The Idealization of Love

BY WALI AHMADI

بر کرده شرت پند زنجیس	سیاد که تیرین حد انده است	بر صید کشیده و زخود اند
طوف که مذاشت چاشنی کا	بی زنت برشته در سده است	المایش شکفت لعل نایب است





THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM

Persia's tale of impossible love, *Layla and Majnun*, predates Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* by several centuries. The story has inspired countless artists throughout the Middle East and beyond—including the Mark Morris Dance Group and Silk Road Ensemble who, with Azerbaijani *mugham* singers Alim Qasimov and Fargana Qasimova, present the New York premiere of Mark Morris's recent adaptation during the White Light Festival.

From my early youth I have been intrigued by the love story of Majnun and Layla (or Laili, in most Persian renderings), two young lovers from Bedouin Arabia. I remember very well that, during long, cold winter nights in Kabul, in the 1970s, my mother would tell us the remarkable story of these two lovers, their intense, splendid romance, and their endless plights leading to their heartrending deaths. It was then that I learned of an epic Indian movie based on the story that purportedly brought the audience to tears.

Years later, as a student of literature, I read the Persian romance of *Laili and Majnun* by Nezami Ganjawi (1140–1209 C.E.) and then came across several reworkings of this amazing romance. The story clearly draws from brief, disjointed oral anecdotes reported in earlier Arabic sources. It was Nezami who superbly worked through the scant materials in his possession, developed a more complex plot, intensified the characterization, and composed a much more multilayered story, in the *masnawi* (rhyming couplet) form, to be incorporated, along with four other long narratives, into his monumental quintet (*Khamasa*).

In brief, Qays ibn al-Mulawwah of the Banu 'Amir tribe falls in love with his classmate Layla bint Sa'd. As the two grow older, the intensity of their love increases. Although Layla, too,

THE IDEALIZATION OF LOVE

is truly smitten by love, it is Qays who publicly and unreservedly pronounces his obsessive passion in elegiac lyrics, thus earning the epithet Majnun (literally, “possessed” or “mad”). Majnun’s incessant poetic expression of Layla’s beauty and his astonishingly outrageous public conduct alarm Layla’s parents. Concerned about their daughter’s reputation as well as the honor and standing of the tribe, her parents ensure that the lovers are kept apart. When Qays’ father asks for Layla’s hand in marriage to his beloved (but universally seen as deranged) son, Layla’s family flatly refuses the proposal, a response that seems harsh but, in the light of Majnun’s scandalous conduct, not necessarily unreasonable. As Majnun continues wandering aimlessly through the desert, bonding with wild beasts, living an ascetic life, and composing verses about his obsession with Layla, his father lures him into visiting the holiest of Muslim sites, the Ka’ba, in the hope of curing him of his obsessive love. There, Majnun pleads to Allah to make him “a hundred-fold” more “possessed” in his love for Layla.

In the meantime, Layla’s father gives her in marriage, against her will, to an affluent, but shallow, man named Ibn Salam. The marriage is never consummated as Layla insists on preserving her chastity. She remains faithful to her true love, Majnun, until Ibn Salam dies of rejection, disillusionment, and grief.

A number of times, Majnun is offered the chance to visit his beloved, to speak with her in person. Towards the end of the story, when Layla, through

the intermediation of a young, faithful devotee of Majnun, appears to him, he still refuses to have physical (or sexual) contact with her. Majnun strives to realize “perfect love” in Layla, a love that transcends sensual contact with the beloved, a love that is free from selfish intentions, lust, and earthly desires. Precisely for this reason, many commentators have interpreted Nezami’s *Laili and Majnun* as a Sufi (Islamic mystical) allegorical narrative, where the lover seeks ultimate union with, as well as annihilation in, the Beloved (i.e. the Divine or the Truth). Majnun’s harsh life in the desert, then, has been compared to the ascetic life of Muslim mystics who rejected earthly pleasures and renounced worldly affinities. Accordingly, his excessive devotion to Layla represents his unique and steadfast devotion to Ideal Love, the Divine—which explains why, in spite of his incessant yearning for his beloved Layla, he is incapable of physical intimacy with her. It is with the idealized image of the beloved—in the person of Layla—that Majnun is infatuated. When Layla falls mortally ill and passes away, Majnun, too, loses his one and only purpose in life, his sole means towards the realization of True Love. When he learns about the death of his beloved, he at once seeks her gravesite. Weeping and moaning, he presses himself against her gravestone and breathes his final gasps, and dies. The lovers ultimately unite, but only in death.

Nezami’s romance of *Laili and Majnun* is a multilayered, complex text, which makes it open to contrasting, and perhaps contradictory, readings. While a



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, BEQUEST OF CHARLES K. WILKINSON, 1986

Sufi (mystical) reading of it is plausible, one can justifiably read it as a conventional, yet immensely rich and enthralling, love story. Despite the abundance of mystical motifs and metaphors, the profane dimensions of the poem cannot be overlooked.

Nezami's unparalleled narrative proved considerably influential during the subsequent centuries. While allusions and references to Layla and Majnun can be readily found in *divans* (collections) of poets before Nezami's time, his version led several noted poets, in a host of languages, to compose original texts modeled after Nezami's work. In Persian alone, one should mention Amir Khusraw

Dehlawi's masterpiece *Majnun and Laili* (completed c. 1299) and 'Abd al-Rahman Jami's *Laili and Majnun* (composed c.1485). Other notable renderings of the story are by Maktabi Shirazi, Hatefi, and, more notably, Fuzuli. The latter became considerably influential in Ottoman Turkey. The romance of Layla and Majnun has been made into several popular films and movies in Hindi, Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. ■

Wali Ahmadi is an associate professor of Persian literature at the University of California, Berkeley. His publications include *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan: Anomalous Visions of History and Form* (2008) and *Converging Zones: Persian Literary Tradition and the Writing of History* (2012). He is currently working on the cultural politics of modern Persian poetics and aesthetics.

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white light festival calendar

October 2017

18	Wed. 7:00	Monteverdi's <i>Orfeo</i>	ATH
19	Thu. 7:00	Monteverdi's <i>Return of Ulysses</i>	ATH
20	Fri. 7:30	Dancing Voices	GLT
21	Sat. 3:00	Dancing Voices	GLT
21	Sat. 7:00	Monteverdi's <i>Coronation of Poppea</i>	ATH
21	Sat. 7:30	Dancing Voices	GLT
24	Tue. 7:30	Nearing the End	ATH
26	Thu. 7:30	Layla and Majnun	RT
27	Fri. 7:30	Layla and Majnun	RT
28	Sat. 3:00	White Light Conversation: Faith	SKP
28	Sat. 7:30	Layla and Majnun	RT
29	Sun. 3:00	Layla and Majnun	RT
31	Tue. 7:30	Gazing at the Divine	SKP

white light lounges

Keep the White Light spirit alive with White Light Lounges following most performances. Come mingle with the artists and your fellow concertgoers while enjoying a complimentary glass of wine or sparkling water.

White Light Lounges take place adjacent to the performance venue.

Orfeo | October 18

The Return of Ulysses | October 19

Dancing Voices | October 20

The Coronation of Poppea | October 21

Nearing the End | October 24

Layla and Majnun | October 26–28

Gazing at the Divine | October 31

Stabat Mater | November 1 and 2

The Psalms Experience | November 2

4 (after 7:30 pm concert only), 5, and 11 (after 8:30 pm concert only)

The Beckett Trilogy | November 3

Sacred | November 7

Eternal Light | November 14

The Routes of Slavery | November 15



White Light Lounge



Pre- or post-performance discussion

1	Wed. 6:00	Panel Discussion: Introducing THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE	DRA
1	Wed. 7:30	Stabat Mater	RT
2	Thu. 7:30	Stabat Mater	RT
2	Thu. 7:30	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Mortal Leadership, Divine Guidance	PAUL
3	Fri. 7:00	The Beckett Trilogy	DUKE
4	Sat. 5:00	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Faith	PAUL
4	Sat. 7:00	The Beckett Trilogy	DUKE
4	Sat. 7:30	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Justice	PAUL
5	Sun. 3:00	The Beckett Trilogy	DUKE
5	Sun. 5:00	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Powerlessness and Redemption	PAUL
7	Tue. 7:00	Film/Sacred: Milestones of a Spiritual Life	WRT
8	Wed. 7:30	The Moth	RT
9	Thu. 6:30	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: State of Humankind	SEC
9	Thu. 7:30	Darkness and Light	CA
9	Thu. 8:30	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Gratitude	SEC
10	Fri. 6:30	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Abandonment	SEC
10	Fri. 8:30	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Lamentation	SEC
11	Sat. 1:00	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Security and Trust	JMC
11	Sat. 3:00	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Pilgrimage of Life	JMC
11	Sat. 5:00	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Celebration of Life	JMC
11	Sat. 8:30	THE PSALMS EXPERIENCE: Consequences of Power	ATH
12	Sun. 11:00	The Past Made Present	WRT
12	Sun. 3:00	Beethoven's Missa Solemnis	DGH
14	Tue. 7:30	Eternal Light	CMV
15	Wed. 7:30	The Routes of Slavery	RT

ATH Alice Tully Hall
Broadway at 65th Street

CA Church of Ascension
Fifth Avenue and
West 10th Street

CMV Church of St. Mary
the Virgin
145 West 46th Street

DGH David Geffen Hall
Broadway at 65th Street

DRA David Rubenstein Atrium
Columbus Avenue between
62nd and 63rd Streets

DUKE The Duke on 42nd Street
229 West 42nd Street

GLT Gerald W. Lynch Theater
at John Jay College
524 West 59th Street

JMC James Memorial Chapel
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway, between
121st and 122nd Streets

PAUL St. Paul's Chapel
209 Broadway, between
Fulton and Vesey Streets

RT Rose Theater
Jazz at Lincoln Center's
Frederick P. Rose Hall,
Broadway at 60th Street

SEC New York Society for
Ethical Culture
2 West 64th Street

SKP Stanley H. Kaplan
Penthouse
165 West 65th Street,
10th floor

WRT Walter Reade Theater
165 West 65th Street