

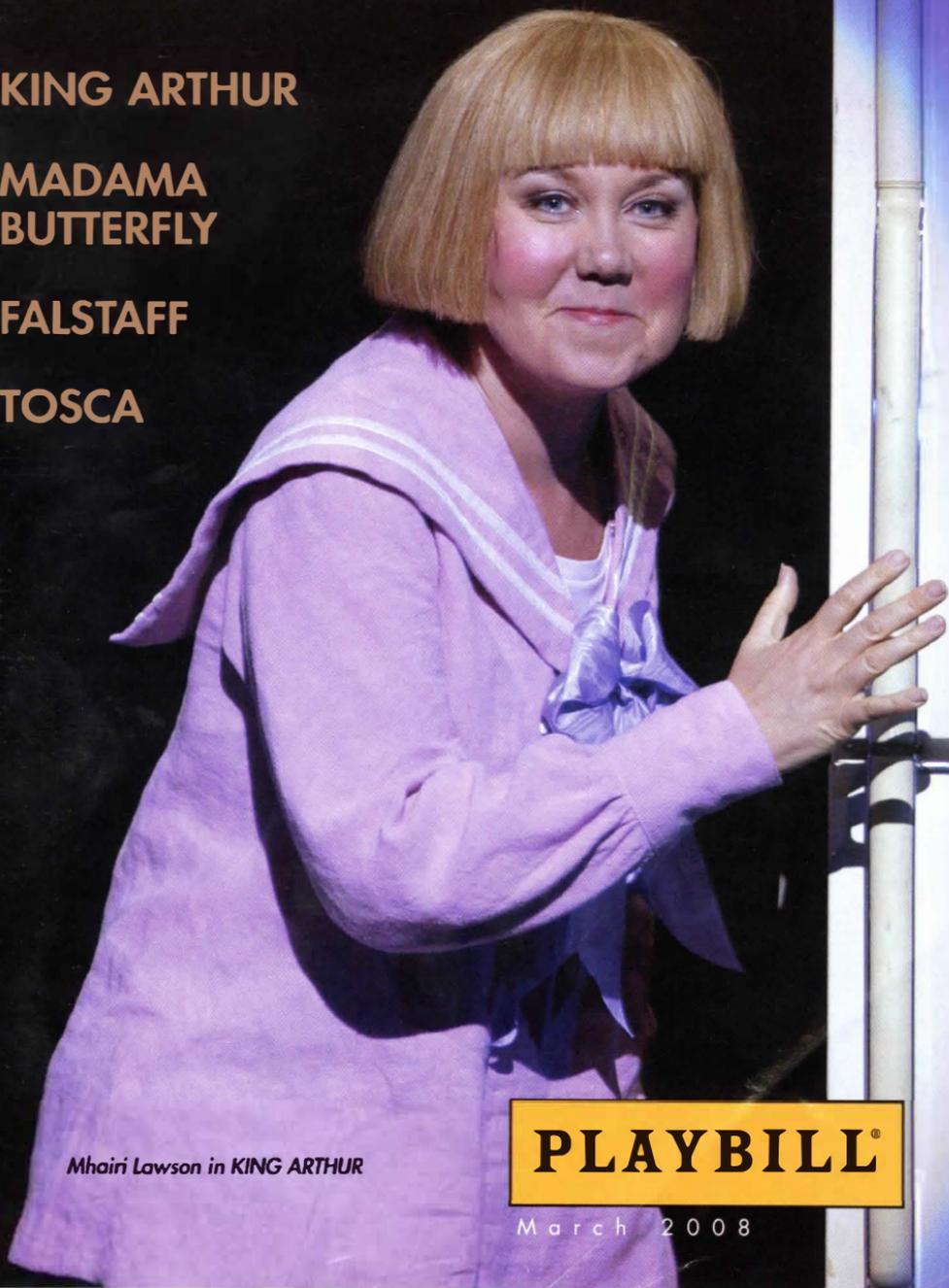
NEW YORK  
**CITY**  
**OPERA**

**KING ARTHUR**

**MADAMA  
BUTTERFLY**

**FALSTAFF**

**TOSCA**



*Mhairi Lawson in KING ARTHUR*

**PLAYBILL®**

March 2008

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After the zany but poignant *Platée*, seen at City Opera in 2000 and 2004, what will Mark Morris do for an encore? "A pageant—a sort of vaudeville—a sequence of production numbers sacred and profane."

By Nancy Dalva

41 VOX 2008 SELECTIONS

cover photo: © Peter Da Silva



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# The English Orpheus: Henry Purcell



**"THE INGREDIENTS** in the magic brew of song are words and notes. A gift of melody is often enough to give great pleasure: the correct accentuation of words can inform and suggest: the revelation of sense through sound and of sound in sense is given to few to achieve. None would deny Purcell's melodic genius: there is plentiful witness to it throughout his work for the stage, both instrumental and vocal . . .

The Magic gift of Purcell's with words and music cannot be explained any more than Schubert's can. It is easy enough to say that he found in words the sound-picture (line, color, and proportion) which was translatable into song. How he found this, and his method of translating, are his secrets and his copyright. There is really no need to probe; it is enough to love our incomparable Orpheus Britannicus." **PETER PEARS (1959)**

**"IN ADDITION TO** his gift of melody there are his sense of harmony, his feeling for orchestral color, his humor, his intensity, his lyrical power . . . Yet all these details of composition were subordinate to his amazing power of dramatic characterization.

This power has been possessed by very few opera composers. Indeed, many do not seem to have been aware of the necessity of cultivating it. They have thought it more important to study the idiosyncrasies of the particular opera singers engaged for a production than to consider the dramatic foundation on which to build the music. Musical characterization is usually looked upon as a modern factor in opera. One instinctively thinks of Wagner. Both Purcell and Wagner used all their gifts of melody and harmony, all their mastery of orchestral color, to give life to their characters and situations. But while Wagner painted huge scenes, each consistent in itself and at the same time part of a vaster whole, Purcell was content to paint little cabinet pictures.

But in one way Purcell is a finer stage composer than Wagner: his music is full of movement of dance. His is the easiest music in all the world to act. Only those can realize fully the truth of this who have experienced the joy of moving to Purcell's music, whether in the ballroom or on the stage or in the garden: but especially in the garden." **GUSTAV HOLST (1927)**

**"PURCELL** is a great master at handling the English language in song, and I learned much from him. I recall a critic once asking me from whom I had learned to set English poetry to music. I told him Purcell: he was amazed. I suppose he expected me to say folk music and Vaughan Williams." **BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1963)**

# New York City Opera

2007-2008 SEASON

September 6-November 18, 2007

March 5-April 20, 2008

## Sopranos

Pamela Armstrong Lielle Berman\* Jennifer Black Julianne Borg Alison Buchanan  
Janinah Burnett\* Mardi Byers\* Elizabeth Caballero Anna Maria Chiuri\* Lisa Daltirus\*  
Julianna Di Giacomo Inna Dukach Nina Edwards\* Lauren Flanigan Melissa Fogarty\*  
Priti Gandhi\* Katherine Jolly\* Maria Kanyova Mhairi Lawson\* Ji Young Lee\* Yunah Lee  
Shu-Ying Li Deborah Lew Anya Matanović\* Kerri Marcinko\* Maureen McKay  
Sarah Jane McMahon Meagan Miller\* Nelly Miricioiu\* Sarah Moulton\* Jennifer Piacenti\*  
Irina Rindzuner\* Anna Shafajinskaia Anna Skibinsky Erin Elizabeth Smith Heidi Stober\*  
Caroline Worra Lauren Worsham\* Jessica Wright\* Jennifer Zetlan\*

## Mezzo-sopranos

Cassandre Berthon\* Judith Blazer Joyce Castle Ariana Chris\* Beth Clayton Amanda Crider\*  
Rosalind Elias Ursula Ferri Katharine Goeldner Sue Goodman\* Emily Langford Johnson\*  
Heather Johnson Janara Kellerman\* Tracie Luck\* Elena McEntire\* Susan Nicely  
Abigail Nims\* Rebecca Ringle\* Jennifer Rivera Jennifer Roderer Sandy Rosenberg\*  
Krysty Swann\* Margaret Thompson\* Jennifer Tiller

## Countertenors

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## Tenors

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Adam Diegel\* Andrew Drost William Thomas Evans\* Michael Hayes Wayne Hobbs\*  
Jeffrey Halili\* Eric Fennell Christopher Jackson Brandon Jovanovich Michael Wade Lee\*  
Jeremy Little\* Robert Mack Ryan MacPherson Eric Margiore\* Raúl Melo Aaron Pegram\*  
Jeffrey Picón\* Scott Piper Daniel Reichard\* Steven Sanders\* Bruce Sledge Joel Sorensen  
Carl Tanner John Tessier James Valenti Dinyar Vania Kip Wilborn Shonn Wiley\*

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Ross Benoiel\* Daniel Borowski Eugene Brancoveanu\* Matthew Burns Peter Castaldi\*  
Michael Chioldi Michael Corvino Larry Daggett João Fernandes\* Andrew Fernando\*  
Branch Fields Eric Michael Gillett Paul Goodwin-Groen\* Scott Guinn Michael Halling  
Gregory Harrell Scott Hogsted Weston Hurt Eric Jordan Museop Kim\* Young Bok Kim\*  
Richard Kind\* William Ledbetter Malcolm MacKenzie Corey McKern\* Timothy Mix\*  
Daniel Mobbs Brian Mulligan Marco Nisticò Daesan No Andrew Oakden\* Jan Opalach  
Kyle Pfortmiller Stephen Powell Leonard Rowe Boyd Schlaefer Michael Todd Simpson\*  
Aaron St. Clair Nicholson\* Peter Samuel Richard Stilwell Peter Strummer Alexander Tall\*  
Christopher Temporelli\* Todd Thomas Martin Van Treuren\* Jeffrey Tucker\*  
Michael Wanko Don Yule Kyungmook Yum Michael Zegarski

## Solo Dancers

Gregorio de Silva Esperanza Galan

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Jane Glover Steven Jarvi\* George Manahan Anne Manson\* Joseph Mechavich\*  
Steven Mosteller Timothy Myers\* Ari Pelto Joseph Rescigno Nicholas Ross\*  
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\* Debut with New York City Opera

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Christopher Carrico Shannon Carson\*\* Ruth Ann Cunningham Neil Eddinger Daniel Egan Bernadette Fiorella  
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Katherine Keyes Jason Phillip Knight William Lagundino Paula Liscio Olga Lomteva Roger Ohlsen  
Beth Pensiero Louis Perry Doug Purcell Boyd Schlaefer Daniel Shigo Amie Thompson Verda Lee Tudor  
Elisabeth White Deborah Williams\*\* Edward Zimmerman

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Jane Ann Askins Inessa Tarasova Banayan Jennifer Bates Dennis Blackwell Willsonia Boyer\* Elough Butler  
Jeff Caldwell Alexander Caraballo\* Mae Carrington\* Albert Christmas Dan Cucura Ruth Ann Cunningham  
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Karen Feder Martin Fisher\* Ronald Forsmo Sabrina Francis Joan Fuerstman Basia Gajdek\* Kevin Gardner  
Richard Gillyard\* Tom Goldstein\* Kevin Grace Chad Graham\* James Daniel Gregory Donna Grossman  
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Laurice Simmons Kennel\* Erich Simo Danielle Sinclair Martin Sola Charles Sprawls Tyrone Stanley\*  
Kurt Steinhauer Tamara Tarby Clifford Terry\* Michael Testa Pamela Thomas Lloyd B. Thompkins  
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Courtney Wilds\* Daniel Williams\* George Leslie Wyman Gil Ung Yun

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Virginia Cook Veronica Gorelik Michael Landes Jonathan Makepeace Lucien Mervin-Leroy  
Yves Mervin-Leroy Dylan Moore Lauretta Mosteller Elias O'Connor Hawken Paul Ashwin Ragupathi  
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David Grabarkewitz Beth Greenberg Lillian Groag Mark Lamos Michael Kahn Stephen Lawless  
Leon Major Arthur Masella Mark Morris Brendan Moffitt Kevin Newbury A. Scott Parry Mike Phillips  
Harold Prince James Robinson Michael Scarola Albert Sherman Keturah M. Strickann Bethzaida Thomas\*  
Tazewell Thompson Tomer Zvulun\*

## Choreographers

Patricia Birch Renaud Doucet\* Esperanza Galan Daryl Gray Lynne Hockney  
Mark Morris Anthony Salatino\* Susan Stroman

## Designers

André Barbe\* Ken Billington Chloe Chapin Pat Collins John Conklin Jeff Davis Judith Dolan Clarke Dunham  
Donald Eastman Jess Goldstein Wolfgang Goebbel Jeff Harris Constance Hoffman James F. Ingalls Abe Jacob  
Jessica Jahn Rolf Langenfass Adrienne Lobel Ashley Martin-Davis Mark McCullough Isaac Mizrahi Allen Moyer  
Merrily Murray-Walsh Martin Pakledinaz James Schuette Sidney Shannon Paul Shortt Eduardo V. Sicango  
Guy Simard\* Stephen Strawbridge Pia Virolainen\* Robert Wierzel Michael Yeargan

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Liora Maurer Steven Mosteller Susan Caldwell Marijo Newman Curt Pajer\* Susan Woodruff Versage

## Language Coaches

Lynn Baker Thomas Grubb Kathryn LaBuff

## Stage Managers

Thomas A. Kelly (Production Stage Manager) Chelsea Antrim\* Anne Dechêne Francesca DeRenzi\*  
Caroline Dufresne Samantha Greene Peggy Imbrie Cindy Knight Jency Lazar Lisa Jean Lewis  
Katherine West\* Annie Wheeler Chad Zodrow

\* Debut with New York City Opera

\*\* On leave of absence

Friday Evening, March 7, 2008, 8:00–10:00

# King Arthur

## A Dramatick Opera

*Music by Henry Purcell*

*Libretto by John Dryden*

*Production premiere: June 26, 2006, London Coliseum, United Kingdom*

*Conductor* Jane Glover

*Director and Choreographer* Mark Morris  
*Scenic Design* Adrienne Lobel  
*Costume Design* Isaac Mizrahi  
*Lighting Design* James F. Ingalls

### *Cast*

*(in order of vocal appearance)*

*Baritones* Daniel Mobbs  
Alexander Tall  
*Countertenor* Iestyn Davies  
*Tenor* Steven Sanders  
*Sopranos* Sarah Jane McMahon  
Heidi Stober  
Mhairi Lawson

### *Dancers*

Craig Biesecker Charlton Boyd Elisa Clark Amber Darragh  
Rita Donahue Lauren Grant John Heginbotham David Leventhal  
Laurel Lynch Bradon McDonald Dallas McMurray Maile Okamura  
June Omura Noah Vinson Julie Worden Michelle Yard

### *Continuo*

*Harpichord* Jane Glover  
*Harpichord, Organ* John Beeson  
*Theorbo, Baroque Guitar* David Miller  
*Cello* Mark Shuman

*Recorders* Rachel Begley, Nina Stern

*Chorus Master* Charles F. Prestinari  
*Associate Conductor* Steven Fox  
*Assistant Chorus Masters* Anthony Piccolo, Mozart de Oliveira  
*Musical Preparation* John Beeson, Keith Chambers,  
Susan Woodruff Versage, Lynn Baker  
*Assistant Directors* Mike Phillips, Tomer Zvulun  
*Stage Managers* Anne Dechène  
Jenny Lazar, Annie Wheeler  
*English Diction Coach* Lynn Baker  
*Assistant Costume Designer* Courtney Logan  
*Assistant to Mr. Morris* Joe Bowie

*Mark Morris Dance Group*  
Artistic Director     Mark Morris  
Executive Director     Nancy Umanoff

Craig Biesecker   Samuel Black   Joe Bowie   Charlton Boyd  
Elisa Clark   Amber Darragh   Rita Donahue   Lauren Grant  
John Heginbotham   David Leventhal   Laurel Lynch   Bradon McDonald  
Dallas McMurray   Maile Okamura   June Omura   Noah Vinson  
Jenn Weddel   Julie Worden   Michelle Yard

A co-production with English National Opera/Mark Morris Dance Group/New York City Opera  
in association with Cal Performances, Berkeley

Leadership support provided by The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation

*King Arthur* and New York City Opera's 2007–2008 Season are sponsored by Altria Group, Inc.

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The Mark Morris Dance Group's performances are made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts Dance Program.

## Director's Note

*King Arthur* is here presented as a pageant—a sort of vaudeville—a sequence of production numbers sacred and profane, small and large, sad and happy, sung and danced.

I chose to discard the spoken text (which I don't like) and keep all of the music (which I do).

The setting is the stage. The time is now. The performers are themselves.

—Mark Morris

"Music is a song and a dance."  
*Lou Harrison (1917–2003)*

# King Arthur

## A Dramatick Opera

*'Sure there's a Dearth of Wit in this dull Town,  
When silly Plays so savourly go down...'*

**ACT I, Scene 1:** Ritual Sacrifice  
*"Honour prizing,  
Death despising,  
Fame acquiring  
By Expiring"*

**Scene 2:** Offstage Battle  
*"And pity Mankind that will  
perish for Gold"*

**ACT II, Scene 1:** The Chase  
*"Come, follow me"*

**Scene 2:** A Pastoral  
*"And Love, they tell me, is a  
Dance of Hearts"*

**ACT III, Scene 1:** What Love Does  
*"I can scarcely move or  
draw my Breath"*

**Scene 2:** *"Love was made for a  
Blessing, And not for a Pain"*

### *Intermission*

**ACT IV, Scene 1:** Double Seduction  
*"What Danger from a Naked Foe?"  
"A Lazie Pleasure trickles through my Veins"*

**Scene 2:** Love's Lesson  
*"No Joys are above  
The Pleasures of Love"*

**ACT V:** A Storm  
Menageric  
Industry  
Men on sex  
Women on love  
A Quarrel  
Pride plus power

*"And as these Excel in Beauty,  
Those shall be Renown'd for Love"*

## Notes on *King Arthur*

Those familiar with Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, or those anticipating a conventional Arthurian opera featuring Lancelot, Guinevere, and the sword Excalibur might well be mystified by *King Arthur*, or *The British Worthy*. Nevertheless, John Dryden's magical adventure play about King Arthur's battles with the evil Saxon King Oswald, including musical episodes composed by Henry Purcell (1659–1695), conformed perfectly to English notions about musical theater in the late 17th century. Dubbed "A Dramatick Opera" by poet Dryden (1631–1700), *King Arthur* was premiered at the Queen's Theater Dorset Garden in London in late spring of 1691 for an audience long accustomed to such hybrid musical entertainments.

While various forms of sung drama were spreading like wildfire throughout the European continent in the 17th century, the English had lavished their attention on the extravagant scenic effects of the masque, a form of musical theater that flourished in courts and private homes in the first half of the century, in which singing, instrumental music, and dance were set into relief by spoken dialogue. Masques often starred courtiers and nobles, who would eagerly cross the boundaries between reality and fantasy in order to sing, act, and—above all—dance in the "revels." Although the natural development of musical theater in England was interrupted at mid-century for nearly 20 years by the civil war and the Commonwealth, the masque conventions provided the background for pastorals, semi-operas, and seemingly endless varieties of English operatic genres that became popular during the subsequent Restoration period, including Dryden and Purcell's *King Arthur*.

Dryden's collaboration with Purcell on this project was in many respects a fortuitous accident in history. Dryden first wrote *King Arthur* to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Charles II's ascension to the throne in 1685, while the 26-year old Henry Purcell, who had no apparent interest in theater, was employed as the court composer and organist at Westminster Abbey. Since Charles II preferred the continuous sung drama favored by the French, Dryden obliged his patron by jettisoning the main part of the play and expanding the sung prologue, entitled *Albion and Albanus*, which was set to music by Luis Grab. Unfortunately, Charles II died before that work opened in the theater; moreover, its public run was disrupted by the unexpected landing in England of Charles' illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, bolstered by 4000 troops and a burning desire for the throne. Monmouth was beheaded later that year; *Albion and Albanus* did not fare much better.

It was Purcell's success with *The Prophetess, or the History of Dioclesian* (1690)—rather than his only "true" opera *Dido and Aeneas*—that inspired Dryden to turn to the composer for his second go at *King Arthur*. In fact, Purcell's justly famous opera about the Queen of Carthage—unique both with regard to British theatrical conventions and within Purcell's output—garnered the composer little public acclaim: its only securely documented performance in Purcell's lifetime was at a girl's boarding school in Chelsea in 1689. But Dryden's *King Arthur*—a curious amalgam of British nationalism, pastoral, magic, and romance—provided fertile ground for what might seem an unconventional marriage between music and poetry.

The central plot of the "Dramatick Opera" concerns Arthur's quest to unify Britain and regain his betrothed, the blind Cornish Princess Emmeline, who had been abducted by the evil Oswald. None of these principal speaking characters actually sing; the two sorcerers, Merlin and Osmond (in the service of Arthur and Oswald respectively) have the ability to both sing and speak, while a host of spirits, gods, shepherds, and nymphs—along with choruses of singing Brits and Saxons—exist exclusively within the musical realm.

Dryden may have grumbled about having "been obliged" to cramp my Verses, and make them rugged to the Ear" to suit the composer; yet he praises Purcell's genius as so great that "he has nothing to fear but an ignorant, ill-judging Audience." Indeed, this curious tale—judged by some to be political allegory, but described by Sir Walter Scott as "a mere fairy tale totally divested of any possible meaning beyond extravagant adventure"—inspired one

of Purcell's most enticing scores. Where Italian opera of the period presented one (mostly) da capo aria after another, the wonder of Purcell's *King Arthur* is its remarkable formal and sonic variety: his seemingly endless ways of combining chorus and soloists, his rich palette of orchestral colors and textures, the evocative shifts between major and minor, the lyrical recitative reminiscent of an earlier moment in Italian opera, and the intoxicating French dance rhythms, along with some of the most seductive vocal melodies ever written—all seasoned with Purcell's judicious use of luscious chromatic touches.

Purcell evokes a complex universe of pagan warriors, fairies, shepherds, and gods and goddesses with unerring insight. In Act I, for example, as the Saxons sacrifice their prize horses to the god Woden, the hypnotic repeated quarter-note march and choral refrains provide a suitably primitive accompaniment to a pagan ritual, while the trumpets and triumphant choruses evoke the nationalistic praise of Britain that lurks beneath *King Arthur*. Who could resist the enticing magic of "Hither, this way, this way bend" in Act II, a spry melody on tip-toes, echoed obediently by the chorus; or the sheer bucolic loveliness of the shepherds' songs and dances? Their g-minor choral dance, "Shepherds, Shepherds leave decoying", provides a hint of the latent eroticism in this pastoral realm: "Pipes are sweet on summer day," the shepherds sing, "But a little after toying, Women have the shot to pay. Here are Marriage vows for signing..." In Act III, the jagged rhythms, tremolos, quavers, shivers, and chattering teeth of singers and orchestra in the famous "Frost Scene" create an unforgettable sonic representation of a frozen universe, which is subsequently melted by the irrepressible warmth of Cupid's jaunty dotted rhythms. Love also plays a role in Act IV through the seductive songs of sirens—"the daughters of the aged streams." Their interweaving vocal lines in close imitation enchant their ear, while the body is surely aroused by the elegant strains of a seductive *passacaglia*—a slow triple-metered dance in which a short pattern in the bass is repeatedly varied. In Act V, the distinctly English character of the work comes to the fore, as the Harvest is celebrated with boisterous enthusiasm ("Your Hay it is Mowed") and Venus herself appears to extol the pleasures of the "Fairest Isle" with one of Purcell's most haunting melodies. Arthur's victory is England's triumph.

Mark Morris' answer to the generic challenges of *King Arthur* is typically bold: he entirely eliminates Dryden's play (which he claims not to like) and focuses his remarkable choreographic skills and special insight into Baroque rhythm and gesture on Purcell's score. What results is a colorful, frothy, and engaging vaudeville-style entertainment with choreographies that range from the sober to the exuberant, decorated with playfully anachronistic gestures that send the viewer on a dizzying trip through time. While *King Arthur* never appears in his production, his royal presence is invoked by the unexpected appearance of a crown every now and then. Other potent symbols—such as the Christmas tree, the Maypole, or the appropriate modern kitchen appliance for the Frost Scene in Act III—create a festive blend of Baroque and contemporary sensibilities. Inventive choreography abounds: the processions of wooden horses in Act I evokes the solemn Saxon sacrifices to Woden; there is sheer delight in the fairy games with doors, mirrors, and blinking lights in Act II, or the sultry night-club act and typically English frolic around the Maypole in Act V. Baroque sensuality reigns in the opening of Act IV, as the purple, shimmering abode of the sirens provides satisfaction for a lusty hero in "How Happy the Lover," ornamented by the elegantly danced *passacaglia*. In Morris' joyfully irreverent and unerringly sensitive realization of some of the period's greatest music, Dryden's *King Arthur* may step aside, but Henry Purcell remains center stage. As in the masques of 17th-century England, Morris invites everyone to join in the dance and celebrate.

*Wendy Heller is Associate Professor of Music at Princeton University and Director of the Program in Italian Studies. Her many writings on Baroque opera include Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice.*

## Meet the Artists



**Mhairi Lawson**, soprano. Birthplace: Scotland, UK. This season at City Opera: debuts as Soprano I in *King Arthur*. Career highlights: appearances at Paris' Cité de la Musique, Théâtre du Châtelet, London's

Wigmore Hall, and Utrecht's Vredenburg and with Opera Comique, Edinburgh's Festival Theatre, English National Opera at London's Royal Opera Coliseum Theatres, Les Arts Florissants, The Gabrieli Consort, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra; Handel's *Alcina* and *Acis, Galatea e Polifemo*, Purcell's *King Arthur* and *Fairy Queen*, and Hasse's *Antonio e Cleopatra* with the Early Opera Company. Recordings: Haydn's English and Scottish Songs (premiere recording with period instruments), Stefano Landi's *Il sant' Alessio* (Les Arts Florissants), and many works of Vivaldi with virtuoso British group La Serenissima. Upcoming: Handel's *Acis and Galatea* (Vienna, Strasbourg, London's Wigmore Hall); recording of Haydn's *Creation*; performances of music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier in Spain and Vivaldi's *La fida ninfa* in Venice.



**Sarah Jane McMahon**, soprano. Birthplace: New Orleans, Louisiana. This season at City Opera: Soprano II in *King Arthur*. City Opera debut: *Galatea in Acis and Galatea*, 2006. Career highlights: Mabel in *The Pirates*

*of Penzance* with City Opera; The Infanta in *Der Zwerg* with Bard SummerScape; Fifth Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*, opposite Plácido

Domingo, and Naiade in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Los Angeles Opera; soprano soloist in *Carmina Burana* at Avery Fisher Hall; Musetta in *La bohème* and Valencienne in *The Merry Widow* with New Orleans Opera; Micaëla in *Carmen* with Opera Grand Rapids; Dorinda in *Orlando* with Washington Concert Opera; *Broadway by the Year 1959*, *A Night at the Operetta*, and *Broadway Unplugged* at Town Hall, New York; Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare* with Opera Theater of Connecticut. Upcoming: Rutter's Requiem at Carnegie Hall; Maria in *West Side Story* with New Orleans Opera; Lucia in *The Rape of Lucretia*; Maria in *West Side Story* with Central City Opera.



**Heidi Stober**, soprano. Birthplace: Waukesha, Wisconsin. This season at City Opera: Poppea in *Agrippina* and Soprano III in *King Arthur*. Career highlights: La Folie/Thalie in *Platée* with Santa Fe Opera; Blonde in

*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Drusilla in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Xenia in *Boris Goudonov*, and Frasquita in *Carmen* with Houston Grand Opera; Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera* with Boston Lyric Opera and Opera Colorado; Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Colorado; Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with Boston Baroque; Comtesse Adele in *Le Comte Ory* with Wolf Trap Opera; soprano soloist in *Ein deutsches Requiem* with Houston Symphony; soprano soloist in *Carmina Burana* and Poulenc's Gloria with Houston Ballet. Upcoming: Carolina in *Il matrimonio segreto* with Brooklyn Academy of Music; Tigrane in *Radamisto* with Santa Fe Opera.



**Iestyn Davies**, countertenor. Birthplace: York, UK. This season at City Opera: debuts as Countertenor in *King Arthur*. Career highlights: Ottone in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* for Zürich Opera; Hamor in Handel's *Jephtha* and Frailty/Pisander in Monteverdi's *Ritorno d'Ulisse* for Welsh National Opera; Apollo in *Death in Venice* and Countertenor in *King Arthur* for English National Opera. Recordings: Handel's *Mesiah* for Naxos with the Academy of Ancient Music and New College Oxford and Vivaldi's *Griselda* for Naïve Records, conducted by Spinosi. Upcoming: Ottone in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* for Glyndebourne Festival Opera with Haïm; Oberon in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Houston Grand Opera; Armindo in Handel's *Partenope* for English National Opera; Handel's *Flavio* with Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music; Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* with Gustavo Dudamel at La Scala, Milan; Handel's *Belshazzar* at the Proms with Sir Charles Mackerras. Upcoming: Wigmore Hall debut solo recital, 2009.



**Steven Sanders**, tenor. Birthplace: Augusta, Kansas. This season at City Opera: debuts as Tenor in *King Arthur*. Career highlights: Bonario in *Volpone* and Hérison in *L'Étoile* with Wolf Trap Opera; Tybalt in *Romé et Juliette* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; Giles Corey in *The Crucible* with Opera Boston. Orchestra/symphony engagements: Mozart's Mass in C minor with the Boston Youth Symphony; Mozart's Requiem with Austin Symphony; *Carmina Burana* with the Dallas Wind Symphony. Recordings: *Volpone* by John Musto. Upcoming: Mozart's Solemn Vespers at Carnegie Hall; Oronte in

Handel's *Alcina* with Wolf Trap Opera; Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* with the Boston Youth Symphony.



**Daniel Mobbs**, bass-baritone. Birthplace: Louisville, Kentucky. This season at City Opera: Leporello in *Don Giovanni* and Baritone I in *King Arthur*. City Opera debut: Dancairo in *Carmen*, 1993. Career highlights: Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* with Florida Grand Opera; Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Baltimore Opera, City Opera, and South Africa's Spier Festival; Taddeo in *L'italiana in Algeri*, Marcello and Schaunard in *La bohème*, Lord Sidney in *Il viaggio a Reims*, Papageno in *The Magic Flute* at City Opera; Cascada in *The Merry Widow*, and Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera; Ping in *Turandot* for New Orleans, City, Pittsburgh, and Washington operas; Togod in Pascal Dusapin's *Faustus* at Spoleto Festival USA; Elmiro in Rossini's *Otello* with Opera Orchestra of New York at Carnegie Hall; *Tancredi*, *I puritani*, and *La sonnambula*; *Il trovatore* at Caramoor. Upcoming: Don Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Caramoor; Brahms Requiem at Carnegie Hall; title role in *William Tell*, Warsaw, Poland.



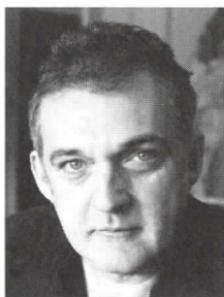
**Alexander Tall**, baritone. Birthplace: Cresskill, New Jersey. This season at City Opera: Silvio in *Pagliacci* and Baritone II in *King Arthur*. Career highlights: Schaunard in *La bohème* with Opera Company of Philadelphia and Opera Birmingham; Mercutio in *Romé et Juliette* with Opera Grand Rapids; Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* with Merola Opera Company; Pollux in *Castor et Pollux* with Opera Français de New York; Marcello in *La bohème* with the Music Academy of the

West; Fiorello in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Florida Grand Opera; and the Officer in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with the Opera Company of Philadelphia; title role in *Orpheus*; Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* with the National Symphony Orchestra; Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Chicago Opera Theater; Sciarone in *Tosca* with Fort Worth Opera; and Anthony in *Sweeney Todd* with Wolf Trap Opera. Upcoming: Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra.



**Jane Glover**, conductor. Birthplace: Helmsley, England. This season at City Opera: *King Arthur*. City Opera debut: *Iphigénie en Tauride*, 1997. Career highlights: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at Royal Opera,

Covent Garden, and Glyndebourne and Royal Danish operas; *Così fan tutte* at Berlin Staatsoper, Glyndebourne, and Chicago Opera Theater; *Figaro* at English National Opera (ENO), Australian Opera, Bordeaux, and Canadian Opera; *Don Giovanni* at Glyndebourne, ENO, and Opera du Rhin; *Die Zauberflöte* at ENO; *Idomeneo* at Glyndebourne and Opéra de Lausanne; Monteverdi trilogy for Chicago Opera Theater (and *L'Orfeo* at BAM); *Tamerlano*, *Ulisse*, *Poppea*, *La Calisto*, and *Iphigénie* at Glimmerglass Opera; *Ariodante*, *Agrippina*, and *Acis and Galatea* at City Opera; engagements also with La Fenice, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Oviedo Opera, Florida, Boston, Mostly Mozart, and BBC. Artistic director, London Mozart Players (1984–91); musical director, Glyndebourne Touring Opera (1981–85); currently music director of Chicago's Music of the Baroque.



**Mark Morris**, director and choreographer. Birthplace: Seattle, Washington. This season at City Opera: *King Arthur*. City Opera debut: *Platée*, 2000. Founded Mark Morris Dance Group in 1980 and has since created over

120 works for the company; choreographed dances for many ballet companies, including the San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theater, and Boston Ballet; director of dance (1988–91) at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels' national opera house, where he created 12 pieces, including three evening-length works: *The Hard Nut*; *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*; and *Dido and Aeneas*; co-founder of White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov; extensive work in opera as both choreographer and director, including *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Metropolitan Opera; named fellow of the MacArthur Foundation; subject of a biography by Joan Acocella (FSG). Upcoming: *Romeo & Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare* by Prokofiev at the Bard SummerScape Festival (July 2008).

**Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG)**. Formed in 1980. One of the world's leading dance companies, MMDG maintains a full touring schedule, including regular appearances in Berkeley, Urbana (Illinois), Boston, Fairfax (Virginia), London, and Seattle; three years as resident company of Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels (1988–91); television credits include PBS's *Dance in America* series and the U.K.'s *South Bank Show*; film projects include Morris' *Dido and Aeneas* and the Emmy Award-winning collaboration with Yo-Yo Ma, *Falling Down Stairs*; opened the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, the company's first permanent headquarters in the U.S., in 2001, housing rehearsal space for the dance community and outreach programs for local children, as well as a school offering dance classes to students of all ages. For more information, visit [www.mmdg.org](http://www.mmdg.org).

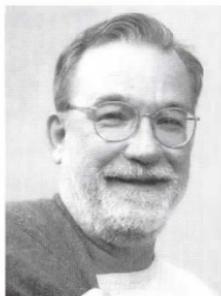


**Adrienne Lobel**, set design. Birthplace: Brooklyn, New York. This season at City Opera: *King Arthur*. City Opera debut: *Platée*, 2000. Projects for Mark Morris: *King Arthur* (ENO), *Platée* (Royal Opera, London, Edinburgh, and City Opera), *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (La Monnaie-Brussels, BAM), *The Hard Nut* (La Monnaie-Brussels, BAM), *Le nozze di Figaro* (Brussels), and *Orfeo ed Euridice* (BAM and U.S. tour). Career highlights: *Lady in the Dark* at London's National Theatre; *An American Tragedy* at the Metropolitan Opera; *Dr. Atomic* at San Francisco Opera; *Street Scene* and *Nixon in China* at Houston Grand Opera; *Paris' Bobigny* at ENO; *The Rake's Progress* at Théâtre du Châtelet; *The Magic Flute* for Glyndebourne; Peter Sellars' productions of *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, and *The Mikado*. Broadway: *Passion*, *Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Twelve Dreams* (Lincoln Center) directed by James Lapine; *On the Town* directed by George C. Wolfe; *A Year with Frog and Toad* (developed/produced).



**Isaac Mizrahi**, costume designer. Birthplace: Brooklyn, New York. This season at City Opera: *King Arthur*. City Opera debut: *Platée*, 2000. Career highlights: as fashion designer, opened his own business in 1987; as creative director for Liz Claiborne brand, oversees design/marketing for women's apparel/accessories line; subject of 1995 documentary, *Unzipped*, for which Mizrahi and director Douglas Keeve received a special CFDA Award for bringing the fashion world to cinema; designed costumes for movies, theatre, and dance in collaboration with Twyla Tharp, Bill T. Jones, and Mikhail Baryshnikov; Roundabout's *The Women* (Drama Desk Award, 2002); appeared in his own

off-Broadway one-man show, *Les Mizrahi*; three-time CFDA Designer of the Year award winner; author of the comic book series *The Adventures of Sandee the Supermodel*; attended High School of Performing Arts and Parsons School of Design. Currently shooting his new web show and writing his first book, *How to Have Style*, available fall 2008.



**James F. Ingalls**, lighting designer. Birthplace: Hartford, Connecticut. This season at City Opera: *King Arthur*. City Opera debut: *Platée*, 2000. Career highlights: New York productions of *Mozart Dances*, *The Hard Nut*, *Dido and Aeneas*, and *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (Mark Morris Dance Group); *Ainadamar*, *Zaide*, and *Bach Cantatas*, all directed by Peter Sellars (Lincoln Center, Inc.); *War and Peace*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *An American Tragedy*, *Salome*, *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Les Troyens*, *Gambler*, and *Wozzeck* at the Metropolitan Opera; *El Nino*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, and *Nixon in China* at BAM; *Trumpery*, *Romance*, *A Second Hand Memory*, and *Writer's Block* with Atlantic Theatre Company; *Sixteen Wounded* and *The Elephant Man* on Broadway. Recent projects: *Adriana Mater* by Kaija Saariaho with Finnish National Opera; *Coppelia* with Het Nationale Ballet, Amsterdam; *after the quake* with Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Steppenwolf; *Passion Play* at the Goodman Theatre. He often collaborates with the Saint Joseph Ballet, Santa Ana, California.



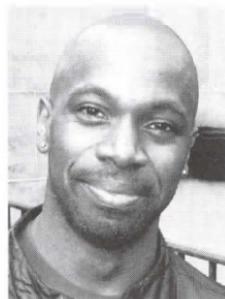
**Craig Biesecker**, MMDG. Hometown: Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. Received a B.S. in music education from West Chester University of Pennsylvania. While teaching music in Philadelphia, he studied ballet with John White, Margarita de Saa, and Bryan

Koulman and worked with choreographers Tim and Lina Early. In New York City he has worked with Pascal Rioult, Carolyn Dorfman, New York Theater Ballet, Mark Dendy, and Gerald Casel. Mr. Biesecker joined MMDG in 2003.



**Samuel Black**, MMDG. Hometown: Berkeley, California. He began studying tap at age nine with Katie Maltsberger. He recently received his B.F.A. in dance from State University of New York, Purchase, where he performed works by Mark Morris, Paul Taylor, Zvi Gotheiner, Seán Curran, and Kevin Wynn.

During a semester at the Rotterdamse Dans-academie in Holland, Mr. Black danced in several Dutch cities and in Germany. He has performed in New York with David Parker, Takehiro Ueyama, and Nelly van Bommel. Mr. Black first worked with MMDG in 2005 and joined the company in 2007.



**Joe Bowie**, MMDG. Birthplace: Lansing, Michigan. He began dancing while attending Brown University, where he graduated with honors in English and American literature. In New York he has performed works by Robert Wilson and Ulysses Dove and danced with the Paul Taylor Dance Company for two years before going to Belgium to work with Mark Morris in 1989.

with Mark Morris in 1989.



**Charlton Boyd**, MMDG. Birthplace: New Jersey. He studied and performed with the Inner City Ensemble Theater and Dance Company. He graduated from The Juilliard School and went on to dance with the Limón Dance Company and appear in *Jose Limón Technique Video, Volume 1*, among other music videos. He first appeared with MMDG in 1989 and became a company member in 1994.



**Elisa Clark**, MMDG. Received her early training from the Maryland Youth Ballet and her B.F.A. from The Juilliard School, under the direction of Benjamin Harkarvy. She has danced with the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, the Nederlands Dans Theater, the Peridance Ensemble, and Battleworks Dance Company. Ms. Clark has staged works by Robert Battle, David Parsons, Igal Perry, and Adam Houglund at various schools and with companies, including the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. She has been on the faculty of the American Dance Festival and currently works closely with Carolyn Adams and the American Dance Legacy Institute, in addition to serving on an advisory panel for Capezio. She first appeared with MMDG in *L'Allegro* in August 2005.

with MMDG in *L'Allegro* in August 2005.



**Amber Darragh**, MMDG. Hometown: Newport, Oregon. She began her dance training with Nancy Mittleman and received her B.F.A. from The Juilliard School in 1999. She went on to dance with the Limón Dance Company for two years and received the 2001

for two years and received the 2001

Princess Grace Award and has presented her own choreography both in New York and abroad. Ms. Darragh joined MMDG in 2001.



**Rita Donahue**, MMDG. Birthplace: Fairfax, Virginia. Attended George Mason University, where she graduated with honors in dance and English in 2002. She danced with bopi's black sheep/dances by kraig paterson and joined MMDG in 2003.



**Lauren Grant**, MMDG. Hometown: Highland Park, Illinois. Before graduating with a B.F.A. from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Ms. Grant studied ballet from the age of three. Later, she trained in character dance, acting, and singing. She teaches master classes in ballet and modern technique at schools and universities around the world, at MMDG's school in Brooklyn, and for the company as well. Ms. Grant is married to fellow dancer David Leventhal. She has danced with MMDG since 1996.



**John Heginbotham**, MMDG. Hometown: Anchorage, Alaska. He graduated from The Juilliard School in 1993 and has performed with such artists as Susan Marshall, John Jasperse, and Ben Munisteri; he was a guest artist with Pilobolus Dance Theater. John's choreography is featured in the work of recording artists Fischerspooner, and in *Champ: A Space Opera* (New York International Fringe Festival). As a teacher, he works regularly

with members of the Brooklyn Parkinson Group. John joined the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1998.



**David Leventhal**, MMDG. Hometown: Newton, Massachusetts. He studied at Boston Ballet School and has danced with José Mateo's Ballet Theatre and the companies of Marcus Schulkind, Richard Colton/Amy Spencer, Zvi Gotheiner, Neta Pulvermacher, and Ben Munisteri. He graduated with honors in English literature from Brown University in 1995 and teaches master classes in technique and repertory at schools and colleges around the country. Mr. Leventhal gives classes regularly at MMDG's school, including one for people with Parkinson's disease. He is married to fellow dancer Lauren Grant and has danced with MMDG since 1997.



**Laurel Lynch**, MMDG. Hometown: Petaluma, California. After performing in a few too many *Nutcrackers* growing up, she moved to New York to attend The Juilliard School, where she performed works by Robert Battle, Margie Gillis, José Limón, and Ohad Naharin. Since graduation in May 2003, Ms. Lynch has danced for Dušan Týnek Dance Theatre, Sue Bernhard Danceworks, Pat Catterson, Stephan Koplowitz, and T.E.A. (Transpersonal Education and Art). She performed at the Festival Oltre Passo in Lecce, Italy, and appeared as a guest artist with Petaluma City Ballet. Ms. Lynch first appeared with MMDG in 2006.



**Bradon McDonald,** MMDG. After receiving his B.F.A. from The Juilliard School in 1997, he danced with the Limón Dance Company for three years and received the 1998 Princess Grace Award. He has choreographed and presented his own works internationally, served as choreographer for seven Juilliard Opera Company productions under director Frank Corsaro, and was the choreographic assistant to Donald McKayle at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Mr. McDonald joined MMDG in 2000.



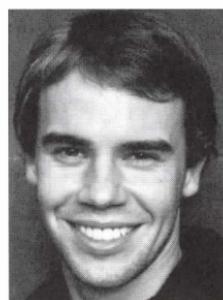
**Dallas McMurray,** MMDG. Hometown: El Cerrito, California. He began dancing at age four, studying jazz, tap, and acrobatics with Katie Maltsberger and ballet with Yukiko Sakakura. Mr. McMurray received his B.F.A. in dance from the California Institute of the Arts and has since performed with the Limón Dance Company, in addition to works by Jiri Kylian, Alonzo King, Robert Moses, and Colin Connor. Mr. McMurray first appeared with MMDG as an apprentice in 2006 and joined the company in 2007.



**Maile Okamura,** MMDG. Hometown: San Diego, California. She was a member of Boston Ballet II from 1992 to 1993 and Ballet Arizona from 1993 to 1996. She has danced with choreographers Neta Pulvermacher, Zvi Gotheiner, and Gerald Casel, among others. Ms. Okamura began working with MMDG in 1998 and became a company member in 2001.



**June Omura,** MMDG. Birthplace/Hometown: New York/Birmingham, Alabama. She graduated from Barnard College with honors in dance and English and first studied with Mark Morris in 1986, joining MMDG in 1988. In 2005 she received a New York Dance and Performance Award ("Bessie") for her career with the company. June and her husband are the proud parents of twin girls, born in 2003, and a baby boy, born in September 2006. She is grateful to her family, Mark Morris, and MMDG for their love and support.



**Noah Vinson,** MMDG. He received his B.A. in dance from Columbia College Chicago, where he worked with Shirley Mordine, Jan Erkert, and Brian Jeffrey. In New York he has danced with Teri and Oliver Steele and the Kevin Wynn Collection. He began working with MMDG in 2002 and became a company member in 2004.



**Jenn Weddel,** MMDG. Hometown: Longmont, Colorado. After receiving her early training from the Boulder Ballet Company, she received a B.F.A. from Southern Methodist University and studied at The Boston Conservatory, Colorado University, and the Laban Center, London. Since moving to New York in 2001, Ms. Weddel has performed with the RedWall Dance Theatre, Sue Bernhard Danceworks, Venci Dance Trio, Rocha Dance Theatre, and with various choreographers, including Alan Danielson

and Connie Procopio. She has presented her own work in Manhattan and continues to collaborate with the T.E.A. Dance Company under the direction of Ella Ben-Aharon and Sahar Javedani. Ms. Weddel first appeared with MMDG as an apprentice in 2006 and joined the company in 2007.



**Julie Worden**, MMDG. Ms. Worden graduated from the North Carolina School of the Arts. She joined MMDG in 1994.



**Michelle Yard**, MMDG. Birthplace: Brooklyn, New York. She began her professional dance training at the New York City High School of the Performing Arts. Upon graduation she received the Helen Tamiris and B'nai Brith awards. For three years she was a scholarship student at the Alvin Ailey Dance Center, and she attended New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where she graduated with a B.F.A. Ms. Yard joined MMDG in 1997. Mom, thank you.

**MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP STAFF**

Mark Morris, *Artistic Director*  
Nancy Umanoff, *Executive Director*

**PRODUCTION**

Johan Henckens, *Technical Director*  
Wolfram Koessel, *Music Ensemble Director*  
Joe Bowie, *Assistant to the Director*  
Matthew Rose, *Assistant to the Choreographer*  
Leo Janks, *Lighting Supervisor*  
Katherine M. Patterson, *Wardrobe Supervisor*  
Iim Abdou, *Sound Supervisor*

**ADMINISTRATION**

Aaron Mattocks, *General Manager*  
Adrienne Bryant, *Company Manager*  
Elizabeth Fox, *Director of Finance*  
Victoria Gintautiene, *Finance Associate*

**MARKETING/DEVELOPMENT**

Lauren Cherubini, *Director of Marketing and Development*  
Alexandro Pacheco, *Special Projects Manager*  
Christy Bolingbroke, *Marketing Manager*  
Jane McCarthy, *Development Associate*  
Moss Allen, *Development Assistant*  
Jay Selinger, *Office Assistant*

**EDUCATION**

Eva Nichols, *Director of Education*  
Diane Ogunusi, *School Administrator*  
Marc Castelli, *Administrative Assistant*

**DANCE CENTER OPERATIONS**

Karyn Treadwell, *Studio Manager*  
Monica Carter, *Administrative Assistant*  
Matthew Eggleton, *Production Manager*  
Bruce Lazarus, *Music Coordinator*  
Joseph Tsiporin, *Facility Manager*  
Ray Calderon, Gustavo Chaguay, *Maintenance*

Michael Mushalla (Double M Arts & Events), *Booking Representation*  
William Murray (Better Attitude, Inc), *Media and General Consultation Services*  
Mark Selinger (McDermott, Will & Emery), *Legal Counsel*  
Kathryn Lundquist, CPA, *Accountant*  
David S. Weiss, M.D. (NYU-HJD Department of Orthopaedic Surgery), *Orthopaedist*  
Jeffrey Cohen, *Hilot Therapist*

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Leon Lowenstein Foundation; Materials for the Arts, NYC; McDermott, Will & Emery;  
The Untitled Foundation; USArtists International; and the Friends of the Mark Morris Dance Group.

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NEW YORK  
**CITY  
OPERA**

salutes

The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation  
and



Altria

for their generous leadership support  
of our new production of *King Arthur*.



# Something Old,

*After the zany but poignant  
Platée seen at City Opera in  
2000 and 2004, what will  
Mark Morris do for an encore?*

*"A pageant—a sort of  
vaudeville—a sequence of  
production numbers sacred  
and profane."*

by Nancy Dalva

© Peter Da Silva



“It’s set in a theater,” says Mark Morris of his production of *King Arthur*, which plays at New York City Opera March 5 through 15. “Baroque complex theater devices? I don’t do that.”

You might be forgiven for agreeing that he doesn’t have to, being a rather baroque and complex personage himself. The same can be said for Morris’s spacious office at the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, with large cubbyholes along the wall

# Something New



*Mhairi Lawson (center) and members of the Mark Morris Dance Group.*

behind his desk holding some truly odd, disparate, and unlikely items, including three large grey plastic wolf heads, some bronzed baby shoes, and a rubber chicken. On a nearby sofa, discouraging any casual collapsing, is a severed arm (fake, of course). There are also massed votive candles dedicated to various purposes, a bamboo plant in need of water, and an enormous bathtub, not concealed at all by its bead curtain. It's the workplace of a man at very serious play.

The focus of Morris's latest "serious play" is the so-called "semi-opera" *King Arthur*, with

# New York City Opera

music by Henry Purcell and text by John Dryden, first performed in 1691; without cuts, it runs something over four hours. Morris's version, co-produced by New York City Opera, English National Opera, and the Mark Morris Dance Group, in association with Cal Performances, lasts just under two hours.

Morris achieved this draconian streamlining by happily and unceremoniously ditching the entire spoken text. As he states in his Director's Note, "*King Arthur* is presented here as a pageant—a sort of vaudeville—a sequence of production numbers sacred and profane....The setting is the stage. The Time is now. The performers are themselves."

Whatever his disdain for Dryden's rhymed couplets, Morris is utterly engaged with the Purcell score. "Jane [Glover, the production's conductor] and I auditioned all of the principal singers and assigned the orchestral lines together—which instruments play treble, which play which wind parts." With Baroque scores, he explains, "There are no *utexts*. You can translate a piece of music to another thing in the show. There are elements that aren't fixed. This is a particular performing score."

When Morris's *King Arthur* premiered at the London Coliseum in June 2006, some Londoners missed King Arthur himself, who is represented onstage only by a large prop crown which appears in all manner of unlikely spots, ubiquitous but unacknowledged. Morris's "story"—except that there isn't a story, really—has nothing to do with him.

The reaction was different on this side of the Atlantic when *King Arthur* played Berkeley, California, last September. "People were less defensive," says Morris. "It wasn't 'an American doing something to our Englishness'. Either 'How dare you?' or 'Finally!' were the reactions in England."

But when the show opened, says Morris, "Suddenly everyone was an expert, defending the play—like anyone had even read it! How dare I remove the boring rhymed couplets? Suddenly people were defending Dryden. But all the text we need is in the songs. It's not a fancy show. It's done with imagination."

With the spoken text gone, what is *King Arthur* about? "It's about love, of course," Morris declares. Suddenly standing up behind his desk and drawing back an imaginary bow, he continues, "The archer occurs more than any other gesture in my work. It is Cupid, yeah, sure. You have to be able to believe that Cupid is responsible for making you fall in love."

The show has many elements nowhere to be found in Dryden's spoken text, owing their presence partly to the madcap invention of costume designer Isaac Mizrahi. One of these is a ballerina wearing bat-



**Mark Morris and Jane Glover in rehearsal for *King Arthur***

© Peter Da Silva



*Andrew Foster Williams and Mhairi Lawsom*

tered point shoes, a long blue tulle skirt, and a blue cardigan. Here and there she wafts and poses, like a kind of Good Fairy bestowing blessings. “That,” says Morris, “was Isaac saying ‘Wouldn’t it be nice if you had some Margot Fonteyn as a guest artist?’ It’s the idea of a period ballerina, in rehearsal clothes, as a visiting artist.”

She’s not the only interpolated element. “Did you see the shoes that light up?” Morris asks gleefully. And what about the parade of animals in the Act V storm scene? “They’re there for no reason whatsoever,” Morris declares with evident pleasure. “A red herring... A flamingo, a cheetah, a bear, a duck—pantomime animals. Why not? Isaac said there needs to be a menagerie—don’t animals all come out after a storm?”

And a storm there is, and all kinds of weather, including a snowfall dispensed from a suspended prop bag full of fake snowflakes. *King Arthur* also includes a Frost Scene with a man emerging from a freezer. And its final chaconne is an utterly perfect maypole dance, followed by what looks like the ultimate 4th of July celebration—if the 4th were a British holiday. Instead of fireworks, there are Chinese ribbons, and a flyover is staged with paper airplanes sailed in from the wings. “I couldn’t have real airplanes,” Morris lamented. “I didn’t have any money to hire The Blue Angels for a giant festival with a flyover.”

It’s all part of the calculatedly makeshift look of the production, devised to have a kind of “Hey kids, let’s put on a show” feeling. The sets are designed by Adrienne Lobel, the lighting by James F. Ingalls, both longtime Morris collaborators.

© Peter Da Silva



*The crown representing King Arthur.*

“The whole point is we put on this show with what would be around if you were putting on a show. We wanted this to be *objets trouvés*. When you rehearse, you use chairs and apple crates. There’s always a stairway, a ladder, all of the equipment that you would use to stage a show before there were sets. We have a fake brick wall in the back with adjustable pilasters, so we can make it look like a raw theater.”

“For the costumes,” Morris explained, “Isaac went to storerooms and got what looked like armor. He brought back stuff from the storerooms of City Opera and English National Opera.” In other words, the engagingly garbed participants look like desperate but attractive members of a touring company that has raided a costume closet. And why not?

“This is some enchanted place,” Morris declares. “There is a tree because it is in a forest. A tree can stand for a whole forest. Things get moved around as needed.” This is done by the dancers and singers, intermingled from the beginning. “Nothing is a mistake, but it’s made to look as if it just fell together. It’s not postmodern; it’s Baroque and contemporary, of course.”

The dances in *King Arthur* are, Morris asserts, “pre-Classical, before ballet. They are old English dances. Schottisches, contradanses. I know them, and I made up some that look like them. All of the scenes are demonstrations. *King Arthur* is not a dance, it’s a show,” says Morris. “Come and see it. It’s gorgeous. No one knows it, and it’s gorgeous.”

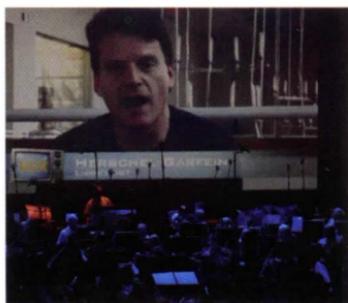
It also seems to make people happy. “It’s meant to,” Morris agrees, then backs off a bit. “I don’t set out to make people happy, but it’s nice if people get that. I never have an agenda for an audience—so you can never be fully wrong. It’s a show. A really good one. It’s also fun to do. People like doing it.” And, from many reports, people like seeing it, too.

And where is Morris while his *King Arthur* takes the stage? “I’m in the house, watching,” he says, looking surprised. “I don’t know why one wouldn’t want to watch.”

*Nancy Dalva is the Senior Writer/Editor of 2twice Editions, and writes book reviews for The New York Observer and “The Letter from New York” for danceviewtimes.com.*

# VOX 2008 SELECTIONS

VOX is New York City Opera's exciting annual festival of new operas that offers American composers and librettists the opportunity to hear their works-in-progress with City Opera's full orchestra and excellent soloists. This year, the selection committee received submissions from over 80 applicants. 10 were selected for the free performances on May 10 & 11 at NYU's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts.



Photos of VOX by Carol Rosegg.

## **Jeanne**

Music and libretto by Justine F. Chen

## **Our Giraffe**

Music by Sorrel Hays

Libretto by Charles Flowers

## **Dice Thrown**

An opera by John King

## **The Mortal Thoughts of Lady Macbeth**

Music by Veronika Krausas

Libretto by Tom Pettit, after Shakespeare

## **Soldier Songs**

Music and text by David T. Little

## **Dylan and Caitlin**

Music by Robert Manno

Libretto by Gwynne Edwards

## **The Officers**

Music and libretto by Steve Potter

## **Eleni**

Music by Cary Ratcliff

Libretto by Cary Ratcliff, with Robert Koch

Based on the book *Eleni* by Nicholas Gage

## **Charlie Crosses the Nation**

A jazz opera by Scott Davenport Richards

## **Criseyde**

Music by Alice Shields

Libretto by Nancy Dean

Read about these selections and hear excerpts from the last two years of VOX presentations at [www.vox-nyco.com](http://www.vox-nyco.com).

Hear directly from the composers: each week, one of the composers talks about his or her own music and ideas on the City Opera blog! Visit [www.nycopera.com](http://www.nycopera.com).

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Dry Ice by United Ice Co. Sound equipment by Masque Sound and Recording Corp. Loudspeaker system by Meyer Sound Labs. Additional lighting equipment from Production Resource Group. Selected firearms by Centre Firearms.

Hand Torch System by Eoin Sprott Studio, Ltd. Ricola Cough Drops courtesy of Ricola Inc.

Select hosiery and undergarments by Bra Tenders.

MARGARET GARNER: Built and painted by Adirondack Studios. Costume construction by Seams Unlimited;

Donna Langman Costumes; Scafti, Inc.; Civil War Lady.com;

History In The Making; River Junction Trade Company. Millinery by Arnold S. Levine; Clearwater Hat Company.

Costume aging and dying by Christine Sanders. Scenery built and painted by Adirondack Studios. Body prop by Den Design Studios.

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA/PAGLIACCI scenery refurbished by Adirondack Studios and Michael Hagen Inc.

VANESSA scenery refurbished by Adirondack Studios.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS — Information: (212) 496-0600 Hours: Mon-Fri., 10am-5pm

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REFRESHMENTS — On the Promenade Bar and other locations throughout lobby.

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Visit the NEW YORK CITY OPERA GIFT SHOP located on the Promenade Level.

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Patrons with disabilities who require specific accommodations, including wheelchair seating, should contact the Box Office at (212) 870-5570. Requests should be made at least two weeks in advance of the performance to ensure best possible arrangements. Assistive Listening Systems are available at the Check Room on the Orchestra Level. Braille Librettos are available from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Library of Congress, Washington DC 20542, (800) 424-8367. LARGE TYPE information for each performance is available at the New York City Opera Information Table, located at the Orchestra Level House Left. Theater Management reserves the right to request removal of any and all mobility assistive devices (walkers, wheelchairs, etc.) from the seating areas when such devices obstruct a means of egress or ingress causing a violation of the fire safety provisions of the New York City Building Code.

PLEASE NOTE: The use of cameras and other recording equipment is strictly prohibited. The use of cell phones in the auditorium is also prohibited. Smoking is not permitted in all areas of the theater.



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## ABOUT NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Since its founding in 1943, New York City Opera has been recognized as one of America's preeminent cultural institutions, celebrated for its adventurous programming, risk-taking production style, and legendary role in launching the careers of more than 3,000 young artists. The company's wide-ranging repertory of 271 works spans five centuries of music and includes 29 world premieres of such works as Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land*, Jack Beeson's *Lizzie Borden*, and Hugo Weisgall's *Esther*, as well as more than 60 American and/or New York premieres of such notable works as Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, Ferruccio Busoni's *Doktor Faust*, and Arnold Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*. In 1983, the company made operatic history when it became the first American opera company to use supertitles, an innovation that has revolutionized the way opera is produced and appreciated in this country. Nine years ago, the company began its annual presentation of *VOX: Showcasing American Composers*, a festival that gives composers unprecedented opportunities to share their new operas in free open readings performed by City Opera soloists and the New York City Opera Orchestra.

During the 2007–2008 season, City Opera will reach an audience of more than 250,000 with 112 performances of 13 works. Highlights include the New York premiere of Richard Danielpour's *Margaret Garner*, a 50th anniversary production of Samuel Barber's *Vanessa*, and a co-production with the Mark Morris Dance Group of Henry Purcell's rarely-staged *King Arthur*. The company will reach a national audience of millions through a *Live from Lincoln Center* telecast of Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* on March 20, 2008. The season also features the company's third annual *Opera-For-All Festival*, a popular series of education-enhanced performances that are helping to win new audiences for the art form.

On February 28, 2007, New York City Opera's Board of Directors announced that Gerard Mortier, currently Director of the Opéra National de Paris, would become the company's new General Manager in 2009–2010. Renowned for his famed tenures at the Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels, and the Salzburg Festival, Gerard Mortier will take City Opera boldly into a new era of artistic achievement and distinction. Building on the company's core mission of artistic excellence and accessibility, his plans include broadening the company's geographic reach through performances in venues across the City, and a major launch of new education and outreach programs designed to ensure that all New Yorkers have the opportunity to attend live performances of opera.

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