



Ngawang Sangdrol, Photo: H. Valentine

SMUGGLED SONGS BY TIBETAN NUN HELD AS POLITICAL PRISONER FOR MORE THAN A DECADE INSPIRE NEW OPERA

AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS PRESENTS SCENES AT RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART. JOHN SCHAEFER LEADS PANEL DISCUSSION FEATURING FORMER NUN NGAWANG SANGDROL.

New York, NY-- On Wednesday, November 16, at 7:00pm, American Opera Projects, in association with the Rubin Museum of Art, will present scenes from **Numinous City**, a new opera by British composer **Pete M. Wyer** based on the extraordinary true story of Tibetan nun **Ngawang Sangdrol**. The evening will also feature Ms. Sangdrol as part of an artist panel discussion, moderated by **John Schaefer** (WYNC's Soundcheck). In addition, Ms. Sangdrol will lead an intimate guided tour of the Rubin Museum's collection of Himalayan art. Soprano Sara Heaton stars with music direction by Mark Shapiro. The event will be held at the Rubin Museum of Art. Tickets are \$18-\$45, available at www.rmanyc.org/numinouscity.

Numinous City is inspired by the true story of Ngawang Sangdrol, a Tibetan nun imprisoned at 14 years-old. Sangdrol, along with other nuns, recorded songs in prison on a smuggled cassette player, the fame of which ultimately led to her release and immigration to Brooklyn, New York. The title 'Numinous City' is a reference to the unseen forces, spiritual, emotional and political, that influence her paths.

5:00 p.m. - Guided tour of Rubin Museum by Ngawang Sangdrol
6:00 p.m. - Pre-concert reception
7:00 p.m. - Numinous City concert with panel discussion
Post-concert - Off site reception hosted by International Campaign for Tibet

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, November 16
Rubin Museum of Art
150 W. 17 St
New York, NY 10011

American Opera Projects, in
association with the Rubin
Museum of Art, presents

Numinous City

Opera scenes with panel
discussion
Music and text by Pete M. Wyer
Sara Heaton, soprano
Mark Shapiro, music director
Ngawang Sangdrol, panel guest
John Schaefer, panel moderator

Tickets:
\$18-\$45
www.rmanyc.org/numinouscity

Complete Info:
www.operaprojects.org/events

Contact:
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AOP Producing Director
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Press Photos:
www.operaprojects.org/press

About the Artists

Pete M. Wyer (composer): London based composer Pete M. Wyer has written music for the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, The Juilliard School, BBC television and many others. Since 2006 he has developed, at the National Theatre studio, a major opera-theatre project based on the events of the Moscow Theatre Siege, with director Phyllida Lloyd (Ring Cycle for English National Opera, *Peter Grimes*, Opera North, *Mamma Mia* stage and film productions) playwright Bryony Lavery (*Frozen*, *Stockholm*) and artist John Keane. He has written the libretti for four opera/music-theatre works, including the hit *Johnny's Midnight Goggles* (2008) and has created work for English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North and the Tete a Tete Opera Festival. His hour-long collaboration with poet Steve Dalachinsky 'Insomnia Poems' was recorded by BBC Radio 3 and chosen for the 'Best of 2009'. He also won 'Best Composer' at the Fringe Report Awards, London in 2011. A volume of poetry 'The Dance around the Fire' is published by Alternating Current in 2012. <http://pmwmusic.com/>

Sara Heaton (soprano) has captivated audiences earlier this year as Miranda in the US premiere of Tod Machover's *Death and the Powers* at the A.R.T. in Boston and with Chicago Opera Theater. In 2012, Sara will return to Chicago Opera Theater to sing the role of Lidochka in Shostakovich's *Moscow, Cheryomushki*. <http://saraheaton.com>

Mark Shapiro (music director) is one of a handful of conductors in North America to have won a prestigious ASCAP Programming Award four times. Shapiro enjoys working with orchestras, opera companies, and choruses. He is Artistic Director of Cantori New York and the Monmouth Civic Chorus, and in 2011 was appointed Music Director of the Saint Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra in New York City, where he will lead in two concerts in Carnegie Hall during 2011-12. www.cantorinewyork.com/about_artisticDirector.php

Ngawang Sangdrol, a former nun at Garu Nunnery near Lhasa, was born in 1977. She was first arrested in Tibet in 1990 for protesting China's occupation of Tibet. Two years later, she protested again and was sentenced to three years in prison for "counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement," according to the Chinese government. Her sentence was extended on several occasions due to acts of peaceful dissent and solidarity with other nuns in prison, culminating in a 23 year sentence. While in Drapchi Prison, Sangdrol and 13 fellow nuns sang and recorded Tibetan freedom songs, which were later heard around the world. Despite years of inhumane treatment, including torture and "patriotic education," her spirit was far from broken. In 2002, Sangdrol was released into the care of The International Campaign for Tibet following a massive global effort on her behalf. She continues to be a vocal advocate for the Tibetan people around the globe.

ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

American Opera Projects' mission is to champion innovative works of music theater, to expand the art form, and to identify, develop and present new works by emerging and established talent. *Numinous City* is the latest opera in AOP's First Chance series that presents concert performances of new op-

eras in an intimate format that allows for direct conversation between audience and artist. Operas to receive fully-staged premieres after passing through AOP's First Chance development program include *Séance on a Wet Afternoon* (New York City Opera, Opera Santa Barbara), *Before Night Falls* (Fort Worth Opera), and the upcoming *Heart of Darkness* (London's Royal Opera House), among many others. www.operaprojects.org

The Rubin Museum of Art provides an immersive environment for the exploration of Himalayan art and culture and its connections to contemporary life and ideas through innovative exhibitions, dynamic programs, and diverse educational opportunities. The only museum in the U.S. dedicated to Himalayan art, the museum holds one of the world's most important collections of the paintings and sculptures of Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, and Bhutan, and provides a bridge between the cultures of the region and other cultures worldwide. In addition to exhibitions, the Rubin's programming encompasses dialogues, films, performances, and more, offering multiple entry-points for understanding and enjoying the art of the Himalayas. The shop and café at the Rubin are also inspired by the varied cultures of the region, completing the visitors' experience. For more information, including hours and location, visit www.rmanyc.org.

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