



The Walcott Sextet presents
Georges Aperghis'
Sextuor: L'origine des espèces (1992)

Biographies of the Artists

Group Biography

The Walcott Sextet. Kris Wildman-Soprano; Marja Liisa Kay-Soprano; Mayra Leticia Gallo-Soprano; Stephanie Aston-Mezzo-Soprano; Leslie Ann Leytham-Contralto; April Guthrie-Violoncello; Lenka Udovicki-Director; Martina Franic-Costume Designer

The Walcott Sextet is a group of 6 musicians based in the Los Angeles area who initiated the 2006 North American premiere of *Sextuor*, a chamber opera by Georges Aperghis. Separately, the sextet members have worked with Louis Andriessen, Muhal Richard Abrams, Antoine Bonnet, Jürg Frey, Richard Foreman, Vinny Golia, Michael Gordon, James Homer, Eva-Maria Houben, Joan LaBarbara, Libby Larsen, Mario Lavista, Nicola LeFanu, Radu Malfatti, Stephen L. Mosko, David Rosenboom, James Tenney, Wadada Leo Smith, Christian Wolff, and John Zorn.

Aston, a member of the sextet, is a recent recipient of a recording graduate student award from the Warren Music Center Studios at UCSD. With this award the sextet will be recording Sextuor in June 2010.

Individual Biographies of the Artists

April Guthrie, cellist/Walcott Sextet Co-Director (US Support)

April Guthrie is a Los Angeles based cellist who is active in many fields of music including contemporary, experimental, rock, improvisational, and performance art. She has performed with the Vinny Golia Large Ensemble, Wadada Leo Smith's Silver Orchestra, Javanese Gamelan Kyai Dorodasih, Seawolf, and Spiritualized. Guthrie's specialization in contemporary music has led to work under the direction of the well-known composers such as Louis Andriessen, Georges Aperghis, Muhal Richard Abrams, Antoine Bonnet, Vinny Golia, Joan LaBarbara, Libby Larsen, Mario Lavista, Stephen L. Mosko, David Rosenboom, James Tenney, Wadada Leo Smith, Christian Wolff, and John Zorn. This year she will be continuing tours with guitarist Miroslav Tadic and actor Rade Serbedzija, as well as the VOCCO, a four-part vocal harmony (plus cello, banjo, and accordion) performing songs from Appalachia and Eastern Europe.

Her performance and production work includes the North American premiere of George Aperghis' *Sextuor: L'origine des espèces*, a retrospective concert of American composer Earle Brown (including a publication in collaboration with the Earle Brown Foundation with writings by Christian Wolff, Joan LaBarbara, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, Dorothy Stone, and Stephen Lucky Mosko), and numerous performances with the Kyai Dorodasih Javanese Gamelan under the direction of the renowned Djoko Walujo WP.

She recently completed an artist residency with her cello/viola duet, Guthrie & Streb, at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, California. The Hammer Museum's Artist Residency Program was initiated with funding from the Nimoy Foundation and is supported through a significant grant from the James Irvine Foundation.

Ms. Guthrie holds a BA in cello performance and environmental science from Illinois Wesleyan University, and an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. She has studied cello with Dr. Nina Gordon, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick of the California EAR Unit, and Rohan de Saram, formerly of the Arditti String Quartet.

Marja Liisa Kay, Soprano II/Walcott Sextet Co-director (UK/Ireland support)

Marja Liisa Kay is deeply dedicated to the performance and promotion of contemporary music. She has premiered Principle roles in three new operas: the world premiere of Richard Foreman and Michael Gordon's rock opera, *What to Wear*; the North American premiere of Georges Aperghis' *Sextuor*; and the world premiere of Anne Le Baron's *WET*. Miss Kay also worked as a studio singer for James Horner and Phantom Recordings.

Originally from Southern California, Miss Kay holds an MFA from California Institute of the Arts under the tutelage of Jacqui Bobak and a BM from Chapman University as a Presidential Scholar. She is currently at University of York working towards a PhD in the areas of contemporary vocal techniques and Finnish vocal music.

Since relocating to the UK, Marja has worked with a number of musicians and composers such as Donnacha Dennehy, Nicola LeFanu, Thomas Simaku, Bill Brooks, John Potter and Linda Buckley. Performances include Cage's *Songbooks* in a collaboration between the Orpheus Institute of Ghent, Belgium and Columbus, Ohio; the Swedish premiere of Anne Le Baron's cyber-erotic opera, *Sucktion*, at the Connect Festival in Malmo; new works of emerging Irish composers in Dublin's royal concert hall; Berio's *Sinfonia* as Soprano I; Ligeti's *Aventures*. Most recent performances have found Miss Kay singing in Varese's *Offrandes*, Vivier's *Lonely Child*, Berio's *Laborintus II* with Vic Hoyland in Birmingham and in a solo concert of contemporary Finnish music at the National Center for Early Music during York's Spring Festival of New Music.

Lenka Udovicki, Director

Lenka Udovicki studied at the Academy of Dramatic Arts, University of Belgrade, where she gained her Master of Arts Degree in Theatre Directing. She started her professional career in regional and major Belgrade theatres and left her native country in 1992. She has since lived in London and Los Angeles, and works as an international director for theatre and opera. Her special interest is developing new work and exploration in musical theatre.

ULYSSES THEATRE, CROATIA – AS CO-FOUNDER AND ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR 2001-PRESENT

Ulysses Theatre started in 2001 as a Summer Theatre Festival on the Island of Brijuni, Croatia. The founding idea has been to create a space where international artists and artists from different parts of Former Yugoslavia can work, exchange ideas and creative energy. So far, it has had eight successful seasons with artists from Croatia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Serbia, Italy, UK, USA, Germany, France, and Chechnya collaborating in large scale, site-specific productions on the remains of the largest Austro-Hungarian fortress.

KING LEAR by W. Shakespeare with Rade Serbedzija

MEDEA by Euripides with Mira Furlan

MARAT/SADE by P. Weiss

HAMLET by W. Shakespeare

CORE SAMPLE (based on WAITTING FOR GODOT by S. Beckett and accounts of survivors from the Goli Otok prison Island) with Vanessa Redgrave, Lynn Redgrave, Amanda Plummer and Caroline Jones

PIJANA NOC 1918 by M. Krleza and I. Stivicic – Audiences Award as Best Performance, BITEF Theatre Festival 2007

FOR MOVING THEATRE COMPANY, LONDON – AS CO-FOUNDER AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR 1994-1999

FIRERAIERS by M. Frisch – Riverside Studios, with Frances de la Tour

BRECHT IN EXILE Bridge Lane Theatre, with Vanessa Redgrave, Eckehart Schall and Rade Serbedzija

WATERFALL by V. Stevanovic – Riverside Studios, Critics Choice (Time Out), Hot Ticket (The Guardian)

LEMONADE by E. Ensler- Kings Head, Chelsea Arts Center (rehearsed readings)

WORK AS THEATRE DIRECTOR INCLUDES

THE TEMPEST by W. Shakespeare – Shakespeare's Globe, London, UK with Vanessa Redgrave as Prospero, Jasper Britton as Caliban

HAMLET by W. Shakespeare, California Institute of Arts, USA

TAKING SIDES by R. Harwood, Atelje 212, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

MOTHER COURAGE by B. Brecht, PPP, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, (best performance of the year by "SCENA" theatre magazine)

Lenka Udovicki continued

ANTIGONA by D. Jovanovic - Kumanovo Macedonia

CHAMBER MUSIC by C. Durang - BDP, Belgrade Yugoslavia

OPERA AND MUSIC THEATRE

DIFFERENCES IN DEMOLITION composed by N. Osborne, libretto G. Simic WORLD PREMIERE, international collaboration between artists and performers from UK and Balkan countries, produced by Opera Circus, UK, toured Bosnia and City of London Festival in 2007, on tour in Scotland, Austria and Turkey in 2008. Ms. Udovicki developed this opera with Nigel Osborne and Opera Circus through series of workshops and residencies between 2004-2007 in Croatia and UK, and "Sevdah Opera" work in progress toured Dorset in 2005.

A BETTER PLACE composed by Marin Buttler, libretto C. Oswin, WORLD PREMIERE, English National Opera, Coliseum, London

SHORELINE/STORIES OF LOVE AND WAR music by N. Osborne – co-production between Hebrides Ensemble, Opera Circus and Scottish Dance Theatre, toured Scotland

THE CONSUL by G. Menotti – Leighton House, concert performance for Moving Theatre

HISTORY'S RHYME Limelight Club, London, for English National Opera Studio

Kris Wildman, Soprano I

An eclectic performer in Southern California and beyond, Kris Wildman has had choral and solo stints with the LA Chamber Singers, Hollywood Early Music Players, LA Bach Festival, LA Opera, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and LA Chamber Orchestra, as well as many LA area churches and synagogues. In 2006, Kris completed her Master of Fine Arts in Vocal Performance at California Institute of the Arts, specializing in new song literature and chamber music, particularly the work of recent and living American composers, such as George Crumb, Ursula Mamlok, Elaine Barkin, and Libby Larsen. Her studies led to operatic work as well: "Apollo" (*L'Orfeo* by Claudio Monteverdi – CalArts April 2005); "Lumberjack no. 1" (*Wet* by Anne LeBaron, World Premiere, REDCAT, Dec 2005); Soprano I "Birth" (*Sextuor: L'origine des espèces*, by Georges Aperghis, North American Premiere, CalArts, March 2006).

Kris continues her work in modern song and chamber music with several colleagues from CalArts in their ensemble, *Night Wanderers*. She is also a founding member of the female vocal trio *Elemental Harmony*, performing a cappella vocal harmony from throughout history and around the world. Kris Wildman debuted as a featured soloist with Maria Newman and Scott Hosfeld in their Malibu Coast Chamber Music Festival in August of 2008, is a scheduled performer for the 2009 Festival, and has also appeared on their year-round Kairos concert series in the 2008-2009 season.

Mayra Leticia Gallo, Soprano III

Mayra Leticia Gallo has recently completed her Master's Degree at the California Institute of the Arts, where she studied with Maria Fortuna Dean. She received her Bachelor's Degree from California State University Northridge, where she was a student of Judith Scott. Ms. Gallo's numerous musical experiences have included role of Soprano III (The Love Experience), in the North American Premiere of Georges Aperghis' *Sextuor: L'origine des espèces* as well as chorus in the world premier of the new Michael Gordon opera *What to Wear*. In 2007, Ms. Gallo performed as Belinda in Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and in 2008, she premiered the part of Soprano, for Chisako Inoshita's *Missa Ordinarium*. Currently, Mayra is working at the USC Thornton School of Music and soon plans to begin a Doctoral degree in vocal performance.

Stephanie Aston, Mezzo-Soprano

Stephanie Aston, mezzo-soprano, is a committed performer of contemporary music. She has participated in several American and world premieres, including Luigi Nono's *Guai ai gelidi mostri* and Michael Gordon's *What To Wear* (both at REDCAT) as well as Georges Aperghis's *Sextuor: L'origine des espèces*. She has appeared on the CalArts Creative Music Festival, in John Zorn's *Rituals*, as well as the UCSD Spring Festival of New Music, which has included performances of Jason Eckardt's *Tongues and Phillipe Manoury's Cruel Spirals*. Ms. Aston has also performed with the CalArts New Century Players, and 18-squared, Los Angeles' resident Steve Reich ensemble. Past projects include the performance of Ginastera's *Cantata para America Magica* at the Walt Disney Concert Hall with Red Fish Blue Fish, UCSD's resident percussion ensemble, as well

Stephanie Aston continued

as the performance of Varèse's *Offrandes* and Kueiju Lin's *Snow in June* with the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus. More recent projects include performances at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival with the Norfolk Contemporary Ensemble and pianists Lisa Moore and J.J. Penna. Ms. Aston holds an M.F.A. from California Institute of the Arts and a B.M. from University of North Texas, and she is currently pursuing doctoral studies at the University of California at San Diego.

Leslie Ann Leytham, Contralto

Leslie Ann Leytham hails from Las Vegas, NV, where she received her Bachelor of Music from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2005 as a student of author and teacher Dr. Carol Kimball, and graduated with a Masters Degree in Music from The Boston Conservatory in 2007 where she studied with Dr. Rebecca Folsom. Ms. Leytham has recently begun her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Contemporary Music Performance at the University of California, San Diego, where she now studies with renowned soprano, Susan Narucki, and continues her work in the promotion and performance of contemporary music and sound art.

While at UNLV Ms. Leytham performed the roles of Zita in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, Prince Orlofsky in Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, and Elizabeth Proctor in Robert Ward's *The Crucible*. At The Boston Conservatory, Ms. Leytham performed the roles of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Bianca in *The Rape of Lucretia*, both by Benjamin Britten.

As a founding company member of Guerilla Opera Ms. Leytham premiered the roles of Marfa in *Heart of a Dog* and Delores MacAvoy in *We are Sons*, both by Rudolf Rojahn, and Inez in Andy Vores' operatic adaptation of *No Exit* which "rocked the local opera scene" (Sarah Faith Alterman, the Boston Phoenix). Lloyd Schwartz of the Boston Phoenix wrote of *No Exit*, "I can't imagine anyone left the theater unshaken." In addition to her work with Guerilla Opera, Ms. Leytham has also worked with local composers in premiering concert repertoire has most recently performed with the Boston Stage Company as Mrs. van Daan in the company's inaugural production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

Martina Franic, Costume Designer

Martina Franic, b. 1973 Zagreb, Croatia, began her work with two years as a makeup artist in the prestigious Croatian Gavella City Drama Theater. She continued and completed her studies in Amsterdam at the Grimme School for Theater and Movie with a focus in make-up and body painting. After five years of work in make-up and body painting experience she returned to her homeland of Croatia. Upon her return to Zagreb she worked again in the Gavella City Drama Theater directing costumes and body painting for numerous dance performance runs.

In 2001 Ms. Franic moved to the beautifully quiet island of Prvic, Croatia where she and her husband opened a museum, gallery, and café. It is in this setting of the Dalmatian coast, in the town of Sepurina, that Ms. Franic currently sells her clothing and interior decorating lines. These surroundings of the coastline and Adriatic Sea inspire her to create a vibrant and exotic fashion line with the comfort of all natural fabrics.