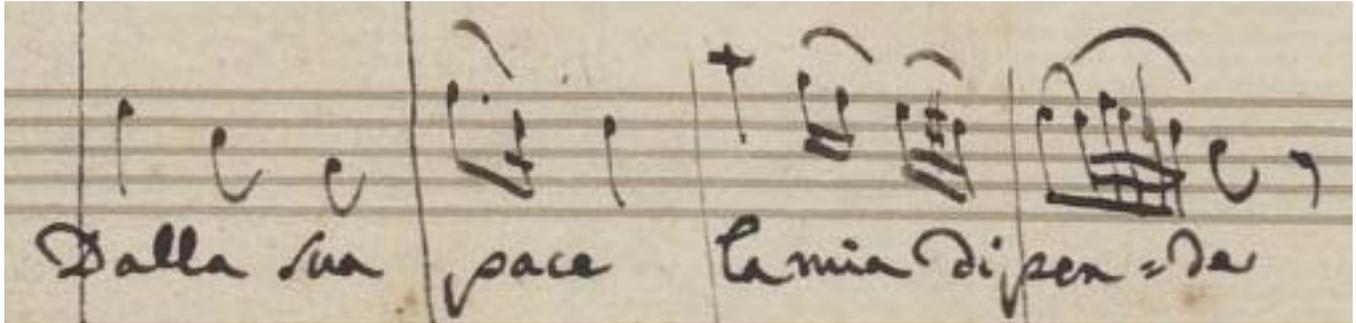
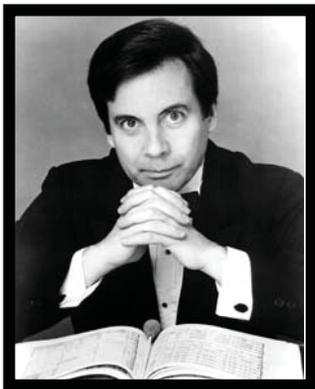


L O N G I S L A N D
O P E R A G U I L D
N E W S L E T T E R



JANUARY 2017



***A letter from the
Artistic Director of
Stony Brook Opera***

For our chamber opera production on Friday, February 24 in the Recital Hall (with a repeat performance at the Second Presbyterian Church in Manhattan on Saturday, February 25), we are pleased to present *Impressions de Pelléas*, Peter Brook's and Marius Constant's brilliant adaptation of Claude Debussy's operatic masterpiece *Pelléas et Mélisande*. *Impressions de Pelléas* (*Impressions of Pelléas*) is scored for a cast of six, two pianos, and percussion. Soprano Catherine Sandstedt and tenor Jeremy Little play the title roles of Mélisande and Pelléas, while baritone Alexander Hahn performs the role of Golaud, mezzo soprano Kristin Starkey that of Geneviève, and Elyse Saucier that of the child Yniold. Guest artist Charles Temkey, who last appeared with Stony Brook Opera as Raimondo in our semi-staged concert performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor* two seasons ago will sing the role of King Arkel. I will conduct the performances, and Metropolitan opera soprano Jennifer Aylmer, who directed our chamber opera production of *The last five years* in 2015, returns as stage director. Although not even the Staller Center Main Stage could accommodate a full production of

**Stony Brook Opera
2016-2017 Season**

Debussy's original opera, the Recital Hall is ideally suited for an intimate chamber production of *Impressions de Pelléas*. The opera will be sung in the original French language, with projected titles in English.

This issue of our *Newsletter* is devoted entirely to *Impressions de Pelléas*, and includes background articles about Debussy's original opera and Peter Brook's 1992 Paris production of *Impressions*, a synopsis, and brief bios of our artists, with their photos. I am convinced that this will be a wonderful evening in the theater. Tickets for the Stony Brook performance are available at the Staller Center Box Office for \$10 each.

Finally, my sincere thanks to all of you who have made tax-deductible contributions to the Long Island Opera Guild in support of our 2016-2017 season. If you have been meaning to make a contribution but have not yet done so, it is still not too late. Please make your check out to the Stony Brook Foundation. Your tax-deductible contribution will be deposited in the Long Island Opera Guild account and will be used to help finance *Impressions de Pelléas*, as well as our full production of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* in April. Our March issue will be devoted to *The Rape of Lucretia*.

David Lawton

Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*

Debussy had been searching for an opera subject since the early 1880s. Finally Catulle Mendès wrote a libretto for him entitled *Rodrigue et Chimène*, based on the life of El Cid, (Rodrigo Díaz del Vivar), the 11th-century Castilian nobleman. At the time both Mendès and Debussy were ardent admirers of Wagner. After a frustrating period of trying in vain to set this libretto, Debussy abandoned it. He found the dramatic situations too hackneyed, and by then he was consciously attempting to resist the influence of Wagner. He sought a subject that would inspire him to write a totally new kind of opera. He turned to the Symbolist dramas of the Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), which was closely related aesthetically to the poetry of the Symbolist poets Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, and Stéphane Mallarmé, whose poems Debussy had set so often among his early songs for voice and piano. Initially Debussy wanted to set Maeterlinck's first play *La princesse Maleine* as an opera, but the playwright had already offered it to Vincent D'Indy. In 1893 the composer then chose *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and had a very cordial meeting with Maeterlinck in Brussels. The poet gave his consent for Debussy to use it for the text of his opera, and even authorized the composer to make whatever cuts he deemed necessary, even suggesting some himself. Debussy took a long time to compose the opera, with which he was occupied from 1893 until 1902, when it was premiered at the Opéra Comique in Paris.

The finished work was indeed a radically new kind of opera. Although it met with mixed reactions at its premiere, in the course of time it came to be recognized as one of the seminal French works of the early twentieth century, and exerted an enormous influence on the subsequent development of French music. To begin with, instead of fashioning an opera libretto based on Maeterlinck's play, from the beginning Debussy decided to set the play as it stood, making only those cuts that he deemed indispensable for an operatic version. These included four entire scenes that were less centrally connected to the main story line and could be omitted without damaging the plot, and many smaller cuts intended to tighten up the action where the play seemed too wordy. As far as the musical setting is concerned, he created a new approach to operatic text setting that gave maximum importance to the comprehensibility of the sung text at all times. There are no melismas in the vocal lines—the text is set syllabically from beginning to end, imitating as closely as possible the natural rhythms and inflections of spoken French. In addition, the singers deliver their lines in alternation throughout the work; except for a few very brief passages in the final love scene, the voices are never combined into ensembles of simultaneous singing. The backdrop to such lean vocal writing is provided by the orchestra, which functions in a manner that is undeniably Wagnerian, even if the style of Debussy's music is very different from that of the German master. There are leitmotives associated with each of the principal characters as well as some of the central dramatic ideas. Debussy's music spins out these motives into patterns that are constantly developed and varied, but consistently present so that they provide a high degree of unity to the music of the individual scenes.

The plot of *Pelléas et Mélisande* involves a love triangle, which Wikipedia summarizes succinctly as follows:

“Prince Golaud finds Mélisande, a mysterious young woman, lost in a forest. He marries her and brings her back to the castle of his grandfather, King Arkel of Allemonde. Here Mélisande becomes increasingly attached to Golaud's younger half-brother Pelléas, arousing Golaud's jealousy. Golaud goes to excessive lengths to find out the truth about Pelléas and Mélisande's relationship, even forcing his own child, Yniold, to spy on the couple. Pelléas decides to leave the castle, but arranges to meet Mélisande one last time and the two finally confess their love for one another. Golaud, who has been eavesdropping, rushes out and kills Pelléas. Mélisande dies shortly after, having given birth to a daughter, with Golaud still begging her to tell him ‘the truth’.”

Although Maeterlinck develops this plot in a masterly fashion, he does so more through suggestion and allusion. Although the language is strikingly simple throughout, at times the dialogue is quite mysterious, and almost

seems to raise more questions than answers. The elusive nature of the plot and characters finds its perfect counterpart in Debussy's music. The harmonic language is extremely advanced, and if it owes something to Wagner, in the end Debussy takes Wagner's chromaticism much farther, at times exploiting chords for their coloristic value as opposed to their normal tonal functions. Together with a supple approach to rhythm and constantly shifting orchestral textures, the orchestra represents the emotional content of each scene with restrained but powerful musical gestures.

The première of the opera took place at the Opéra comique in Paris on April 30, 1902. The conductor was André Messager, who had been an early champion of the work, and had arranged for its production there. The opera was rehearsed for 15 weeks before it opened, and Debussy took part in most of the rehearsals himself. Although initially the composer had promised to cast Maeterlinck's mistress Georgette Leblanc as Mélisande, in the end the management of the Opéra comique persuaded him to offer the role to the Scottish soprano Mary Garden instead. This brought the friendship between Debussy and Maeterlinck to a bitter end, and the playwright distanced himself from the premiere, even publishing a denunciation of Debussy's opera in the press, and condemning the composer for the cuts he had made to the play.



Maurice Maeterlinck



Claude Debussy



Mary Garden, the first Mélisande,
in the tower scene



The original set design for Act I, scene 1

About Impressions de Pelléas

British director Peter Brook has long been established in Paris, and owns and operates his own theatre there, the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord. Although mostly he produces and directs plays there, he became interested in adapting several celebrated operas for production in this small theatre, which reflected the theatrical values that he had cultivated to such acclaim with his company. The first such adaptation was *La tragédie de Carmen* (the *Tragedy of Carmen*), which opened in 1981, and after an extremely successful run there, and a European tour, the production eventually came to New York in 1983, where it enjoyed a long run at the Vivian Beaumont theatre at Lincoln Center. Brook and his music director Marius Constant trimmed Bizet's original 4-act opera to a single act that played in 80 minutes. They replaced much of the dialogue from Bizet's opera with material from the Prosper Merimée novel on which Bizet's libretto had been based. Only the main characters of the opera were retained, and the chorus was also omitted. Constant arranged the orchestral accompaniment for a chamber orchestra of 14 players (the most that could be accommodated in Brook's small theatre). Stony Brook Opera produced *La tragédie de Carmen* on the Main Stage of the Staller Center in February 2012, in a production conducted by Timothy Long and directed by Joachim Schamberger.

Impressions de Pelléas was Brook's and Constant's next operatic adaptation, and it premiered at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in 1992, to great critical acclaim. As they had done with *Carmen*, they greatly shortened the work from the five acts of Debussy's opera to a single act 90 minutes in duration. Using Debussy's own piano score of the opera, from which the composer had played the opera for his friends before he had orchestrated it,

Constant arranged the orchestral part for two pianos, with a chime at the very end of the work. In order to shorten the opera in this way, they had to cut several entire scenes, in addition to making some internal cuts within scenes. The result is incredibly compelling theatrically, and Constant has so skillfully managed the cuts musically that only listeners intimately familiar with the original opera will realize that anything is missing. In an interview with *New York Times* critic John Rockwell published in the issue of November 14, 1992, Peter Brook reflected on the special nature of Debussy's opera: "There is a funny overlapping of two worlds in Debussy, those of myth and a kind of 19th century hothouse. The hypersensitivity of Proust was as much in my mind as Debussy. Incredible passions were stifled by this closed world, and only a few artists were able to discover the finest shadings of emotions." In the published score of *Impressions de Pelléas*, Peter Brook provides a treatment that describes his staging concept at the same time that it serves as a useful summary of the action of his adaptation of Debussy's masterpiece. In the score this treatment is written in French; here I have translated it into English.

Peter Brook's treatment for *Impressions de Pelléas*

Seated on the floor, a child, Yniold, looks at a picture book. One is in a "turn of the century" living room: armchairs, chaise, shawls, parasols, gold fish swimming in a fish bowl...A piano occupies the middle of the stage; it is Piano A that will be present during all of the action (Piano B, hardly visible, is half way in the wings).

A pianist comes on stage and plays the beginning of the work. Little by little, the characters –Geneviève, Golaud, Arkel, come around the piano. (It is the Proustian image of the celebrated photograph that shows Debussy at the piano, surrounded by his friends [--see below].)

Geneviève reads the first part of Golaud's letter.

From the rear, dressed in a kimono, Mélisande appears [see below; she is an oriental, the only one dressed that way (the others have clothing from 1900). Mélisande crosses the stage and comes to kneel downstage, at the edge of a body of water, a fountain. The only one who has noticed her, Golaud, detaches himself from the group and addresses her: "Why are you crying?"

Geneviève reads the second part of the letter, which announces the arrival of Golaud and his new bride, Mélisande.

Geneviève has Mélisande visit the gardens of the castle. Pelléas arrives and the two young people are alone for the first time. A little later, they meet by the fountain; Mélisande plays carelessly with her wedding ring and lets it fall in the deep water; a complicity binds the two young people from now on...

Golaud, lying down on the chaise, has a nightmare: he wakes up and tells Mélisande how, during he hunt, his horse bolted, and how he was wounded. He brusquely notices the absence of their wedding ring. He orders Mélisande to go look for it that instant, even though it is nighttime.

Seated at the window of her room, Mélisande combs her long hair; Pelléas, at the foot of the tower, reaches his hands towards his beloved; her unwound hair wraps around him in bliss. Golaud surprises them both: "you are children, what children." He drags Pelléas into the vaults of the castle, where he will attempt to push him in a well, from which a stifling odor of death comes up.

Golaud is seated in the half-light, in company with his young son, Yniold, below Mélisande's windows. He hopes to learn from the child some details of the relations between Pelléas and Mélisande.

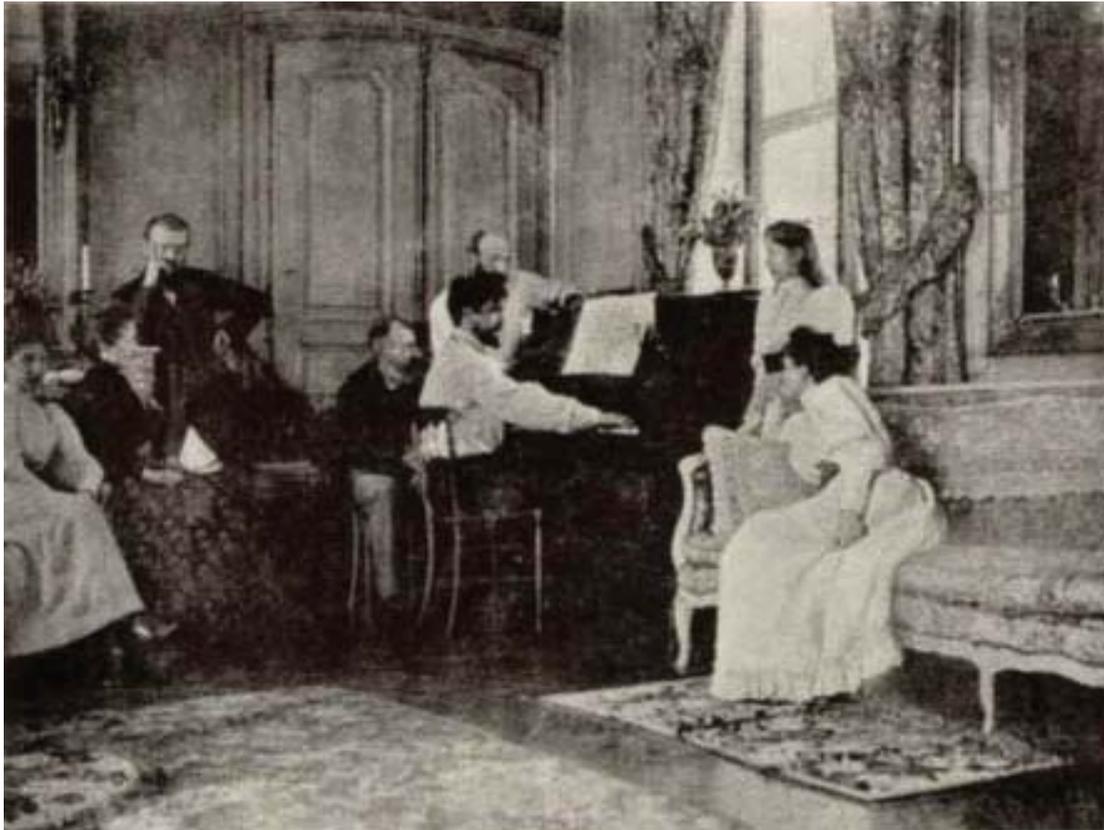
Light invades the stage. Arkel appears, and speaks tenderly to Mélisande; Golaud arrives, haggard, in a wild mood, and roughly pushes Mélisande away, grabs her by her hair and drags her mercilessly along the ground. Arkel intervenes and Golaud rushes off stage.

In the gardens, Pelléas awaits Mélisande. It is nighttime. She arrives and a long love scene follows. Golaud, hidden in the shadows, observes them; he approaches and stabs Pelléas. Mélisande flees, horrified.

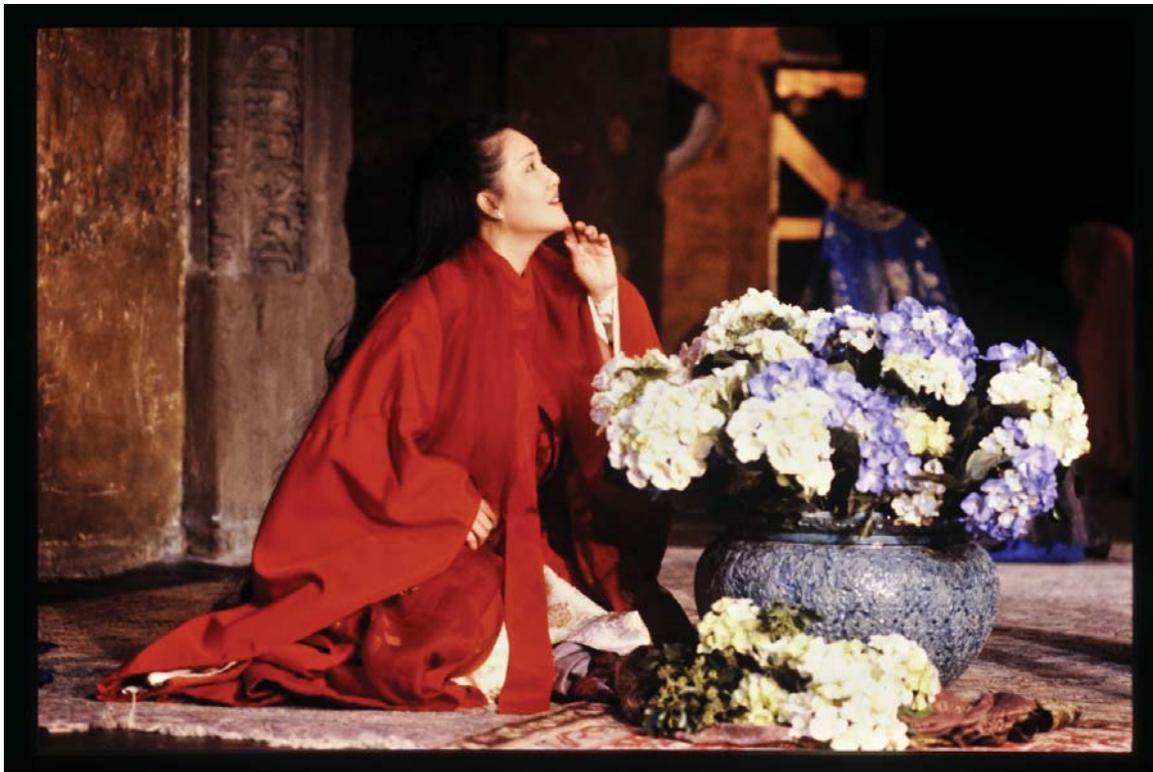
Golaud, Arkel and Mélisande are downstage. Golaud, mad with grief and uncertainty demands "the truth" from Mélisande. But it is too late; she approaches the fountain where she first appeared, and expires. It is Arkel who concludes: "you must not upset her, the human soul is very quiet...but the sadness, Golaud, the sadness of all that one sees..."

While a bell sounds twelve times, all the characters get up and disappear into the wings. The last one on stage, the pianist, closes his score and leaves as well...

--From the score published by Durand, 1994; original in French, English translation by David Lawton



Debussy playing *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the piano for his friends



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Mélisande in Peter Brook's 1992 Paris production of *Impressions de Pelléas*

NATIONAL DE
PROPRIÉTÉ
LITTÉRAIRE
ALGERIE - 1917

Acte I^r
Une Forêt

Trois Machines

2 Hauts
1 Clarinette
2 Bassons
3 Trompes
Alto Violoncelles
Violoncelles
Contre Basses
2 Violons
1 Violon

①

716

Debussy's autograph full score of the beginning of the opera, Act I, scene 1



Debussy's autograph piano score of Act I, scene 1, which Marius Constant used in the preparation of his arrangement for two pianos

Interview with Jennifer Aylmer

Before staging rehearsals for *Impressions de Pelléas* began, Metropolitan Opera soprano Jennifer Aylmer, who returns to Stony Brook Opera to direct this show, found time to sit down with me for the following interview. I began by asking her what concept she was developing for our production of this work, in part because I needed to know what costumes, furniture, and props we would need. In the following, the initials JA refer to her responses, and DL to my questions.

JA: Initially, I thought we should stick very conventionally to the Peter Brook adaptation, but recently, I've found myself obsessed with HBO's "Westworld" and the idea that sentient beings are real, both to themselves, and to others who choose to see them that way. This may seem strange to apply to Debussy, but *Mélisande* has no past, and while Golaud accepts that at first, he becomes increasingly angry and jealous as the piece continues, suggesting he wants more from this life. *Pelléas* seems to be the only one who truly accepts *Mélisande* "as is"... There are also underlying themes of masochism in general (the idea that 'women' are innocent, can only exist according to the will of their husbands, are born to procreate, etc...) but I think it's more interesting to explore *Mélisande*'s emotional evolution.

I'm also a bit infatuated with Brook's titling his piece "Impressions of Pelleas," since he's so obviously playing on the word "Impressionist." The Oxford English Dictionary defines Impressionism in music as "...conveying the moods and emotions aroused by the subject rather than a detailed tone picture." This couldn't be more true for Debussy's score. If we go one step further and look at Impressionism in art, the thin brush stroke, the subtle but completely accurate depiction of light, and the most important element: human perception and experience of an impressionistic painting, that is *Mélisande*. If *Mélisande* were a host, or piece of art, and Golaud were initially challenged and intrigued by that Monet-esque design, he could be proud and commend himself for seeing and appreciating such a complicated beauty. In reality, however, the thing he can't accept is that he's probably more comfortable with a photo-portrait of her.

DL: This is a fascinating idea, but for my benefit, as well as that of our audience, can you tell me more about "Westworld"?

JA: "Westworld" is essentially an amusement park for the future, based on the American Wild West. The original 'designers' of the park filled it with android-people, calling them "hosts." These hosts were be used at the discretion of the paying guests (visitors could murder them, have sex with them, torture them, go on adventures with them, etc..) but whatever the guests did to the hosts, the hosts were restored, and their memories wiped clean and readied to be used again the next day. However, one of the designers realized a greater potential, and began programming certain hosts to experience dreaming and distant memory. This design enabled the hosts to begin reasoning for themselves, and remembering the indiscretions they'd endured from the guests. Since the AI design was in the initial stages, some hosts were more capable of processing this information, but others had the equivalent of a breakdown and either became suicidal or homicidal. This is what made me think of *Mélisande* as a host: she could either evolve in the knowledge of her existence with Golaud, or die slowly in that knowledge.

DL: How does that all relate to Debussy's opera?

JA: If we imagine *Mélisande* as a host, a being without a past, a thing to be fawned over/loved/idolized, what-have-you, and Golaud is akin to a guest, then he views *Mélisande* as a thing only for him: she makes him feel a

certain way, but he doesn't truly know or care to accept her for her potential in the now, or ever. Pelléas then, is the host who realizes Mélisande as a host, and is willing to accept what that means- he sees her potential, but also probably knows the futility of attempting to possess or love her. (Arkel is the only one to feel empathy for Mélisande, being a father figure, and he doesn't take sides. He's more of the neutral observer- not standing up to his son, but also not 'rescuing' Mélisande either). In the end, Mélisande has been taken out of her world, and she becomes self-aware. The world that was made for her to exist in disappears, and when she is brought into "reality", it eventually kills her. What I also love about the way "Westworld" is told, is that you can't tell immediately which story line is the past, and which is the present. In this way, it becomes more of a study in personalities and evolution in the moment, which is how I see the Debussy too: this story is being told in multiple timelines, with the benefit of hindsight to guide the audience.

DL: How do you see the stage set-up? Do you plan to follow Peter Brook's plan, which was inspired by the famous photo of Debussy playing the opera on the piano for his friends?

JA: Yes, I'd like to place Piano A center stage, with a chaise downstage left of it. There will be an additional chair next to the piano, across from the chaise. An oriental rug will define Geneviève's living room space, and there will be a table with liquor and glasses on it. Piano B will be upstage right, and the fountain area will be in front of it. Outdoor scenes and the vault scene will take place stage left of the living room area. At this point I see the story being told in two different timelines, in the 1910s (Geneviève's reading of the letters), and past events occurring in or around the 1880s--1890s.

DL: What do you have in mind in the way of costumes? Do you intend to follow Peter Brook's idea that most of the characters are dressed as in the early 1900s, but Mélisande—who is an outsider to the world in which the opera takes place—costumed differently? Peter Brook dressed her in a red kimono to define her difference.

JA: There's a lot of story to be told, in how a production is costumed. When considering the "Westworld" influence on the story, I realized we'd be able to get the men's costumes pretty spot on, but with the women, it's a little trickier. So in terms of costuming, I'd like the audience to see what an aristocratic French family might look like in the American "Old West." Mélisande, the otherworldly being that she is, will look as beautiful and alluring as we can achieve! Her costuming will be decidedly feminine, and won't necessarily conform to the fashion of the day. This will help set her apart visually in a way analogous to what Peter Brook did with the kimono, and if we can find a costume of the same hue and design as the "Westworld" look, then we'll have a very obvious signifier for those audience members acquainted with the show.

* * *

Meet our Performers



Bass-Baritone **Alexander Hahn**'s (Golaud) recent performances include his debut with the Beethoven Easter Festival of Warsaw as Pietro in *Simon Boccanegra*, Figaro in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Bronx Opera, Monterone with in *Rigoletto* with Opera Theater of Connecticut, Le Bailli in *Werther*

with Opera Company of Brooklyn, and the bass-baritone soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with EOS Orchestra of Beijing. Mr. Hahn's operatic credits include performances of Lorenzo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, King René in *Iolanta*, Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, and the Sorcerer in *Dido and Aeneas*, as well as excerpted performances of Colline in *La Bohème*, Bartolo in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Frère Laurent in *Roméo et Juliette*, Banco in *Macbeth*, Dulcamara in *l'elisir d'amore*, and Superintendent Budd in *Albert Herring*, as well as many others with Mannes Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and Yale Opera. Equally at home in art song, Mr. Hahn has performed as a soloist in Chautauqua Opera's young artist recital series, Yale Opera's Liederabend concerts, and the Montreal International Vocal Arts Institute recital series.

Mr. Hahn is a graduate of the Yale School of Music, where he earned both a Master's degree in Music and an Artist Diploma as well as being awarded the David L. Kasdon Memorial Prize, for the most outstanding singer in the School of Music. Mr. Hahn earned his Bachelor's degree in Music from Mannes College of Music.



Described as a "first-rate tenor" with "a clarion lyric" voice (*New York Times*), tenor **Jeremy Little** (Pelléas) has performed throughout the United

States with such companies as The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Des Moines Metro Opera, Florentine Opera, Anchorage Opera, The Juilliard Opera Center, and Wolf Trap Opera. He has been seen as Romeo in *Roméo et Juliette*, Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Alfredo in *La Traviata*, Fenton in *Falstaff*, and has been featured in concert and recital at Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, and Merkin Hall. Jeremy created the title role in Lowell Liebermann's *Miss Lonelyhearts* for Juilliard's Centennial Celebration, and was a 2010 Grammy Nominee for his performance in the live recording of John Musto's *Volpone*, garnering praise of "remarkable theatrical suavity, revealing a robust tenor to go with the rich characterization" (*Opera News*). After 8 years with the celebrated Metropolitan Opera Chorus, appearing in 150 performances each season, Jeremy is currently on sabbatical and is a doctoral student at Stony Brook University.



Soprano **Catherine Sandstedt** (Mélisande), is a first-year masters student in Vocal Performance at Stony Brook University. Catherine currently studies voice with Brenda Harris at Stony Brook and previously worked with Ann Harrell (voice) from the University of Missouri as well as Leslie Perna (viola).

At Stony Brook, she has performed with the University Orchestra as a soloist for the Messiah; performing a duet from Derrick Wang's new opera Scalia/Ginsburg, with the composer himself playing the piano; and performing the premiere of Nathan Heidelberger's work, "Come il vento tra queste piante" with the Contemporary Chamber Players. Catherine currently sings with the Marble Church Choir in New York City. Catherine's main focus is performance, although she does teach privately. Some of her operatic performances include *Le nozze di Figaro* (Susanna); *Gianni Schicchi* (Nella); *The Crucible* (Mary Warren); *The Outlaw* (Gunloed) – World Premiere by Justin Pounds. These were performed at the University of Missouri as a part of the Show-Me Opera series. She has also sung the role of Almirena in Handel's *Rinaldo* while at the summer program OperaNEO, based in San Diego. She participated in the Kentucky Bach Choir Competition last spring as a Top 10 Finalist in the Live Round; she was alternate for both Voice and Viola in the MTNA (Missouri Teacher National Association) State-Level; she placed 2nd in the Senior Women division at the 2015 National level of NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) in Greensboro, North Carolina. She also received 1st place in the Junior Women division at the Regional NATS in 2013.



Undergraduate Soprano **Elyse Saucier**, is extremely excited to debut in her first ever opera role as Yniold. Previously, she has performed in Opera Scenes within the Graduate Opera Workshop at Stony Brook University. She also spent a summer as a Studio Artist at Songfest at the Colburn School of Music. Elyse has also sung in the opera choruses for Puccini's *La Bohème* and Donizetti's *Lucia de Lammermoor*.



Mezzo soprano **Kristin Starkey** (Geneviève) is currently working towards her D.M.A. in Vocal Performance at Stony Brook University. She has recently been seen as La Principessa (*Suor Angelica*) and Gringerde (*Die Walküre*) with New York Lyric Opera, and as a featured soloist with One World Symphony singing *Field of the Dead*. Repertoire includes roles as Alisa (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Mrs. Grose (*Turn of the Screw*), Dalila, Carmen, Musette (Leoncavallo's *La Boheme*), Oktavian, Hermia, Cenerentola, La Voix, Third Lady, and Arsamene. Recent performances include Il Tebro in Handel's *O come chiare e belle* for Stony Brook Opera, and Erda (*Das Rheingold*), Rosette (*Manon*), and Maddalena (*Rigoletto*) with Opera Company of Brooklyn.



American Bass **Charles Temkey's** (Arkel) opera credits include many of the great Mozart Bass roles such as Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Bartolo and Figaro (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), and Leoporello and Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*). A versatile singer at home in many periods of classical repertoire, Charles' other roles vary widely, and include Charon (Monteverdi's *Orfeo*), Polyphemus (Handel's *Acis and Galatea*),

Fiesco and Banco (Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* and *Macbeth*), Raimondo (Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*), and Colline (Puccini's *La Boheme*). Equally at home on the concert stage, he has served as the bass soloist in all of the major *Requiems* (Mozart, Faure, Verdi, Brahms), as well as Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Haydn's *Creation* and *Lord Nelson Mass*, Bach's *Magnificat* and *B Minor Mass*, and many contemporary concert works, such as Roger Ames' 1999 World Premiere of *In Memoriam: Warsaw 1945*. Charles also has a passion for performing Musical Theatre, and was a part of Sondheim's 75th birthday celebration in Boston's Symphony Hall, as well as The Long Island Philharmonic Orchestra's 2009 New Year's Gala "Broadway Goes to Hollywood". He has also worked as a solo artist with: The Lincoln Center Festival, Carnegie Hall, Los Angeles Opera, Symphony Hall, The Boston Pops, German Radio Orchestra Cologne, Milwaukee Symphony, Tanglewood, Tulsa Opera, Central City Opera, Connecticut Grand Opera, The Long Island Philharmonic, Roanoke Symphony, The Long Island Masterworks Chorus, and Eugene Concert Choir among others. He holds Bachelor and Master's Degrees from Manhattan School of Music.



American soprano Jennifer Aylmer (stage director) has developed a sterling reputation for her beautiful voice, compelling stage portrayals and impeccable musicianship. The *New York Times* has hailed her for her, “awesome accuracy,” while *The Chicago Sun-Times* has recommended that listeners, “bask in the aural delight of Aylmer’s dazzling shifts from regal command to cool insouciance and fatally attractive seduction.” Recent seasons saw her debut with Dallas Opera as Bertha in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and she returned to Utah Symphony and Opera singing various roles in *L’enfant et les sortilèges*, to Portland Opera as Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and she also sang her celebrated Despina in *Così fan tutte* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. On the concert stage she returned by popular demand to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston with Baritone Randall Scarlata and pianist

Laura Ward in their Tin Pan Alley concert. Highlights of past seasons included *Messiah* with the National Chorale, solo recitals at Virginia Tech and with the Skaneateles Festival, and as the guest soprano soloist in Handel’s *L’Allegro, il Pensieroso ed il Moderato* with the Mark Morris Dance Group as a part of the 2014 White Light Festival. Upcoming engagements include several recitals in the Pittsburgh area, concerts with LyricFest! in Philadelphia, and performances with the Carnegie Mellon Contemporary Ensemble.

Ms. Aylmer made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2005 as Papagena, in the first world-wide broadcast of *The Magic Flute*. Since then, she has been seen as Rodelinda with Portland Opera, Semele with Florentine Opera, Mařenka in *The Bartered Bride* with Opera Bosto, Rosasharn in *The Grapes of Wrath* with Utah Opera, soprano soloist with the San Diego Symphony, and Gretel in *Hansel und Gretel* for her Atlanta Opera debut, a role which she also covered at the Metropolitan Opera. She may also be heard on the 2012 release “The Opera America Songbook”, accompanied by Timothy Long, on Kevin Puts’ *You need song*. Since translating *Hansel and Gretel* for Stony Brook in 2014, Ms. Aylmer is currently working on additional translation projects, in addition to her active performing and full-time teaching career. She last appeared with Stony Brook Opera as stage director for our chamber opera production of *The last five years* in 2015.

Stony Brook Opera
Dateline 2016-2017
Save the dates!

I. Chamber Opera production of *Impressions de Pelléas*

(Two performances)

--Friday, February 24, 2017 at 8 p.m., Staller Center Recital Hall,
Stony Brook University

--Sunday, February 25, 2017 at 8 p.m., Second Presbyterian Church,
Central Park West and W. 96th St, New York City

II. Full production of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*

(Three performances)

--Wednesday, April 19, 2017 at 12 noon, preview performance,
Berkner Hall, Brookhaven National Laboratory

--Saturday, April 22, 2017 at 8 p.m., Staller Center Main Stage,
Stony Brook

Sunday, April 23, 2017 at 3 p.m.: Staller Center Main Stage, Stony
Brook