

**THE KITCHEN, WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
and THOMAS BUCKNER**
present
JACOB'S ROOM
a chamber opera in one act
by Morton Subotnick
November 4-7, 1993

Libretto by Morton Subotnick
Directed by Herbert Blau

Featuring:
Joan La Barbara, soprano
Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, cello
Thomas Buckner, baritone

Mother/Guide Joan La Barbara
Cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick
Male Voice (Jacob) Thomas Buckner

Video Images Steina and Woody Vasulka
Movement John Alleyne
Costumes Victoria Petrovich
Interactive Computer System Mark Coniglio
Lighting Allen Hahn
Assistant to the Director Will Pomerantz
Production Coordination Naima, Inc.

This program is part of World Music Institute's Interpretations series.
The Interpretations series is made possible in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust and the Greenwall Foundation.

For The Kitchen:

Program Curator Ben Neill
Production Coordinator Cat Domiano
Production Manager Alex Kahn
Technical Director John Frazier

The Kitchen wishes to extend special thanks to the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust and the Aaron Copland Fund for Music

PROGRAM NOTE

JACOB'S ROOM is a chamber opera for two characters: a mother/guide (sung by La Barbara) and a young man (sung by Buckner) who is heard but not seen; solo cello; and computer-generated sound, lights and video projection. The opera takes place in Jacob's mind as he struggles to accept the loss of his family to the Holocaust. He tries to forget by turning inward, losing track of almost everything and everyone around him. Jacob longs for order and justice and beauty. He reads, studies and tries to absorb Platonic thought. A woman, who is both his mother and the conscience of his people, forces him to accept, finally, what he has denied...not only the horror and the pain of his loss, but his feelings of guilt for having survived. The cellist is on the stage, lit and costumed, and symbolizes the internal, spiritual presence of Jacob.

In pitting Plato's concept of ideal reality against the brutal reality of the Holocaust, I have tried to bring together some of the most beautiful ideas of our culture and, while accepting their spiritual brilliance, show the absolute evil which can be unleashed under the guise of those very ideas. Plato suggested the idea of a perfect order in the universe; the Holocaust was perpetuated with a zeal to create a perfect order. This orderliness brings a dimension of horror unimaginable to most of us. Our agony continues today as we see aspects of this brutality occurring over and over again, in the guise of rational thought. I do not try to resolve the issue, rather to present it as clearly and as dramatically as I can.

The libretto is comprised of eyewitness sources from various places and times, woven together to form a single philosophical, psychological and spiritual voice. The stories and experiences of Jacob and the Mother are from diverse personal accounts, and, although they unfortunately help to create a sense of universality to the brutality, suffering and sense of loss and alienation, there is no intention of comparing or identifying the sources. The original experiences have been combined to become those of the characters in my opera.

Part of the video imagery by Steina and Woody Vasulka is drawn from footage shot of Joan La Barbara in the character of "the foreign woman" and later transformed by electronic processing techniques developed by the Vasulkas under the direction of the composer. The remainder of the images comes from World War II footage drawn from the Vasulka archives, reprocessed and mixed for this production.

The imagery and its choreographic animation represents a kind of dream or memory language. Over and over again, certain images return in various forms and collide with verbal and musical images to complement the narrative of hidden memories and self-induced shame, fear and guilt.

--Morton Subotnick

JACOB'S ROOM was originally commissioned as a chamber work by Betty Freeman for the Kronos Quartet and Joan La Barbara. It was then expanded into a media opera through a commission by the American Music Theater Festival and the Minnesota Opera and developed during residencies conducted at The Atlantic Center for the Arts in New Smyrna Beach, FL; California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA; the New Music Theater Ensemble of Minneapolis and Yellow Springs Institute in Chester Springs, PA; with additional funding from private donations, the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, Elizabeth and Alan Mandell, Opera America, Opera for the 80's and Beyond, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Excerpt sources for Morton Subotnick's libretto include: The Little School House, by Alicia Partnoy; Eleni, by Nicholas Gage; Jacob's Room, by Virginia Woolf; The Holocaust Kingdom, by Alexander Donat; The Pit and the Trap, by Moshe Kohn.

SYNOPSIS

- scene 1 **The Dream.**
We are in Jacob's mind, in a dream, as his mother enters and sings a lullaby to her son.
- scene 2 **The Museum.**
She describes Jacob's state of mind and remembers the horrors of the past.
- scene 3 **The Dream Continues.**
The cello and video imagery further reveal Jacob's hidden emotional state.
- scene 4 **The Book of Jacob.**
She tells us the stories in his book, which is, in fact, his diary. As she does so, she begins to relive her past.
- scene 5 **The Condemnation.**
Now unseen, she condemns him for having survived, while images of the past begin to haunt him.
- scene 6 **The Prayer.**
The dream turns into pure nightmare as she reappears, chanting a prayer which asks where was God when the horrors of the Holocaust occurred?
- scene 7 **Confrontation and Epilogue**
The dream is at last over.
She comes forward and asks us to recognize her and the plight of both victims and survivors...and implores Jacob to remember.

The use of technology in Jacob's Room:

Using the computer language **Interactor®**, the musical score is placed into a *master computer score* which contains the control information for all the sound, light and image.

The lighting and video projections are conceived as a unit. Both are under the control of the *master computer score*. The images are on laser discs and are called up by the computer and by the performer. Under control are the frame number, speed, direction (forward or backward), duration and specific moment when the image(s) will be seen. The male voice is on a sampler. Phrases, words and whole passages are called up by the computer score and by the performer. The placement in space and the signal processing are controlled as well. The female voice and the cello are amplified...the amplification, signal processing and location are also controlled by the computer score.

COMING IN FEBRUARY:

Robert Ashley's Atalanta(Acts of God)
February 10-13 and 16-20 at 8pm at The Kitchen
Presented by The Kitchen, World Music Institute and Thomas Buckner
(Part of World Music Institute's Interpretations series)

MORTON SUBOTNICK is one of the acknowledged pioneers of electronic music and an innovator in works involving instruments and other media, including interactive computer music systems. His 1967 composition Silver Apples of the Moon was the first electronic work to be commissioned expressly for the phonograph medium and his 1992 work Five Scenes from an Imaginary Ballet (part of the Voyager cd-ROM All My Hummingbirds Have Alibis) was the first composition created for this new medium. These works, along with Subotnick's The Wild Bull, A Sky of Cloudless Sulphur and The Key to Songs have been choreographed by leading dance companies throughout the world.

In addition to music in the electronic medium, Subotnick has written for symphony orchestra, chamber ensembles, theater and multimedia productions. His staged tone poem The Double Life of Amphibians, a collaboration with Lee Breuer and visual artist Irving Petlin, utilizing live interaction between singers, instrumentalists and computer, was premiered at the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles. The concert version of Jacob's Room, a monodrama commissioned by Betty Freeman for the Kronos Quartet and singer Joan La Barbara, received its premiere in San Francisco in 1985. The Key to Songs for chamber orchestra and computer was premiered at the 1985 Aspen Music Festival. Return, commissioned to celebrate the return of Halley's Comet, premiered with an accompanying sky show in the planetarium of Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles in 1986.

Subotnick's interest in the relationship between performers and technology has produced a series of eleven "ghost" pieces for instruments and interactive electronics. The "ghost" score (which contains no audible sound) consists of a digital program which commands electronic modules to modify the instrumental sounds as they are played from a traditionally notated score. Included in this series are: A Fluttering of Wings, Liquid Strata, Axolotl, After the Butterfly, and The Last Dream of the Beast.

Subotnick's recent works (among them: Jacob's Room, The Key to Songs, In Two Worlds, And the Butterflies Begin to Sing, and A Desert Flowers) utilize computerized sound generation, specially designed software (Interactor®) and "intelligent" computer controls which allow the performers to interact with the computer technology.

Currently, Subotnick co-directs both the Composition Program and the Center for Experiments in Art, Information and Technology (CEAIT) at the California Institute of the Arts. He tours extensively throughout the US and Europe as a lecturer and composer/performer. He is published by European/American.

JOAN LA BARBARA's career as both composer and singer has been devoted to exploring the vast sound spectrum of the human voice going far beyond its traditional boundaries. She is a pioneer in the field of experimental music and extended vocal techniques, including the multiphonics, circular singing, ululation and glottal clicks that have become her signature sounds.

La Barbara has premiered compositions written for her by composers including Robert Ashley, John Cage, Morton Feldman, Philip Glass, Daniel Lentz, Mel Powell, Steve Reich and Morton Subotnick. She concertizes around the world and has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Houston Symphony, New World Symphony, Women's Philharmonic and Orchestras of The Hague.

She has produced seven recordings of her own music including Joan La Barbara/Sound Paintings (Lovely Music) and has recorded for Centaur, Deutsche Grammophon, Elektra-Nonesuch, Music and Arts, Musical Heritage, Newport Classic, Virgin and Wergo. Recent recordings include the internationally acclaimed Three Voices for Joan La Barbara by Morton Feldman and Joan La Barbara Singing Through John Cage (New Albion).

La Barbara has collaborated on interdisciplinary projects with visual artists including Lita Albuquerque, Judy Chicago, Kenneth Goldsmith, Steina and Woody Vasulka. She has been awarded numerous fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, was Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Künstlerprogramm composer-in-residence in Berlin and her music commissions include Meet the Composer/Reader's Digest, the Saint Louis Symphony, University of Iowa, the Center for Contemporary Arts in Santa Fe, Gregg Smith Singers, I Cantori, Radio Bremen, RIAS and the WestDeutscher Rundfunk-Köln. In 1991 she completed her first full-length film score, Animas, for filmmaker Elizabeth Harris. Her musical setting of 73 Poems by Kenneth Goldsmith is scheduled for release in November 1993 as an edition of prints and book with CD by Lovely Music Ltd. and Permanent Press.

ERIKA DUKE-KIRKPATRICK, cellist, is a founding member of the California E.A.R. Unit, and for over a decade has been active as a solo performer and specialist in contemporary music. She has premiered solo and chamber works by composers including Alvin Lucier, Elliott Carter, Mel Powell, Stephen Mosko, Terry Riley, and Morton Subotnick. She has toured and recorded with Joan La Barbara and Morton Subotnick since 1982, most recently appearing on the Voyager cd-ROM All My Hummingbirds Have Alibis, and in the world premiere of Jacob's Room in Philadelphia. She has performed at Tanglewood, the Walker Art Center, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and other series and festivals throughout the US and Europe.

Duke-Kirkpatrick is currently on the faculty at California Institute of the Arts and UC San Diego, and has toured as performer/lecturer in Central and South America with USA "Arts America" program. She has also recorded for Nonesuch, Wergo, and New Albion labels.

THOMAS BUCKNER, baritone, has premiered more than 100 works, many of them written especially for him. A founder of 1750 Arch Concerts in Berkeley, California, and co-founder of the Arch Ensemble for Experimental Music, Buckner has sung leading roles in Robert Ashley's operas Atalanta and El Aficionado. He was co-founder of the trio SPACE, performs regularly with the Roscoe Mitchell New Chamber Ensemble and has been guest soloist with the Bowery Ensemble and Musical Elements. Buckner's latest recordings are Full Spectrum (Lovely Music) and Robert Ashley's Improvement (Nonesuch).

HERBERT BLAU, director, was co-founder of The Actor's Workshop of San Francisco, and subsequently co-director of The Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center in New York. His later work in the theater was as artistic director of the experimental group KRAKEN, the groundwork for which was prepared in the early Seventies at California Institute of the Arts, where Blau was founding Provost and Dean of the School of Theater. The work of KRAKEN was a radical departure from the already innovative theater with which he had been associated before, including some of the earliest productions in this country of such dramatists as Brecht, Beckett, Pinter, Ionesco, Arden, and Genet. He has had a Ford Foundation grant for his work in the theater among other awards, two Guggenheim Fellowships for the books he has written about it: The Impossible Theater: A Manifesto and Take Up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point. His other books include Blooded Thought: Occasions of Theater, The Eye of Prey: Subversions of the Postmodern, The Audience, and most recently To All Appearances: Ideology and Performance. Blau is currently Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee.

WOODY VASULKA, video artist, was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia and began directing and producing films at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. He emigrated to New York in 1965, where he was a freelance film editor. He began working with computers and video tools as a faculty member of the Center for Media Study at the State University of New York--Buffalo. With his wife Steina, Vasulka founded The Kitchen, a major New York City exhibition and media theater, and has participated in major video shows worldwide.

STEINA VASULKA, video artist, was born in Iceland, studied at the Music Conservatory in Prague and was a violinist with the Icelandic Symphony. She emigrated to the United States in 1965 where she co-founded The Kitchen. Her work has explored the electronic image through a broad range of technological tools, and her video tapes and installations have been exhibited extensively worldwide. She was one of the first violinists to combine video with musical performance by playing a MIDI-interfaced violin.

JOHN ALLEYNE, movement director, was formerly first soloist and choreographer with the National Ballet of Canada and currently serves as Artistic Director of Ballet British Columbia. His choreographic works have been performed by the Stuttgart Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, Winnipeg Contemporary Dancers, Wiesbaden Opera Ballet and Ballet British Columbia. Alleyne's Bet Ann's Dance was commissioned by the New York City Ballet, which performed its world premiere in May 1992.

VICTORIA PETROVICH, costume design, began scenic/costume design work in music theater with Luis Valdez' El Teatro Campesino. Collaborations with Anne Bogart include The Women, Cinderella-Cendrillon and Once in a Lifetime. Her work with Minnesota Opera/New Music Theater Ensemble included production of Without Colors, The Snow Leopard, and Philip Glass and Robert Moran's The Juniper Tree and she works extensively with the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles.

MARK CONIGLIO, interactive computer systems, is a 1989 graduate of the California Institute of the Arts, where he studied with Morton Subotnick. He has developed software and hardware for real-time interactive composition and is the creator of MidiDancer, a wireless device which allows dancers to perform music through their movement. Coniglio's most recent work, Tactile Diaries, connected dancers in Los Angeles and New York via slow-scan videophone.

ALLEN HAHN, lighting designer, has designed the lighting for many regional and off-off Broadway productions for companies including Primary Stages, Circle Rep Lab, and Below the Belt. Allen has also designed scenery for the Village Theater Company, The River Ensemble, and most recently for The Jellyheads as part of Tiny Mythic's American Living Room series at the Ohio Theater in New York. Other work includes a myriad of regional theater credits as assistant to numerous lighting designers and in New York on Tango Pasión on Broadway and most recently Fiery Furnace at the Lucille Lortel. Allen holds a degree from Carnegie Mellon University and considers himself a naturalized Brooklynite.

WILL POMERANTZ, assistant to the director, has directed and assisted at such theaters as The Pittsburgh Public Theater, the Mark Taper Forum, Classic Stage Company, Riverside Shakespeare, HOME for Contemporary Theater and Art, and Tiny Mythic Theater Company. He has directed music theater premieres, as well as new plays and classical texts, most recently The Seagull for Carnegie Mellon University. He is currently the Staff Repertory Director for the Acting Company.