THE KITCHEN



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The Negros Burial Ground

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The Kitchen presents

The Negros Burial Ground: A Cantata for the Departed

May 16-19 & 23-26, 1996

Composer LEROY JENKINS
Librettist ANN T. GREENE
Director DOMINIC TAYLOR

Performed by members of OPERA EBONY
Opera Ebony Singers ROMULUS MURRELL, ANGELA SIMPSON,
DANRELL WILLIAMS, LINDA HARDWICK, GORDON EASLEY,
ROBERTA LAWS, EVERETT SUTTLE,
ANDRÉA BRADFORD, ANNA DEMBSKA
Music Director/Conductor WAYNE SANDERS

Musicians
piano JOAN HARKNESS
percussion WILSON MOORMAN
vibraphone THURMAN BARKER

Lighting Designer ALEX KAHN
Sound Designer JOHN PLENGE

Assistant to the Director ANDRÉ TAYLOR
Assistant Director MICHAEL THOMAS

Installation: An Artist's Response to the African Burial Ground (May 1996) by Patricia Satterlee

The installation, located in the second floor gallery, is open for one hour prior to each performance.

PERFORMANCE ORDER

1. Long Time Ago	Roberta Laws (conrano)
2. He Is One, She Is One	
2. He is one, one is one	as Mary Burton
3. The Roll Call	
4. Am I Home	
4. Am I Home	as Solomon Boatwright
5. To Finish My Work	
5. 10 Pulish My Work	
6 Pring Thou Ava/Pri The Coa We Come	as Lulah Cuffee
6. Bring Thou Axe/By The Sea We Come	The state of the s
	Romulus Murrell (baritone) as <i>Elder 2</i>
T. Turking Fran	Ensemble
7. Justice For	
8. Brother Selling Brother	
	as Edmond Perry
	Danrell Williams (baritone)
	as Michael Stewart
	Angela Stewart (mezzo-soprano)
	as Eleanor Bumpurs
9. The Gods Say We Stay HerelI Got to Get Uptown	
	Linda Hardwick (soprano)
	Ensemble
(note: The Elders confer and then gather the Old Dead)	
10. Just Some Bones	Gordon Easley (tenor)
	as Construction Worker A
	Danrell Williams (baritone)
	as Construction Worker B
11. Blackbirders!	Ensemble
12. You Have No Right!/Whose History is it Anyway?	
•	Ensemble
(note: removed from the World of the Dead)	

PROGRAM NOTES

Ann T. Greene

The Negros Burial Ground: A Cantata for the Departed is an excerpt of our work-in-progress, a three-act opera.

This piece originated from the discovery of what is now designated as the African Burial Ground. The socio-political controversy over the remains of New York's 17th and 18th century African inhabitants was juxtaposed with the lingering wounds of the deaths of African-American New Yorkers Eleanor Bumpurs, Edmund (Eddie) Perry, and Michael Stewart.

Eleanor Bumpurs, a 67-year-old Bronx resident, was fatally shot in 1984 while

being evicted from her apartment. Edmund Perry was the 17-year-old Harlemite and Phillips Exeter graduate who died in 1985 from bullet wounds received during the alleged mugging of a New York City cop. Michael Stewart, a 25-year-old artist, died in 1983, a few days after having allegedly been beaten by New York City Transit Police while being arrested for allegedly scrawling graffiti at a subway station.

The cantata explores the tensions between those Africans displaced by New World slavery and those displaced by the violent and immediate end of their stay in the World of the Living. The story is set in 2 worlds over 2 centuries — reflecting the Bakongo cosmos — The World of the Dead and the World of the Living.

The World of the Dead, The Negros Burial Ground, is hilly swampland littered with 18th century debris. The world is inhabited by Africans, enslaved and free, who lived in early Nieuw Amsterdam and New York; Native Americans who participated in the Insurrection of 1712; women who died in childbirth; children; the diseased who died in epidemics; itinerants; penniless indentured servants; and Los Negros, Spaniards captured during warfare with the British, who were enslaved.

Into this world come the New Dead — Bumpurs, Perry, Stewart — who have found each other after death, and, are determined to tunnel their way back home. The Old Dead, those who are not reconciled to death in the New World, have been tunneling too. They expected to reach Africa but instead meet the 20th century in the guise of Bumpurs, Perry, and Stewart.

The Old Dead welcome their kin to the World of the Dead. Their re-union is disrupted by the excavation of the burial ground. Outraged, The Old Dead accuse the New Dead of bringing evil spirits to the burial ground.

To restore peace and order to the burial ground, it is decided by the Elders that a Loved One must be offered to the World of the Living as a sacrifice. Michael Stewart volunteers, despite the pleas of Nana, an 18th century African who has claimed Michael as the son taken from her. The Dead — both Old and New — prepare Michael for his journey, from which he will never return — and bid him farewell. He climbs into Manhattan, ascending the steps of City Hall where he addresses a waiting crowd as the Mayor of New York.

The cantata consists of the following numbers:

Act I, Prologue and Scene 1, 18th century New York City.

He Is One, She Is One. In 1741, Mary Burton, the indentured servant to the tavern owner John Hughson, claims to overhear Hughson and two Africans conspiring to overthrow the governors of New York. In a cascade of name-calling, she accuses Hughson, his wife, and many Africans of rebellion. Those who are named are hanged, burned or garroted.

The Roll Call. As Africans enter the World of the Dead they are greeted and welcomed by its inhabitants.

Am I Home? Solomon Boatwright, one of many "conspirators" executed in 1741, slowly makes his way to the World of the Dead. Boatwright tells the story of watching his brethren die, his own death, and wondering if, at last, he is home.

Act I, Scene 2, 18th century New York City.

To Finish My Work. Lulah Cuffee, an unrepentant seamstress who killed her mistress, argues with the Elders to let her return to the World of the Living for one day to see her babies and "to finish my work."

Act II, Scene 1, The World of the Dead.

Bring Thou Axe/By The Sea We Come. The Elders, knowing that rebels like Lulah will disturb the peace of the burial ground, summon Solomon Boatwright and others to build a tunnel so that the Old Dead can visit their kin in Mother Africa. As they work they sing of home.

Act II, Scene 2, New York City, the 1980s.

Justice For. New Yorkers are marching and demonstrating in protest of the deaths of Eleanor Bumpurs, Eddie Perry and Michael Stewart.

Act II, Scene 2, The World of the Dead.

Brother Selling Brother. As Perry and Stewart are escorted by the tunnelers to meet the Elders, Eddie is wary of the Old Dead and warns Michael, in an aside, about the complicity of Africans in the enslavement of other Africans.

Act II, Scene 3, The World of the Dead.

The Last Thing I Remember. Like Solomon Boatwright, the New Dead tell the story of their own deaths.

Act II, Scene 3, The World of the Dead.

The Gods Say We Stay Here/I Got to Get Uptown. The Elders gather the Dead to tell them that tunneling home to Mother Africa is futile and that they must stay in the World of the Dead. The Old Dead are despondent. Eleanor Bumpurs is embittered and schemes to get "uptown."

Act III, Scene 1, New York City, the 1990s.

Just Some Bones. The excavation for the Federal office building has begun. Two construction workers "discover" the skeletons of some of the Dead. Though one worker is uneasy, his partner wants to "keep digging." They unearth a skull, take some of the bones and carelessly cover the hole with dirt.

Act III, Scene 1, The World of the Dead.

Blackbirders! The Dead are awakened by the light infiltrating the burial ground.

a wide range, such as the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the Nickelsdorf Festival in Austria, and Lincoln Center Out of Doors (for solo violin and solo dancer). The Albany Symphony and the Kronos Quarter have performed his works, and in 1986 some of his compositions were included in the American Composers' Series presented by the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

He has been honored and recognized by five NEA grants, as well as winning grants from the New York Foundation for the Arts twice, the Creative Arts Program, and Harvestworks Artist in Residence Program. He was awarded the Bessie in 1992 for dance/opera composition. New recordings are *Themes and Improvisations of the Blues* (CRI, 1994) and *Leroy Jenkins Live* (Black Saint, 1993).

ANN T. GREENE is a fiction writer and librettist. Her short stories and poetry have appeared in Callaloo, Doublestitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters, Erotique Noire, and Sage: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women. Operas written include Subway with composer Chambliss Giobbi, and The Mother of Three Sons, a collaboration with Leroy Jenkins and Bill T. Jones. In 1984 she collaborated with Blondell Cummings, writing the dance libretto Orpheus and Eurydice, and in 1990 was commissioned by Ms. Cummings and District Curators to write Act I of For JB (an homage to Josephine Baker). Her script, The Cabin, was commissioned by Bill T. Jones for The Last Supper At Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land. Her most recent works are The Cat Lover, Act II of Scenes from American Life for composer Roberto Pace, and Warrior Sisters: The New Adventures of African and Asian Womyn Warriors with composer Fred Ho, which has its concert premiere May 1996 at Aaron Davis Hall.

DOMINIC TAYLOR is a director, playwright, and teacher who has worked extensively around the country in alternative and New Form Theatre. He has worked with award-winning theatrical organizations such as BACA Downtown (Brooklyn), Red Eye Theatre (Minneapolis), Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston) and Rites and Reasons Theatre (Providence, RI).

Public Transportation was the production that brought Taylor to the attention of New York audiences in 1987. Since then he has worked in musical theater, performance art, and avant garde theater with such works as *Intimate Relations* (West Bank Cafe), Sound Check (Red Eye Theatre), Reflexions in D Minor (BACA Downtown), and Burn Baby Burn (BACA Downtown).

Dominic Taylor has received grants from The State of Connecticut Commission on the Arts, The Jerome Foundation, The MacDowell Foundation, and Brown University. He was a participant in the first US-Africa Writers' Fellowship, as well as in the inaugural International Playwrights Institute held at the Eugene O'Neill Center in Waterford, CT. He was a TCG Directing Fellow Finalist 1995-1996.

Taylor's most recent directing credits include Feathered Obsequies at Rites and Reasons Theatre, as well as a workshop production of Fresh Faust (composed by Leroy Jenkins) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in Boston. On May 31st, Crossroads Theatre in New Brunswick will present a staged reading of his play Wedding Dance. He is a founding member of the Next Steps Theatre Collective. Taylor holds a Masters of Fine Arts as well as a Bachelors Degree from Brown University.

ALEX KAHN is currently resident lighting designer at The Kitchen, where he has designed the lighting for The Kitchen's Dance In Progress series and the Dance Improv Festival, as well as the premieres of music/performance works by Gordon Monahan, Mikel Rouse, Ken Butler, and Dudley Saunders. Outside The Kitchen, he has designed for The Roches at Town Hall, and for Compost West, a Japanese Noh Theatre ensemble, at the Ohio Theatre. His fabrications of puppets, masks, and other scenic elements have appeared in works by Meredith Monk, Tony Kushner, Ed Sanders, and in The Greenwich Village Halloween Parade.

JOHN PLENGE has been working the recording studio and live music scene for longer than he cares to remember. While living between London and Barcelona in '88-'89, his highlights included studio work on Pink Floyd's *Momentary Lapse of Reason* and mixing for Ornette Coleman and the European Jazz Festival. Now resident "ears" at The Kitchen and for other area artists, he has been concentrating on producing/promoting his own music. His band's second CD, *Antihistamine Daydream*, will be available this spring.

Founded in 1974 by Benjamin Matthews and Wayne Sanders, New York City-based OPERA EBONY has been a spawning ground for artists to develop and refine their talents on a professional level in the field of theatrical opera. During the course of its existence, Opera Ebony has embraced artists and composers of all races and creeds, spreading musical magic not only through its ground-breaking commissions and world premieres, but also through its critically acclaimed productions of beloved standard operatic works. For over ten years, Opera Ebony has been opera-company-in-residence at Aaron Davis Hall located on the Harlem campus of the City College of New York. Its home-based productions continue to be presented there at the newly renovated Marian Anderson Theater. In addition, Opera Ebony mounted productions at the prestigious Philadelphia Academy of Music during the years 1976-1986. In 1988, Opera Ebony performed Porgy and Bess in collaboration with the Finnish National Opera. This led to a tour of Russia, Estonia and Finland. In 1991, the company went on to numerous performances in Canada, Switzerland, and Iceland. They have also performed at the Sovonlinna Opera Festival and the Joensu Song Festival, as well as Gethenburg Sweden and the Martinique International Music Festival. In 1994, Opera Ebony returned to the Sovonlinna Opera Festival to perform the world premiere of Heikki Sarmanto's and Gregory Freelon's Perfect Harmony. Opera Ebony has recorded this work on the Finlandia record label.

THURMAN BARKER is a well-known master improvisor who began his profession as a teenager playing with members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Members of the AACM with whom he has played, toured and recorded include Richard Muhal Abrams, Amina Claudine Meyers, Anthony Braxton, Sam Rivers, and Joseph Jarman, among others. Mr. Barker has composed, recorded and produced his own album, Voyage. His recent composition Dialogue was premiered in New York City at Merkin Concert Hall this past spring. He is an active touring member of the Cecil Taylor Unit and is an Associate Professor of Jazz Studies at Bard College.

ANDRÉA BRADFORD received her undergraduate degree in Vocal Performance from Oberlin College Conservatory of Music and her masters degree at Boston University. She has performed as a recitalist across the US and abroad, and has performed and toured with the Opera Company of Boston and Opera New England. Ms. Bradford has also appeared with

They realize that some of the Dead and their talismans are missing and immediately suspect an invasion of "blackbirders" and "nigger jockeys," the marauders who captured and sold Africans for bounty and profit. The Old Dead accuse the New Dead of allowing the marauders to enter the burial ground.

Act III, Scene 2, New York City, the 1990s.

You Have No Right!/Whose History is it Anyway? The hapless Old Dead, who have been weakened by their excavation, are examined, measured, photographed and fought over by Academics, Archaeologists, Politicians, Construction and Con Ed Workers, Bureaucrats and Community Activists.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Dominic Taylor

What is a cantata and more importantly what is a staged cantata? A cantata is a composition for one or more voices usually comprising solos, duets, recitatives and choruses sung to an instrumental accompaniment. Cantatas were popular during the Baroque period, but most significantly they were an end product. They were not staged. We have taken part of Ann's libretto and constructed a cantata of sorts and staged it, for the purpose of developing this piece to the operatic scale that it deserves. My staging is an attempt to let you view into the window of what the full production will be.

So what have we done, or what have I done? What are the presentational models that can translate a reinterpretation of transhistorical displacement of Africans? How does one take these ideas and manifest them into a model that is not fixed, but allows his co-collaborators to develop the depth and breadth of their vision? Without elaborating on performance semiotics, it is hoped that the content and structure will allow all involved to examine our individual and collective options. The question that I ask of our audience is: What are our responsibilities, to each other and our ancestors?

As we continue to develop this piece, what I am looking for is the ratio of emotion to form. How does emotion evolve from form? It is a hard thing to measure, and yet a stranger thing to develop. Manipulation of audience is not emotion, but matched expectation. The piece will not develop with manipulation, but with the manifestation of visions. As we look at the form-to-emotion equation one of the fascinating things for me is how the audience places, or replaces, itself within the performance. What is our (the audience's) connection/disconnection with our presentational referents?

What does this mean to you? Clap when feel like, say amen, or yes, or whatever you feel like when you feel like. Feel free 'cause the continuum of life will keep on grooving. Grooving probably being a less than accurate term, but any African-American examination starts with a series of complications that we manifest into

some groove or another. That groove manifests itself into some form emotion equation that becomes an Art piece. Whether it be a Bearden or a dance by Alvin Ailey, the thing that grabs you is the emotion-form ratio. I hope that you enjoy. I hope you can see it as a larger manifestation, and I hope that you can help us bring it to this place.

HISTORICAL NOTES on the AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

First unearthed on April 1, 1991, *The African Burial Ground* is the largest and earliest collection of African-American remains, and possibly the largest and earliest American colonial remains of any ethnic group. Located two blocks north of New York's City Hall, in the block bounded by Broadway, Duane, Elk and Reade Streets, it was discovered when construction crews began digging the foundations for an annex to the Federal Office Building. First shown on a 1755 map as *The Negros Burial Ground*, a five-acre plot was created as a cemetery for slaves and free blacks who were denied burial in the city's churchyards by a policy of mortuary apartheid. By the time it closed in 1794, as many as 20,000 people had been buried there. After three years of controversy over the excavation, nearly 425 skeletons were unearthed at the office building site.

For further information about the burial ground, please contact the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground at (212) 432-5707.

BIOGRAPHIES

Violinist/composer LEROY JENKINS is continually inventing his own language in music. His is an extraordinary bonding of a variety of sounds associated with the Black music tradition, while simultaneously bridging with European styles. His intermeshing of jazz and classical influences leaves critics constantly wondering at his musical identity: however all agree that "Jenkins is a master who cuts across all categories" (San Francisco Chronicle); "He is as quick as a cat, emotional as an actor, and as precise as a mathematician" (St. Louis Post Dispatch); "No violinist in the field can touch Leroy Jenkins" (The Village Voice).

After a decade of touring with his own groups and solo worldwide, Jenkins has received a number of major commissions and is particularly in demand for experimental and theatre-based work and residencies. The Mother of Three Sons, a dance opera collaboration with Bill T. Jones, premiered in Germany and in 1992 was presented in New York by the New York City Opera and by the Houston Grand Opera. Prestigious commissioning programs such as The Rockefeller Foundation and the Readers Digest Program, along with Meet The Composer and National Endowment funding have awarded him grants to create several new works currently in various stages. Fresh Faust (a jazz rap opera) received its first workshop to begin in early 1995. Also in the works: Willie Horton for various venues in Philadelphia, Chicago and New York.

Jenkins has also been sought after as a popular composer/musician in residence, in such universities as Oberlin Conservatory, University of Illinois, Atlantic Center for the Arts, Bennington College, and Carnegie Mellon Institute. Previous commissions have come from

the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops Orchestra, Longwood Opera, Janus Opera and Opera unMet. She has studied and coached with Donna Roll, Allen Rogers, Larry Woodard and John Balme, among others. She also attended the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria.

ANNA DEMBSKA's vocal technique draws from bel canto, North Indian, and Eastern European singing, and exploration of extended vocal sound. She has performed, taught, and directed her music/theatre works throughout the United States and in Canada and Switzerland. The theatrical concert *Pedestrian & Holy Acts of American Music*, which she performs with pianist Joan Harkness, was recently featured in the television documentary *Audible Laundry: The Music of Sound*. Her song *Coyote* for acapella trio will be performed at the Bang On A Can Marathon at Lincoln Center on June 2nd.

GORDON ERIC EASLEY is a native of Mount Arie, PA. He has performed in opera houses throughout the US and Europe, including several works with Opera Ebony in Switzerland and Martinique, WI. He recently performed the role of Sportin' Life in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* in several cities across Spain. Gordon's favorite saying is: "Maybe one day I'll grow up — but I hope not."

LINDA HARDWICK has appeared in numerous operas and musical theatre productions both in New York City and in various opera houses and theatres in Europe. Most recently, she appeared in the Broadway musical *Show Boat* directed by Hal Prince. She also just returned from a European tour of *Porgy and Bess* where she understudied the role of Bess. Future plans include performances in Spain, Portugal, and Austria.

JOAN HARKNESS graduated from the Juilliard School. As a solo pianist, she specializes in the music of Spain and Mexico and has concertized throughout the United States and Mexico. With composer/singer Anna Dembska, she is creator and performer of a theatrical concert called *Pedestrian & Holy Acts of American Music*, bringing together as eclectic group of music and performance art by composers of our time. In New York, Ms. Harkness has performed at Lincoln Center, Weill Recital Hall, Town Hall, and on radio stations WQXR and WNYC. As a performer, improviser, composer, teacher, and listener, she continues to share new insights and experiences with audiences and students.

ROBERTA LAWS trained at Boston Conservatory of Music and has performed a variety of roles with Providence Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Opera North, Boston Concert Opera, Washington Opera, Buffalo Opera Theatre, and Opera Columbus. She has also appeared with the Detroit Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and among others. Most recently, Miss Laws performed the role of Bess in the 1995 Houston Grand Opera Production of *Porgy and Bess*, for which she earned a 1995 NAACP Image Theatre Award nomination for Best Actress.

WILSON MOORMAN III, a native of Newark, NJ, pursued a musical career following the example of an uncle, Clement Moorman, father of pianist Dennis Moorman and singer Melba Moore. Mr. Moorman received BS and MS degrees from the Juilliard School of Music. He is currently a freelance percussionist in numerous musical formats, as well as a lecturer at several CUNY campuses. Performance credits include: Sam Rivers, Lloyd Price, Larry Young, Hank Mobley, M'Boom with Max Roach, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Santa Fe Opera, as well as several Broadway shows and chamber ensembles. Recording credits include: Blue Note, RCA Victor, India Navigation and Folkways labels.

ROMULUS A. MURRELL is a native of North Carolina, where he attended the University of North Carolina. Mr. Murrell has performed with Michigan Opera, Piccolo Opera, Detroit Symphony, Rackham Orchestra and Opera Ebony. He has sung Elijah, Handel's Messiah, Judas Maccabeas, Verdi and Mozart's Requiem, as well as Joe in Show Boat and Jake in Porgy and Bess. Mr. Murrell says that The Negros Burial Ground is an informative and must-see show, not just for African-Americans.

ANGELA R. SIMPSON received her music training at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College. She has appeared as a soloist with several symphonies in the United Stats and Germany. In 1995, Ms. Simpson made her operatic debut with Houston Grand Opera as Serena in their international tour of *Porgy and Bess*. She has performed in major opera houses throughout the US as well as appearing in productions in Japan, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. In July she will be making her European debut in Milan's Teatro alla Scala in the same production.

EVERETT SUTTLE is a graduate of the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. He has coached with such outstanding artists as Luciano Pavarotti, Martina Arroyo, David Garvey, and Martin Katz. His studies also include classes at the Brahms Haus in Baden-Baden, Germany, and The American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. Mr. Suttle has appeared internationally in opera, oratorio, and concert, in works that range from Monteverdi to Gershwin. In addition to a busy schedule singing, Mr. Suttle also acts as a national makeup artist for the Prescriptives cosmetic company.

DANRELL WILLIAMS, a native of Washington, DC, is a graduate of Hofstra University in Music and has appeared as a soloist with Light Opera of Manhattan. He has appeared in the Goetz Friedrich production of *Porgy and Bess* at the Theatre des Westens in Berlin and was a member of the choral ensemble Choros Aristos, both under the musical directoin of Gregory Buchatter, Assistant Conductor of the Metropolitan Opera House. Mr. Williams has appeared in several Metropolitan Opera productions including Wagner's *Parsifal*, as well as performing oratorios and operatic repertory throughout the US.

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The use of cameras, video and audio recording devices, and any other recording devices is expressly prohibited during the performance. The Kitchen would like to thank Jennifer Tipton for her gift of the first floor repertory light plot.

La lunctionette

Just around the corner at 130 Tenth Avenue (at 18th Street)

(212) 675-0342

ESCARGOT AU COGNAC CED
SAUTE SHITAKE MUSHROOMS ESD
VEAL SWEETOREADS VINNERPETE G
LA LU HOUSE SALAD 450
MARINATED BEET SALAD 5GRAT CHEESE OF PUFF PASTRY WITH GREING
ARUGULA SALAD 450
ENDIVE AND REQUIFFORT SALAD 650
ROAST HAIS FREETRING! CHIEKEN WILLTARO 950
GRINGO LAMB SAUSAGES WITH APPLES 13CALVES LIVER WITH BALSANIC VINERAR 1150
STEAK AU POUVRE OR BORDEWISE 1850
FILET OF SALAD WITH SARRIL 1850
SUDPROFISH WITH CAPERS, LEMON IGARUL
WHOLE TROUT WITH SHRIND CEMINGGRISSO
AND WILL MUSHROOMS 1550

Light fare from La Lunchonette
is now on sale at The Kitchen's concession stand



25% OFF WITH THIS AD

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