

NEWS FROM

THE KITCHEN

*The Kitchen Center for Video · Music · Dance
Performance · Film and Literature*
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"JACOB'S ROOM"

AN OPERA BY MORTON SUBOTNICK
DIRECTED BY HERBERT BLAU, FEATURING JOAN LA BARBARA

*New York Premiere is First in a Series of New Chamber Operas to be
Presented by The Kitchen During the 1993-94 Season*

Thursday, November 4 - Sunday, November 7, 1993

8pm each night

Tickets: \$15, Members \$10

Tickets available through TicketMaster, (212) 307-7171,

or at The Kitchen, Monday - Friday, 10am - 5pm

For information call The Kitchen, (212) 255-5793

The Kitchen begins a planned series of new chamber operas with the presentation of the New York premiere of *Jacob's Room*, an opera by Morton Subotnick. The libretto is also by Mr. Subotnick. *Jacob's Room* is directed by Herbert Blau, and features vocalist Joan La Barbara with cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick and baritone Tom Buckner. The opera had its world premiere at the American Music Theater Festival on April 20, 1993. Following the performances at The Kitchen, *Jacob's Room* will be presented at the MANCA Festival in Nice on November 18 and 19.

Mr. Subotnick's collaborators include video artists Steina and Woody Vasulka (founding directors of The Kitchen), movement director John Alleyn, interactive software designer Mark Coniglio, lighting designer Jason Richardson, and costume/set designer Victoria Petrovich.

The composer/librettist talks about his opera: "*Jacob's Room* is a chamber opera for two characters: a mother/guide, sung by Ms. La Barbara, and a young man, Jacob, sung by Mr. 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 in 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."

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, intended to help create a sense of the unfortunate universality of brutality and suffering. These original experiences have been combined to become those of the characters of the opera.

Part of the video imagery by the Vasulkas is drawn from footage shot of Ms. 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 come from World War II footage drawn from the Vasulka archives, reprocessed and mixed for this production.

A note from Ben Neill, Music Curator for The Kitchen

The late twentieth century has seen the development of many new approaches to opera and musical theater, both in terms of composition and performance. The relationship of music and text remains one of the most compelling musical issues, and increasing technological capabilities are greatly expanding theatrical concepts. The Kitchen has a long history of presenting multi-disciplinary, intermedia works, and the new chamber opera series seeks to further this aspect of The Kitchen's mission.

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Jacob's Room was commissioned 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.