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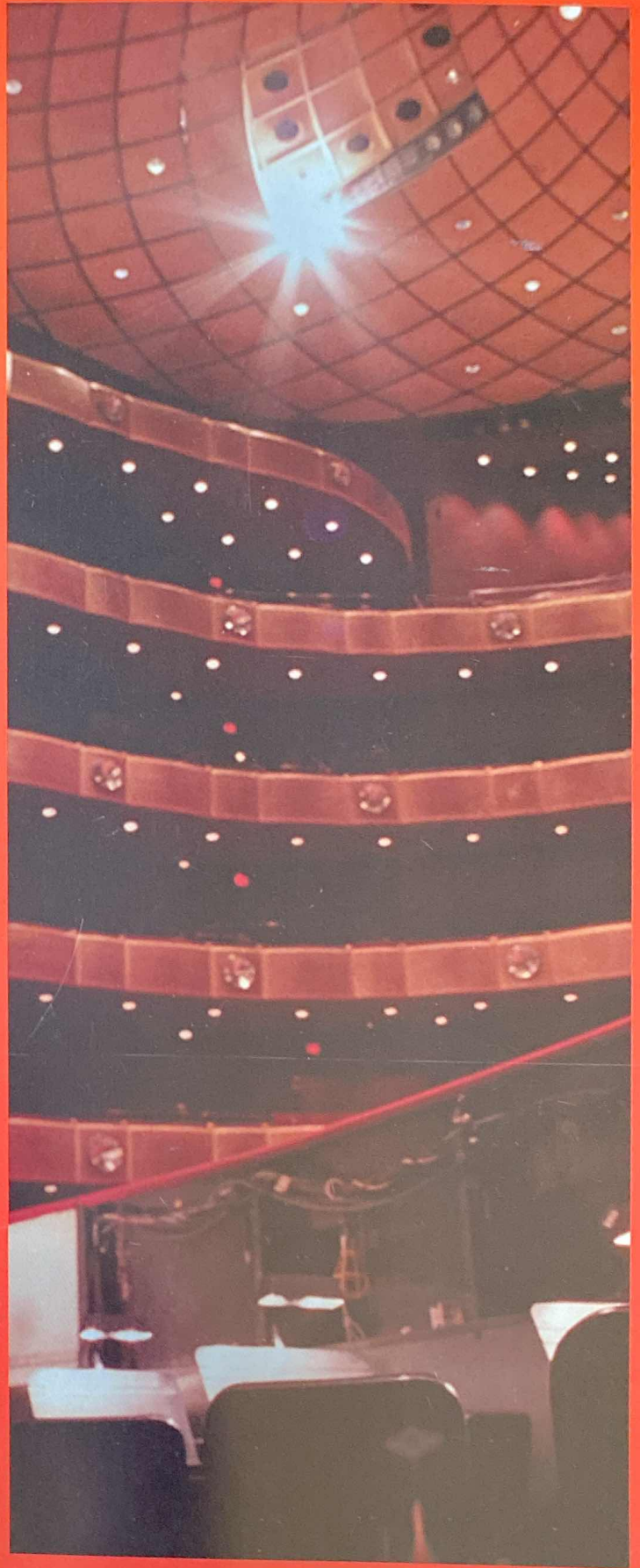
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Waking in New York

Wednesday 5/26/04, 4:45 pm Sharp Theatre



Music by Elodie Lauten
Based on the poem by Allen Ginsberg

Act II excerpts

Synopsis

In *Waking in New York*, Allen Ginsberg is represented in the later part of his life, often reflecting on his aging body and how long he has left to live. He is immersed in a continuous dialogue with his muses, Freedom and Compassion – freedom as the very essence of his style (stream-of-consciousness form), and compassion as what drives his concerns (content). Ginsberg sees other people's lives and feels for them. He switches back and forth between the concrete and the abstract, the emotional and the intellectual, with outbursts of uninhibited lyricism and mini-dramas, in the unique and colorful texture that reflects his personality.

In Act I, Ginsberg is what Buddhists call “being ordinary”, just living his life day after day, moment by moment, focused on the present. From his apartment in the East Village, he is transparent and tells us everything: his state of mind, his bodily functions, his illnesses, his food, his work, his political causes, all in the same breath (*May Days 1988*). And suddenly, he stops to look at the beauty of a tree or the odd shape of a rooftop. He finds poetry in an exhaust pipe! (*Lunchtime*) This is New York... He goes out and tells stories about the people who live in his building – the Russian landlady, the concentration camp survivor, the girl who had the car accident, the junkie – and the odd mix of characters who inhabit his neighborhood, from winos to yuppies (*The Charnel Ground*).

The second act opens with Allen's humorous, brief a cappella *Personals Ads*, wittily relating to his sexual orientation. In Act II, much of which is heard here, Allen expresses his love of life. His thoughts are focused on the values in which he believes: sincerity (*Jumping the Gun on the Sun*), individuality (*Manhattan Thirties Flash*), love (*Song*): “The weight of the world is love”, and compassion (*Waking in New York*). A down-to-earth, occasionally satirical vision of the world alternates with moments of deep emotion and grand lyricism. “Waking in New York”, the actual poem, is broken into three separate parts: part one contains a hymn to New York: “O New York, O now our bird” and a reference to the Kennedy assassination. Part two has the “child, poking his black head out of the womb, like the pupil of an eye” in gospel style. Part three ends the piece with a hymn to the future of humanity: “That all beggars be fed, all dying medicined, all the loveless tomorrow be loved, well come and be balm”.

Conductor

Jeffrey Domoto

Musical Preparation

William Barto Jones

Cast

Soprano

Julianne Borg

Mezzo-Soprano

Kathryn Friest

Baritone

Scott Hogsed

ALLEN GINSBERG





Elodie Lauten creates operas, theater pieces, orchestral, chamber and instrumental music that reflect New York City's energy and diversity. She is widely recognized in North America and Europe as a pioneer of post-minimalism with 18 CDs on more than 10 labels. She has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Massachusetts Council on the Arts, ASCAP, Meet the Composer, the American Music Center Music Liberty Initiative and commissions from Lincoln Center, the Soho Baroque Opera, Harpsichord Unlimited, The Lark Ascending and The Bozeman (MT) Symphony Society. Current projects include *River Meditations*, a video installation in collaboration with artist Rosalind Schneider currently at the Hudson River Museum; a new chamber opera, *Orfeo*, to be premiered in June of this year at Merkin Hall by the Queen's Chamber Band, whose new CD release (Capstone, April 2004) features Lauten's *The Architect*; and *The Wish of the Quickening Moon*. Lauten's *Symphony 2001*, was premiered in February 2003 by the SEM Orchestra in New York. Her opera *Waking in New York, Portrait of Allen Ginsberg*, has been released on 4Tay Records, after three acclaimed performances in New York. In 1999, *Lauten's Deus ex Machina Cycle* for voices and Baroque ensemble (4Tay) received strong critical acclaim in the U.S. and Europe. Her *Variations On The Orange Cycle* (Lovely Music) was included in Chamber Music America's list of 100 best works of the 20th century. She received a Master's in composition from New York University where she studied Western composition with Dinu Ghezzo and Indian classical music with Ahkmal Parwez. From her father, jazz composer Errol Parker, she acquired a deep understanding of improvisation.

Allen Ginsberg was born in Newark, New Jersey on June 3rd, 1926. He was closely associated with William Burroughs, Neal Cassady and Jack Kerouac, and became a leading spokesman of the Beat generation. His poem *Howl* (1956) is considered the most widely read American poem of the post-war period. A prophetic cry of the liberated imagination, its primal, revolutionary articulation of the epiphany of the social netherworld and altered perceptions of reality encountered censorship before achieving widespread acceptance. In December of 1960, Ginsberg met Timothy Leary, who initiated him into the Harvard Psilocybin Project, leading to a life-long fusion of drug experimentation and spiritual quest. His critically acclaimed and most personal work, *Kaddish* (1961), details his mother's battle with insanity and his own confrontation with his immigrant, socialist and Jewish heritage.

His reading at the Royal Albert Hall in 1965 was credited with igniting London's underground scene. That same year he was crowned Prague May King, then expelled from Czechoslovakia and later from Cuba, after which he was placed on a "Dangerous Subversive" Internal Security list by the FBI. As a leader of the protest movement, he tried to levitate the Pentagon during peace rallies in Washington. A major figure at the events surrounding the 1968 Democratic national convention in Chicago, Ginsberg later testified at the trial of the Chicago seven. Ginsberg's spiritual focus began gradually to overtake the political. He was credited with coining the term "flower power," and led the crowd in the chanting of 'OM' at the first Be-In in San Francisco in 1967. Ginsberg met Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche in 1970, whom he accepted as his guru. And in 1973 he co-founded the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, the first Buddhist college in the Western world.

In 1974, his *Fall of America* received a National Book Award. An activist for Gay rights, Ginsberg listed his lifelong companion Peter Orlovsky as his spouse in his *Who's Who* entry, and later joined the North American Man-Boy Love Association. In 1993, he was awarded the medal of *Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et Lettres* by the French Minister of Culture. Ginsberg was a long-time resident of New York's Lower East Side, and was Distinguished Professor at Brooklyn College. After a bout with liver cancer, he died in 1997 in his New York apartment.