



THE LAST AMERICAN HAMMER
LYRIC THEATRE @ ILLINOIS

Music by Peter Hilliard

Libretto by Matt Boresi

Theo Mynka, director

Aaron Ames, music director

Tuesday-Wednesday, May 4-5, 2021, at 4pm

WELCOME

Dear friends of Lyric Theatre,

Welcome to *The Last American Hammer: A New American Chamber Opera* by Peter Hilliard and Matt Boresi. Our own Michael Tilley met Matt and Peter at an Opera American New Works convention where they impressed him with their wit, compassion, and dramatic range. He recommended them to us, and a lovely relationship was begun. Their work is a delightful balance between relevant and timeless—born out of a friendship and their response to current events, in this case, the 2016 election. Such an

approach might result in a work becoming dated, but this pair considers human nature so carefully and compassionately that the characters are three-dimensional people who are simultaneously unpredictable and familiar.

Thank you for your support of the Arts @ Illinois, Lyric Theatre, and American Opera. We are in the golden age.

Yours,

Julie Gunn, co-director, Lyric Theatre @ Illinois

PROGRAM

THE LAST AMERICAN HAMMER

LYRIC THEATRE @ ILLINOIS

Music by Peter Hilliard

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Theo Mynka, director

Aaron Ames, music director

Tuesday-Wednesday, May 4-5, 2021, at 4pm

TIME: April 2018

PLACE: A small town in rural Ohio

SONG LIST:

"Now I Understand . . . It is the God's Honest Truth"

"This Is Not A Time for Cookies"

"Ms. Enraught, God Bless You . . . My Poor Little Museum"

"I Respect Your Perseverance"

"Now I Understand . . . The 13th Amendment"

"So Slavery is Still Legal?"

"How Many Years . . . The Value of Delicate Things"

"And There Was No Way"

"Such Proper Examination . . . The Last American Hammer"

"Thank You for Your Discretion"

"Oh, You Needn't Spread All Those Out"

"I'm a Terrorist . . . There Used to be a Sentiment"

"Milcom is a Man with a Sentiment"

"I Think We're Done Here With the Caring and Sharing"

"The American Dream"

"That's a Lot for One Jug to Hold"

"I've Worked My Whole Life"

"A Powerful Closing Statement, Mr. Prosecutor"

"Oh, I Heard You, Mr. Negley"

"The Jury Has Finished Deliberations"

This performance includes topics of terrorism, bombings, bloodshed, and violence discussed.

The Last American Hammer

Music by

PETER HILLIARD

Libretto by

MATT BORESİ

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For information on performing The Last American Hammer, please email hilliardandboresi@gmail.com.

Lyric Theatre @ Illinois is produced by the University of Illinois School of Music (Jeffrey S. Sposato, director).

THE LAST AMERICAN HAMMER

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Theo Mynka

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Aaron Ames

AUDIO SUPPORT

Alec LaBau

Rick Scholwin

STAGE MANAGER

Mary Kate Baughman

LYRIC THEATRE

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Nathan Gunn, co-director

Dawn Harris, resident director

Michael Tilley, musical administrator

Sarah Wigley, resident director/ musical
theatre coordinator

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TINK ENRAUGHT

Kara Taft

Stephanie Chiodras (Cover)

DEE DEE REYES

Thereza Lituma

Nicole Rodriguez Oliva (Cover)

MILCOM NEGLEY

Lewis McAdow

Hunter Mitchell (Cover)

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN

Amy Chen

Steven Frankowski

VIOLA

Brayden Haas

CELLO

Stephanie Tillman

BASS

Andrey Gonçalves

MANDOLIN

Cody Jensen

BANJO

Jordan Kaye

MUSICAL PREPARATION

Aaron Ames

Julie Gunn

Michael McAndrew

Nicholas Pothier

Michael Tilley

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



What does your America look like?

The answer of the person sitting next to you might shock you. We watched in horror as the events of the January 6 insurrection unfolded. Is this the new face of patriotism or a manifestation of an

embittered faction unwilling to accept a new truth? At what point does patriotic activism become domestic terrorism?

The plaque above the entrance doors to the San Francisco Playhouse reads "Our theatre is an empathy gym where we come to practice our powers of compassion." The characters in this story battle with the definition of truth, justice, and activism. Their views are radical and their methods unorthodox, so they are met with dismissal and alienation by the broader public. This rejection of extremism ostensibly promotes

peace, especially in the short term. But what happens when grievances, whether reasonable or rooted in misinformation and hatred, are swept under the rug and allowed to fester? We seem to have abandoned the idea that disagreement and open discourse are key features of a healthy democracy. I hope the villains in this story remind you of the power of compassion when dealing with the villains in your lives.

As the pandemic comes to a long-anticipated close, and we return with joy and relief to our pre-COVID-19 lifestyle, Lyric Theatre welcomes you back to Krannert Center. We are elated to be performing live for our patrons once more and thrilled to be producing new, engaging works like this one. Typically, we would say "sit back and enjoy the show," but today, as we relish the outdoor air and celebrate the return to normalcy, I urge you to lean in, engage, and condition those empathy muscles.

— Theo Mynka, director

PROFILES



Stephanie Chiodras (Tink Enraught cover) graduated from Wheaton College with a BM in vocal Performance. In 2015, her freshman year, she was awarded Third Place in the First Year College/Independent Women category of the Chicago Chapter of

NATS. In 2018, her senior year, she was awarded First Place in the Wheaton College Vocal Concerto Competition. Chiodras has performed in the Wheaton College Conservatory Opera Scenes as Laetita (*Old Maid and the Thief*) and mainstage operas in roles such as Papagena (*The Magic Flute*), Adele (*Die Fledermaus*), and La Musica and La Speranza (*L'Orfeo*). She has performed as a soloist with Wheaton College Concert Choir and Women's Chorale. Chiodras is currently pursuing her master's in vocal performance and literature at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and played Susanna in last semester's production of W. A. Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*.



Thereza Lituma (Dee Dee Reyes) is a first-year master's student at the University of Illinois, studying voice under the tutelage of Sylvia Stone. Previously, she was a Project Inclusion Voice Fellow with the Grant Park Music Festival where she had the

opportunity to perform as a soloist in multiple Chicago summer concert series and as a professional chorus member with the Grant Park Chorus. Lituma's past opera credits include Lucretia (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Ježibaba/Third

Wood Sprite (*Rusalka*), the Owl (*The Adventures of Little Sharp-Ears*), and Albanact (*King Arthur*). This season, she also performed the role of Mrs. Grose (*The Turn of the Screw*) and covered the role of Erika (*Vanessa*) with Lyric Theatre @ Illinois. For more information, visit therezalituma.com.



Lewis McAdow (Milcom Negley) is a baritone in his second year of the master's program at the University of Illinois where he pursues a degree in vocal performance and literature and studies with Yvonne Gonzales Redman. A native of Texas, he has

enjoyed his time on the stage with Lyric Theatre @ Illinois, performing the role of Harasta in the production of *The Adventures of Little Sharp-Ears* at Krannert Center. McAdow has also participated in multiple competitions, winning first place in Central Region NATS competition (2020), and was named a winner of the U of I Symphony Orchestra's Concerto Competition in March 2021. Past roles include Hanezò in Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz* and Grégorio in Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette* at the Moores Opera Center. Upcoming performances include the role of Barone Douphol in Giuseppe Verdi's *La traviata* at the Bay View Music Festival (Michigan) this summer.



Hunter Mitchell (Milcom Negley cover) attends the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign where he is pursuing a Master of Music in vocal performance and literature. He is in the studio of Nathan Gunn. In the past, Mitchell has been in numerous

shows with the University of North Alabama's opera/musical theatre program including the roles of Marcello in Puccini's *La Bohème*, James Mills in the collegiate premier of Ricky Ian Gordon's *The House Without a Christmas Tree*, Professor Bhaer in *Little Women* (musical), and The Wolf in Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*, among many others. He has competed at the national level in competitions such as the National Association of Teachers of Singing competition where he competed in the national semi-finals in Boulder, Colorado in 2017. In the summers of 2018 and 2019, Mitchell performed in Falmouth, Massachusetts with the College Light Opera company for their 50th and 51st seasons. There, he held roles such as Olin Britt in Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, Lank Hawkins in the Gershwins' *Crazy for You*, the Governor of Zeeland in Victor Herbert's *The Red Mill*, and one of his favorite roles, Talking Head in Stephen Schwartz's *Pippin*, in addition to numerous others. Mitchell's favorite shows are contemporary opera and golden age musical theatre, but he really just loves performing for people and learning new and exciting music with talented musicians more than anything.



Nicole Rodriguez Oliva (Dee Dee Reyes cover) is a senior in vocal performance pursuing her Bachelor of Music at the University of Illinois. She has played a variety of roles in opera scenes during Sylvia Stone's Scuolaltalia program in the summers of 2018 and

2019, from Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* to Flora in *La traviata*. At Krannert Center, she fulfilled the role of Woodpecker in the 2019 production of *The Adventures of Little Sharp-Ears*. She is currently working on a senior recital.



Kara Taft (Tink Enraught) is a second-year candidate for the Master of Music degree in vocal performance and literature at the University of Illinois School of Music, studying with Dawn Harris and Sarah Wigley. Prior performances with Lyric

Theatre @ Illinois include Countess Almaviva in scenes from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the Marschallin in scenes from *Der Rosenkavalier*, Cousin Hebe in *H.M.S. Pinafore* with Sinfonia da Camera, and the Rooster in *The Adventures of Little Sharp-Ears*. A passionate performer of contemporary opera, she also premiered the role of Mem in the workshop performance of Paola Prestini and Brenda Shaughnessy's contemporary opera *Sensorium Ex* with Lyric Theatre @ Illinois and Beth Morrison Projects. Taft received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music in Appleton, Wisconsin, in 2017 and has previously studied at the Balance Arts Center for the Alexander Technique in New York City and the Gaiety School of Acting in Dublin, Ireland. For more information, please visit www.karataft.com.

Aaron Ames (Conductor/Music Director) is a second-year DMA candidate in vocal coaching and accompanying at the University of Illinois. His previous work with Lyric Theatre includes musical coaching for *The Adventures of Little Sharp-Ears* and *Cabaret*. He has previously served as an adjunct staff accompanist at Appalachian State University where he received his Master of Music.

Theo Mynka (Stage Director), a native of Kharkiv, Ukraine, is graduating with an MM in vocal performance and literature from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign where he studies voice with Jerold Siena and Nathan Gunn. At Washington State University (WSU) where he earned his BM in music performance, he played the roles of Jack in *Into the Woods*, Igor in *Young Frankenstein*, Aaron in *First Date*, and Fenton in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. A graduate of the Honors College at WSU, his special thesis *images of their gods: a song cycle for voice and piano* was awarded the merit of Pass with

Distinction. Recently, Mynka took part in Boston Conservatory's Summer Opera Intensive in Valencia, Spain, and the Franco-American Vocal Academy's Mozart Academy in Salzburg, Austria. His roles with Lyric Theatre @ Illinois include *Songs for a New World*, Ernst in *Cabaret*, Henrik in the pandemic-cancelled spring 2020 production of *A Little Night Music*, and Jason in *Ordinary Days*.

Mary Kate Baughman (Stage Manager) is a junior in the stage management program at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She most recently worked with Dance at Illinois as the production stage manager of March Dance 2021 and as the stage manager of Sara Hook's *Cedar Closet* in November Dance 2020. With Illinois Theatre, she has served as the floor manager for *Pshitter! A Drinking Song for the Year of Our Lord 2020* and as the assistant stage manager for *Titus Andronicus* and *Because I Am Your Queen*. Baughman has served as the child supervisor for *La Bohème* with Lyric Theatre @ Illinois. She is currently employed at the University of Illinois Research Park as an events coordinator intern.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Lyric Theatre @ Illinois acknowledges with gratitude the cooperation of the voice and accompanying faculties of the University of Illinois School of Music in supporting the talented students in its productions.

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Illinois System carries out its mission in its namesake state, which includes the traditional territory of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Menominee, Ho-Chunk, and Chickasaw Nations. These lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution for the past 150 years. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them. This acknowledgement and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward for the next 150 years.

Krannert Center affirms the commitment by the university to move beyond these statements, toward building deeper relationships and taking actions that uphold and preserve Indigenous rights and cultural equity.

As we gather to experience this performance, we have an opportunity to reflect on the ways that systems of oppression have shaped our society. We can work together to create systems that support human dignity, establish equity, strengthen cross-cultural relationships, and draw upon the creative capacity of all people that make up this community, state, nation, and world.

LYRIC THEATRE @ ILLINOIS HONOR ROLL

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Ryan Schultz, Technical Director
Tatsuya Ito, Associate Technical Director
Andrea Stewart, Associate Technical
Director
Bill Kephart, Scene Shop Chief Clerk
Dylan Kind, Theatrical Scene Shop
Coordinator
Vincent Meade, Theatrical Scene Shop
Assistant

Stage Management

Cynthia Kocher, Production Stage Manager