

JOHN ADAMS

EL NIÑO

CONDUCTOR
Marin Alsop DEBUT

PRODUCTION
Lileana Blain-Cruz
DEBUT

SET DESIGNER
Adam Rigg DEBUT

COSTUME DESIGNER
Montana Levi Blanco

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Yi Zhao DEBUT

PROJECTION DESIGNER
Hannah Wasileski
DEBUT

SOUND DESIGNER
Mark Grey

PUPPET DESIGNER
James Ortiz DEBUT

CHOREOGRAPHER
Marjani Forté-
Saunders DEBUT

MARIA MANETTI SHREM
GENERAL MANAGER
Peter Gelb

JEANETTE LERMAN-NEUBAUER
MUSIC DIRECTOR
Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Opera in two parts

Libretto based on original sources,
arranged by Peter Sellars and John Adams

Tuesday, April 23, 2024
8:00–10:30PM

Metropolitan Opera Premiere

The production of *El Niño* was made possible by
a generous gift from **C. Graham Berwind, III**

El Niño is part of the **Neubauer Family
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The Metropolitan Opera

2023–24 SEASON

The Metropolitan Opera premiere of
JOHN ADAMS'S

EL NIÑO

CONDUCTOR
Marin Alsop DEBUT

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

COUNTERTENORS
Key'mon W. Murrah DEBUT
Siman Chung DEBUT
Eric Jurenas

SOPRANO
Julia Bullock DEBUT

MEZZO-SOPRANO
J'Nai Bridges

BARITONE
Davóne Tines DEBUT

PUPPETEERS
Antuan Byers
Emmanuel Elpenord
William R Gallacher
Jeremy Gallardo
Monica Lerch
Joseph Lymous
Jonothon Lyons
Rowan Magee
Leah Ogawa

This performance
is being broadcast
live on the SiriusXM
app and streamed at
metopera.org.

Tuesday, April 23, 2024, 8:00–10:30PM

C. Graham Berwind, III Chorus Master Donald Palumbo
Musical Preparation Howard Watkins,* Joseph Lawson,
Jonathan C. Kelly, Patrick Furrer, and Dimitri Dover*
Assistant Stage Directors Dylan Evans, Christina Franklin,
Sarah Ina Meyers, and Marcus Shields
Assistant Set Designer Kate Campbell
Assistant Costume Designer Jessica Crawford
Assistant Projection Designer Katerina Vitaly
Video Animator Gabriel Aronson
Video Illustrator Jayoung Yoon
Puppetry Associate Joshua Buscher
Associate Choreographer Winston Dynamite Brown
Children's Chorus Young People's Chorus of New York City;
Francisco J. Núñez, Artistic Director and Founder
Emma H. Sway, Assistant Conductor
English Diction Coach Kathryn LaBouff
Spanish Diction Coach Juan José Lázaro**
Prompter Jonathan C. Kelly
Met Titles Christopher Bergen
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Broadway, L.L.C., New Windsor, New York; and Metropolitan
Opera Shops
Puppets by The Paragon Innovation Group, Oakville, Ontario,
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Costumes constructed by Metropolitan Opera Costume
Department; Heather Coiner, Delaware; and The Costume
Shop, Chicago
Additional jewelry by Larry Vrba, New York
Wigs and makeup constructed and executed by Metropolitan
Opera Wig and Makeup Department

This production uses strobe-light and smoke effects.

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The Metropolitan Opera

2023-24 SEASON



A scene from Terence Blanchard's
Fire Shut Up in My Bones

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Synopsis

El Niño *tells the story of the Nativity, along with reflections on the wonders and tribulations of motherhood itself.*

Part I

Mary's virtue is praised; she is visited by the angel Gabriel, who tells her of the miracle to come. Mary visits her cousin Elisabeth and reflects on the glory of God. Joseph is angered to discover that Mary is pregnant. He is reassured by an angel of the Lord, who tells him that she has conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem. A star in the east heralds the birth of Jesus.

Intermission (AT APPROXIMATELY 9:05PM)

Part II

Three wise men arrive in Jerusalem in search of the child; Herod, hearing that a new King of the Jews has been born, sends the wise men to find him. They present Jesus with precious gifts. An angel of the Lord tells Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt, for Herod wants to destroy the child. Herod, who has been mocked by the three wise men, orders that all of the children in Bethlehem shall be killed. Jesus performs miracles to rescue and protect his mother as they travel with Joseph through the desert to safety.



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John Adams

El Niño

Premiere: Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, 2000

Described by John Adams as his way of understanding what is meant by a miracle, *El Niño* is an opera-oratorio that brings the tradition of sacred works by composers like Bach and Handel into the modern era. The piece retells the familiar Nativity story—beginning with the Annunciation to Mary and tracing the tale through Christ’s birth and the Holy Family’s subsequent flight into Egypt—but unlike its Baroque forerunner, Handel’s *Messiah*, the setting moves freely over a long continuum of time and place. Compiled by Adams and longtime collaborator Peter Sellars, the libretto incorporates a wide range of sources, from biblical (canonical as well as apocryphal and Gnostic) to medieval folk traditions to colonial and modern Latin American—and especially female—poets. The opera is built on 24 separate sections, each with a musical style attuned to its text. Some of these episodes (especially the “Memorial de Tlatelolco”) emphasize the parallels between biblical accounts of events in the Nativity narrative (the Slaughter of the Innocents) and contemporary events (the deadly repression of protests in Mexico City in 1968). We see that the Nativity story can recur, in some sense, when any woman gives birth, just as Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem and on to Egypt is echoed in every refugee family’s experience.

The Creators

John Adams (b. 1947) is among the most celebrated composers active today. His catalog spans a number of genres, including opera, chamber music, large-scale orchestral works, and film scores. *El Niño* is the fourth of his works to be presented at the Met, following *Doctor Atomic* in 2008, *Nixon in China* in 2011, and *The Death of Klinghoffer* in 2014. He has won five Grammy Awards, and his choral piece *On the Transmigration of Souls*, which commemorated the events of September 11, 2001, earned the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Music. Adams created *El Niño*’s libretto with Peter Sellars (b. 1957), who also directed the premiere production. They drew upon a variety of texts to create the panoptic point of view that is the essence of the work, including selections from the King James Bible’s Hebrew prophecies of Haggai and Isaiah, Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179), the Wakefield Mystery Plays (late-medieval England), Martin Luther (1483–1546), Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (ca. 1648–95), Gabriela Mistral (1889–1957), Vicente Huidobro (1893–1948), Rubén Darío (1867–1916), and Rosario Castellanos (1925–74).

The Setting

While the work is ostensibly set in and around Bethlehem and Egypt during biblical times, it can also be understood to play out in the eras and locales of the people recounting the Nativity story, from medieval England to 20th-century Latin America.

The Music

The score epitomizes Adams's distinct musical voice, marked by driving rhythms, rich orchestrations, and a sweeping melodic arc. The casting for the soloists is somewhat fluid, with more than one singer standing in for the same character or a single artist assuming multiple personae. The Soprano and the Mezzo-Soprano share the responsibility of portraying Mary: They sing together in the realistic yet thoughtful "Se Habla de Gabriel" and also have notable solos set to the texts of the 20th-century Mexican poet Rosario Castellanos—the mezzo-soprano in the reflective "La Anunciación" and the soprano in the intense and epic "Memorial de Tlatelolco," which is in many ways the culmination of the diverse strands developed throughout the score. The Baritone voices Herod, Joseph, and God (in the rousing "Shake the Heavens"), and the three Countertenors take on roles both individually (each of the Three Kings) and as an ensemble (the collective voice of the angel Gabriel). The duties of a narrator are shared by all the voices, including the significant role for the chorus, who naturally embody the audience as well as groups of people in the past. The composer's affinity for monumental choral passages is particularly clear in the antiphonal "For with God No Thing Shall Be Impossible" in Part I and "He Slew All the Children" in Part II.

Met History

This production, by director Lileana Blain-Cruz in her Met debut, marks the company premiere of *El Niño*. Marin Alsop leads a cast headlined by Julia Bullock, J'Nai Bridges, Key'mon W. Murrah, Siman Chung, Eric Jurenas, and Davóne Tines.

Program Note

In the late 1990s, John Adams faced a dilemma (albeit a very nice dilemma for a composer to have): He had received competing commissions for a large-scale vocal work. On one side was the San Francisco Symphony looking for a new work for chorus and orchestra—on the other, Paris's Théâtre du Châtelet wanted an opera from Adams to celebrate the start of the 21st century.

Rather than saying no to either ask, Adams proposed a compromise. He would write an opera-oratorio for soloists, chorus, and orchestra that could be performed in concert or fully staged for a theatrical experience. Both companies signed on, and Adams began searching for a subject.

Up to that point in his lauded career, Adams had taken a "ripped from the headlines" approach to writing opera. His breakthrough, *Nixon in China*, premiered at Houston Grand Opera in 1987, 15 years after the former president's sit-down with Mao Zedong. And his controversial *The Death of Klinghoffer* received its first performances in Brussels in 1991, just six years after the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship and the murder of the opera's eponymous passenger.

But for his new work, Adams flipped the calendar back some 2,000 years to take on one of humankind's most recognizable stories: the birth of Jesus Christ. In many ways, the Nativity story provided Adams with a blank slate. After all, generation after generation has retold the tale of the Nativity, in ways both humble and grand, each re-enactment inflected with the culture and traditions of its creators and performers. What could a composer whose religious beliefs were, in his own words, "shaky and unformed" bring to a retelling of the Nativity written to mark the dawn of a new millennium?

For Adams, who has kept one foot rooted in the traditions of European classical music and the other in the kaleidoscopic, multicultural music of the United States, inspiration came from two very different sources. The first was Handel's *Messiah*, the most beloved of Nativity oratorios.

"I wanted to write a *Messiah*," Adams said shortly before *El Niño's* premiere in December 2000. "The structure of my piece follows very carefully the biblical version in the manner of *Messiah*. Narrative passages alternate with arias and choruses that meditate or reflect on the principal themes. Among those [are] the mystery of the Conception and the miracle of the Nativity (and I should say, not only the birth of Christ, but also that of all children) ... the pregnancy of Mary (and of all women), the paranoia of Herod (and of all tyrants), and the theme of exile."

The second source of inspiration was a collection of Latin American poetry Adams had been introduced to by Peter Sellars, Adams's collaborator on *Nixon in China* and *The Death of Klinghoffer*. (Sellars later helped the composer shape *El Niño's* libretto and directed the staged production as well as the film elements that were part of its Paris premiere.) Among the poets included in the anthology were three women—Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (ca. 1648–95), Rosario Castellanos (1925–74), and Gabriela Mistral (1889–1957)—who could provide a

perspective often ignored in biblical texts, but one Adams knew was essential to the new work.

"How can you tell this story today and not have a woman's voice?" Adams said. "Seldom in the officially sanctioned stories is there any more than a passing awareness of the misery and pain of labor, of the uncertainty and doubt of pregnancy, or of that mixture of supreme happiness and inexplicable emptiness that follows the moment of birth."

Adams's use of Spanish-language poetry would also inform the work's title. While *El Niño* ("the boy") is a nod to Jesus, it also conjures associations with the weather pattern that stirs up violent storms in the Pacific Ocean, often peaking around Christmastime. To Adams, that dual meaning fittingly set the scene for the Nativity story. "As Sor Juana says, a miracle is not without its alarming force," he said. "Christ was referred to as the 'Wind,' a tempest that blows away all that comes in its path and transforms it. Herod knows this. We all know it when a child comes into the world."

Surrounding the Latin American poetry is a tapestry of biblical and religious texts—including the prophecies of Haggai and Isaiah, fairy tale–like Gospels from the New Testament Apocrypha, the medieval Wakefield Mystery Plays, Martin Luther's Christmas Sermon, and a Latin chant of Hildegard von Bingen—that together provide the narrative for the series of miracles surrounding the Christ Child's birth.

Unlike Handel's *Messiah*, which covers the whole of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, *El Niño* focuses on the events just before and after the Nativity. Part I takes us from the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary and her visit to her cousin Elisabeth to the Magnificat and the birth of Jesus. Part II, darker in tone, begins with the quiet adoration of the Three Kings before thrusting us into Herod's maniacal search for the Christ Child, the Massacre of the Innocents, and the Holy Family's flight into Egypt.

The weaving together of multiple authors and perspectives contributes to a profound depth of character in the figures we encounter in *El Niño*—a work, as Sellars remarked, that's "like one of those multipaneled altarpieces you cannot possibly take in all at once." But it's the poems that form the emotional and psychological core of the work. These are the moments when Adams takes us from the exalted realm of the holy Gospels and into the inner chambers of the human heart, offering us the direct perspective of women on the joys, anxieties, and uncertainties of pregnancy, labor, and motherhood, all on a relatable, personal level. We witness the biblical stories, but we feel and deeply connect with the poetry.

In the Magnificat, during *El Niño*'s first half, texts from the Gospel of Luke express Mary's simple wonder at being chosen to bear God's son: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced ... from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." But in the Castellanos poem that follows, "Se Habla de Gabriel," celestial wonder turns into physical weariness at the very human

ALSO ON STAGE



KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

TERENCE BLANCHARD / LIBRETTO BY KASI LEMMONS

FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES

Hailed by *The Washington Post* as “a watershed moment for American opera,” Terence Blanchard’s powerful modern drama returns after playing to sold-out audiences in 2021. Bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green headlines an electrifying production by James Robinson and Camille A. Brown, with Evan Rogister conducting the stirring, jazz-infused score.

APR 8, 12, 17, 20, 24, 27 mat **MAY 2**

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burden of pregnancy. “I felt him grow at my expense,” the poet writes, “steal the color from my blood, add clandestine weight and volume to my way of being on the earth.”

And in the work’s second half, the juxtaposition of holy texts and poetry is at its most potent in Castellanos’s “Memorial de Tlatelolco.” Presented after Saint Matthew’s grisly account of Herod ordering the execution of all male children in Bethlehem under the age of two, Castellanos’s fiery poem is consumed with anger and loss in its remembrance of another massacre—when, in 1968, the Mexican military opened fire on a public plaza filled with student protesters in Mexico City’s Tlatelolco district, leading to an estimated death toll in the hundreds.

Fabulous poetry aside, much of the reason for the emotional connection we experience during *El Niño* lies in Adams’s compelling score and the fountain of musical colors he creates to support and amplify the texts. In his accessible, unmistakable style—informed by Handel and Jimi Hendrix, Beethoven and Broadway, and the hallmarks of the minimalist style he helped to fashion in the 1970s—Adams has the agility to follow the many circuitous shifts in emotion called for in *El Niño*. He summons Herod’s lightning bolts of rage at news of the Christ Child’s birth with violent violin slashes and horn calls, and introduces tender, hypnotic melodies in “La Anunciación” that escort the turbulent soul of an expectant mother to a place of calm.

And through every one of those twists and turns, Adams paces the music with an auteur’s skill so that we’re caught in the cinematic sweep of its grandest moments while having ample opportunity to meditate on the challenging themes the texts present—comfort and joy, of course, but also tyranny and bloodshed, poverty and exile.

Take the celestial sounds of the trio of countertenors who, among their many roles, portray the angel Gabriel and the Three Kings bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh for the Christ Child. Their bell-like tones and tightly wound harmonies are emotional worlds away from the operatic wails and guttural groans of the soprano soloist in “Memorial de Tlatelolco.”

Or consider the numerous examples of Adams’s astonishing text painting, most notably in the final movement. In one of the Christ Child’s first miracles, Jesus makes a tall palm tree bow to the Virgin Mary so that she may choose from its fruit, which creates a rush of water that refreshes the family during their long journey. Wave after wave of cascading figures in the woodwinds, violins, glockenspiel, and bells bring the miraculous vision to life, a waterfall of shimmering, crystalline sound that nourishes our ears after our own journey through the story.

A Nativity for believers and nonbelievers alike, *El Niño* not only celebrates the profound love ushered into the world by the miracle of birth but also examines how that love is inextricably bound to hardship and the fragility of life—a fitting perspective for a work written to commemorate the dawning of the new century.

ALSO ON STAGE



KEN HOWARD/MET OPERA

GEORGES BIZET

CARMEN

NEW PRODUCTION

Declared “a *Carmen* that felt alive” by *The Washington Post*, Carrie Cracknell’s exhilarating modern-day production returns following a celebrated run in the winter. Mezzo-soprano Clémentine Margaine brings her acclaimed portrayal of the title role back to the Met, alongside soprano Ailyn Pérez, tenor Michael Fabiano, and bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green. Diego Matheuz conducts.

APR 25, 29 MAY 3, 9, 13, 18, 22, 25mat

Tickets from \$25 | metopera.org

Program Note CONTINUED

Because in saying hello to the 21st century, Adams and *El Niño* can't help but also say goodbye to the 20th, an era that brought untold suffering, world wars, and authoritarian oppression to nearly every corner of the globe, all themes mirrored in these biblical tales. In positioning love and suffering as equal fixtures in our shared human experience—the simultaneous ideas of light and darkness, order and chaos that uphold balance in our world—*El Niño* reminds us that even in times of sorrow and upheaval, we are always surrounded by the miracle of creation.

—*Michael Cirigliano II*

Michael Cirigliano II is a freelance writer who has worked with the Cleveland Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and Metropolitan Museum of Art.

ALSO ON STAGE



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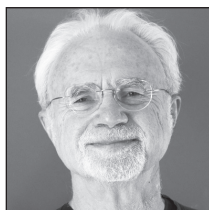
MADAMA BUTTERFLY

Celebrated soprano Asmik Grigorian makes her highly anticipated Met debut in the title role of Puccini's heartbreaking tragedy. Maestro Xian Zhang leads Anthony Minghella's evocative staging, which also features tenor Jonathan Tetelman as Pinkerton, mezzo-soprano Elizabeth DeShong as Suzuki, and baritone Lucas Meachem as Sharpless.

APR 26, 30 MAY 4, 7, 11 mat

Tickets from \$25 | [metopera.org](https://www.metopera.org)

The Cast and Creative Team



John Adams

COMPOSER (WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS *El Niño* is the fourth of John Adams's operas to be performed at the Met, following *Doctor Atomic* in 2008, *Nixon in China* in 2011 (which he also conducted), and *The Death of Klinghoffer* in 2014. Additional stage works include *A Flowering Tree*, *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, *Girls of the Golden West*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* (to be presented at the Met in 2025). He has longstanding connections to the San Francisco Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, and Los Angeles Philharmonic (where he has served as Creative Chair since 2009), and these distinguished ensembles have premiered many of his orchestral works, including *Harmonium*, *Harmonielehre*, *Century Rolls*, *Absolute Jest*, and *The Dharma at Big Sur*. As a conductor, he has led performances with the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, and New York Philharmonic, among others. His honors include five Grammy Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, and the Erasmus Prize "for contributions to European culture." He is the author of the memoir *Hallelujah Junction*, and his articles frequently appear in *The New York Times Book Review* and *The New Yorker*.



Marin Alsop

CONDUCTOR (NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON *El Niño* for her debut at the Met, *Candide* in Vienna, and concerts with leading orchestras and festivals throughout Europe and the United States.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She is the first woman to serve as the head of a major orchestra in the United States, South America, Austria, and Britain. She is in her fifth season as chief conductor of the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, first season as artistic director and chief conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony, and first season as principal guest conductor of London's Philharmonia. This fall, she will begin a three-season term as principal guest conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and she also serves as chief conductor of Ravinia Festival and as the first music director of the National Orchestral Institute + Festival at the University of Maryland, where she launched an academy for young conductors. She has also held tenures as music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, and California's Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, where she led nearly 175 premieres of new works. She was the first conductor to receive a MacArthur Fellowship.

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A scene from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*

PHOTO: KAREN ALMOND / MET OPERA

The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



Lileana Blain-Cruz
DIRECTOR (NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON *El Niño* for her debut at the Met.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS A resident director at Lincoln Center Theater, she made her Broadway directorial debut in 2022 with *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Tony Award nomination). She received the Drama League's 2022 Founders Award for Excellence in Directing and was a 2021 Doris Duke Artist, 2020 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist, and 2018 United States Artists Fellow. Recent projects include Dylan Mattingly's *Stranger Love* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Missy Mazzoli's *The Listeners* at the Norwegian National Opera; *White Girl in Danger* with Second Stage / Vineyard Theatre; *Flex* at Lincoln Center Theater; *Create Dangerously* at Miami New Drama; *Dreaming Zenzile* at New York Theatre Workshop / National Black Theatre; *Marys Seacole* (Obie Award) at LCT3; Wayne Shorter and Esperanza Spalding's *Iphigenia* at MASS MoCA and the Kennedy Center; *Hänsel und Gretel* with Houston Grand Opera; *Faust* at Opera Omaha; *Anatomy of a Suicide* at Atlantic Theater Company; *Fefu and Her Friends* at Theatre for a New Audience; *Girls* at Yale Repertory Theatre; and *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* AKA *The Negro Book of the Dead* (Obie Award) at Signature Theatre.



Adam Rigg
SET DESIGNER (NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON *El Niño* for Adam's debut at the Met, *Illinoise* at Park Avenue Armory and on Broadway, and *Teeth* at Playwrights Horizons.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Adam's Broadway debut was in 2022 with *The Skin of Our Teeth*, for which Adam earned a Tony Award nomination. Adam's work has appeared at Perelman Performing Arts Center, Soho Rep, the Public Theater, the Mark Taper Forum / Center Theatre Group, New York Theater Workshop, LA Opera, Vienna's Theater an der Wien, Signature Theatre, the Guthrie Theater, Seattle Rep, São Paulo's Teatro Municipal, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Yale Repertory Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Atlantic Theater Company, Opera Philadelphia, Cincinnati Opera, Manhattan Theatre Club, the Kennedy Center, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the Norwegian National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Santa Fe Opera, and Theatre for a New Audience, among others. Adam's numerous awards and accolades include a Lucille Lortel Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, Drama Desk Award, Henry Hewes Design Awards in 2020 and 2022, Princess Grace Award, Connecticut Critics Circle Award nomination, Ovation Award nomination, Donal Oenslager Fellowship, and Pierre Carin Fellowship.

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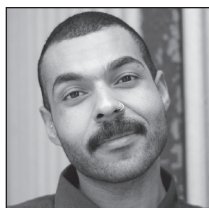


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The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



Montana Levi Blanco

COSTUME DESIGNER (ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO)

THIS SEASON *El Niño* at the Met, Terence Blanchard's *Champion* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Love, Love, Love* at Washington, D.C.'s Studio Theatre, and *A Strange Loop* at San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater and Los Angeles's Center Theater Group.

MET PRODUCTIONS *Champion* (debut, 2023).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He made his Broadway debut in 2022 with *The Skin of Our Teeth* and *A Strange Loop*, the former earning him a Tony Award. His designs have appeared Off Broadway at the Public Theater, Lincoln Center Theater, Second Stage Theater, Soho Rep, Signature Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, Theatre for a New Audience, Atlantic Theater Company, Roundabout Theatre, and the Shed, and regionally at the Glimmerglass Festival, Houston Grand Opera, Minnesota Opera, Guthrie Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theatre, and Yale Repertory Theatre. He has also received a Sam Norkin Special Drama Desk Award, two Henry Hewes Design Awards, a Lucille Lortel Award, and two Obie Awards. He is a graduate of Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music, Brown University, and the Yale School of Drama.



Yi Zhao

LIGHTING DESIGNER (BEIJING, CHINA)

THIS SEASON *El Niño* for his debut at the Met and *I Need That* on Broadway.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He is a longtime collaborator with director Lileana Blain-Cruz. He made his Broadway debut in 2022 with *The Skin of Our Teeth*, for which he was nominated for a Tony Award. He has also received a Vilcek Award for Creative Promise and Henry Hewes Design Award for *The House That Will Not Stand*. Additional opera credits include the world premiere of Missy Mazzoli's *The Listeners* at the Norwegian National Opera, the world premiere of Dylan Mattingly's *Stranger Love* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, *Die Tote Stadt* at Opera Colorado, *Faust* at Opera Omaha, *Ouroboros Trilogy* at ArtsEmerson, and the world premiere of Du Yun's *Angel's Bone* at Prototype. His designs have appeared at Lincoln Center Theater, Signature Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, Soho Rep, Manhattan Theatre Club, the Guthrie Theater, Yale Repertory Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Mark Taper Forum, Washington D.C.'s Shakespeare Theatre Company, Dallas Theater Center, the Wilma Theater, American Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, the Goodman Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center, Sasha Waltz & Guests, Ballet de Lorraine, and Festival d'Automne.

The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



Hannah Wasileski

PROJECTION DESIGNER (BERLIN, GERMANY)

THIS SEASON *El Niño* for her debut at the Met.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She made her Broadway debut in 2022 as projection designer for *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Her opera credits include the world premiere of Dylan Mattingly's *Stranger Love* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the world premiere of Missy Mazzoli's *The Listeners* at the Norwegian National Opera, *Die Zauberflöte* at Staatsoper Berlin, *Lohengrin* at the Bayreuth Festival, *La Voix Humaine* at National Sawdust, and the world premiere of Du Yun's *Angel's Bone* at Prototype. Her designs for theater include *The Lehman Trilogy* at Washington, D.C.'s Shakespeare Theatre Company, *Create Dangerously* at Miami New Drama, *Dreaming Zenzile* at New York Theatre Workshop, *Anatomy of a Suicide* at Atlantic Theater Company, *Fires in the Mirror* and *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* at Signature Theatre, *Pipeline* at Lincoln Center Theater, *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again.* at Soho Rep, *Water by the Spoonful* at the Mark Taper Forum, and *Sleep* and *The World is Round* at Brooklyn Academy of Music. She has received Lucille Lortel, Outer Critics Circle, Henry Hewes, and Obie Awards, as well as a Drama Desk Award nomination.



Mark Grey

SOUND DESIGNER (PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA)

THIS SEASON *El Niño* at the Met, Claus Guth's *Doppelgänger* at Park Avenue Armory, and John Adams's *Antony and Cleopatra* in Barcelona.

MET PRODUCTIONS Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin*, *The Merry Widow*, *Iolanta* and *Bluebeard's Castle*, and Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *Nixon in China*, and *Doctor Atomic* (debut, 2008).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS His opera *Frankenstein* premiered at Brussel's La Monnaie in 2019 and his opera *Birds in the Moon* premiered with the New York Philharmonic in 2021. He has had several commissions from the Atlanta Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and other ensembles. He is an Emmy Award-winning sound designer whose work appears at leading concert halls, theaters, and opera houses, and in 2002, he became the first sound designer for the New York Philharmonic. He is the resident sound designer for the Ojai Music Festival and Park Avenue Armory. He has sound designed productions of *West Side Story*, *My Fair Lady*, *The King and I*, *The Merry Widow*, *Carousel*, *The Sound of Music*, and *Doctor Atomic* at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, Saariaho's *Circle Map*, William Kentridge's *The Head and the Load*, and Boulez's *Répons*, among others, at Park Avenue Armory.



James Ortiz

PUPPET DESIGNER (NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON Puppet design for *El Niño* for his debut at the Met and Disney's *Hercules* in Hamburg, and direction, set design, and puppet design for *Candide* at Milwaukee's Skylight Music Theatre.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He earned a Drama Desk Award for his puppet designs for the 2022 Broadway revival of *The Skin of Our Teeth* and a Drama Desk Award nomination for his work on the 2023 Broadway revival of *Into the Woods*. He won a 2016 Obie Award for his puppet design for the Off Broadway production of *The Woodsman* and is also the 2017 Eugene O'Neill Residency recipient, 2015 and 2019 Jim Henson Foundation Grant awardee, and co-founder and co-artistic director of the devised-theater group Strangemen & Co. His work has also appeared at the Public Theater, Hartford Stage, Paper Mill Playhouse, Yale Repertory Theatre, Carnegie Mellon University, Dallas Theater Center, Theatre for a New Audience, Tectonic Theater Project, Washington, D.C.'s Shakespeare Theatre Company, Chicago's Oriental Theatre, Opera Saratoga, Soho Rep, Naked Angels, New World Stages, Ars Nova, and 59E59, among others.



Marjani Forté-Saunders

CHOREOGRAPHER (PASADENA, CALIFORNIA)

THIS SEASON *El Niño* for her debut at the Met.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS A three-time Bessie Award-winning choreographer and a 2020 Foundation for Contemporary Arts fellow, she is a founding member of the collective 7NMS, co-founded Love|Forté with Nia Love, and received *Dance Magazine's* Harkness Promise Award in 2020 and a Princess Grace Choreography Fellowship in 2014. In 2022, she made her Off Broadway debut as the choreographer of *Dreaming Zenzile*, directed by Lileana Blain-Cruz. Her work has been presented at many theaters, centers, and in partnership with many communities across the United States, including at Danspace Project, Pittsburgh's Kelly Strayhorn Theatre, Movement Research at Judson Church, New Orleans's McKenna Museum of African American Art, Minneapolis's Pillsbury Theatre, Spelman College, Pomona College, and Hunter College, among others. She is an inaugural recipient of three distinguishing fellowships in dance, including Urban Bush Women's Choreographic Center Initiative Fellowship (2017), the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship (2018), and the DanceUSA Artist Fellowship (2019). For five years, she traveled as a performer with the Urban Bush Women dance company. Humbly, she defines her work by its lineage, stemming from culturally rich, vibrant, historic, loving, irreverent conjurers.

The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



J'Nai Bridges

MEZZO-SOPRANO (TACOMA, WASHINGTON)

THIS SEASON The Mezzo-Soprano in *El Niño* at the Met, Lucinda in the world premiere of Jake Heggie's *Intelligence* at Houston Grand Opera, the title role of *Carmen* in Hamburg, and concerts at San Diego Opera, University of Richmond, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and with the New York Philharmonic, Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra, and Boston Symphony Orchestra.

MET APPEARANCES Nefertiti in Philip Glass's *Akhmaten* (debut, 2019).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include *Carmen* in Cagliari, Verona, and at Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Canadian Opera Company, Dutch National Opera, and Palm Beach Opera; *Dalila* in *Samson et Dalila* in concert at Seattle Opera; *Jocasta* in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* with the San Francisco Symphony; and Officer Victoria Wilson in the world premiere of Kamala Sankara's *Rise* and Laurel in the world premiere of Carlos Simon's *it all falls down* as part of Washington National Opera's *Written in Stone*. She has also sung *Carmen* at Cincinnati Opera and San Francisco Opera, *Jocasta* in concert at LA Opera, *Federica* in *Luisa Miller* in Barcelona, and Josef Segovia in the world premiere of John Adams's *Girls of the Golden West* at San Francisco Opera and at Dutch National Opera.



Julia Bullock

SOPRANO (ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI)

THIS SEASON The Soprano in *El Niño* for her debut at the Met; *Cleopatra* in John Adams's *Antony and Cleopatra* in Barcelona; *Nativity Reconsidered: El Niño* with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and on tour with the American Modern Opera Company; *Mélisande* in *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence; recitals in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Providence, London, and at Park Avenue Armory; and performances with London's Philharmonia, where she is a 2023–24 Featured Artist.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS A champion of new music, she headlined the world premieres of Adams's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Girls of the Golden West* at San Francisco Opera, Michel van der Aa's *Upload* at Dutch National Opera, and Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. In collaboration with Peter Sellars, Tyshawn Sorey, and Claudia Rankine, she conceived of and starred in *Perle Noire: Meditations for Joséphine* at Dutch National Opera, Harvard's OBERON, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and she also created the chamber arrangement of *El Niño*, *Nativity Reconsidered*. She has appeared with many of the world's leading opera houses and orchestras, and is a founding core member of the American Modern Opera Company.



Siman Chung

COUNTERTENOR (BUSAN, SOUTH KOREA)

THIS SEASON A Countertenor in *El Niño* for his debut at the Met.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has sung Orphée in *Orphée+* at Edmonton Opera, Siebel in *Faust* in Seoul, Orphée in *Orphée et Eurydice* at Opera Columbus and in Toronto and Banff, Taichiro in the world premiere of Elena Langer's *Beauty and Sadness* in Hong Kong, Grifone in Vivaldi's *Orlando Finto Pazzo* at Korea National Opera, and the Refugee in Jonathan Dove's *Flight* at Mannes Opera. He has also appeared in concert with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale, Orchestre de l'Opéra Royal de Versailles, Voices of Ascension, Juilliard415, and the Cecilia Chorus of New York at Carnegie Hall. He has received Opera Index's Arthur E. Walter Memorial Award, a grant from the Sullivan Foundation, first prize at the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition, and the Best Countertenor Prize at the Concurso Internacional de Canto Tenor Viñas.



Eric Jurenas

COUNTERTENOR (ANNANDALE, VIRGINIA)

THIS SEASON A Countertenor in *El Niño* and the Man Under the Arch / Hotel Clerk in Kevin Puts's *The Hours* at the Met, Prince Go-Go in Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* in Frankfurt, Handel's *Messiah* with the American Bach Soloists, and Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* in Frankfurt.

MET APPEARANCES Guildenstern in Brett Dean's *Hamlet* (debut, 2022).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has sung Hope in *L'Orfeo* in Dresden, the Man in the world premiere of Donnacha Dennehy's *The First Child* and Andronico in Vivaldi's *Bajazet* at Irish National Opera, Arsamene in Handel's *Serse* in Frankfurt, the Angel in the world premiere of Olga Neuwirth's *Orlando* at the Vienna State Opera, Narciso in *Agrippina* at Covent Garden and the Bavarian State Opera, Eustazio in Handel's *Rinaldo* in concert with Ensemble Matheus in Vienna and Versailles, Natasha in Péter Eötvös's *Tri Sestry* in Frankfurt and at the Vienna State Opera, and Alessandro in Handel's *Porro*, Athamas in Handel's *Semele*, the Herold in Aribert Reimann's *Medea*, and the title role of Richard Ayres's *Peter Pan* in Berlin. He made his Broadway debut in 2017 in Claire van Kampen's *Farinelli and the King*.

The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED

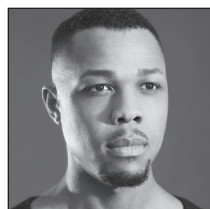


Key'mon W. Murrah

COUNTERTENOR (LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY)

THIS SEASON A Countertenor in *El Niño* for his debut at the Met, the Sorceress in *Dido and Aeneas* at the Bavarian State Opera, a concert at Detroit Opera, Handel's *Messiah* with the New Jersey Symphony, Leonardo in Gabriela Lena Frank's *El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego* at LA Opera, and Tolomeo in *Giulio Cesare* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has sung Hamor in Handel's *Jeptha* at the Komische Oper Berlin, the title role of Handel's *Serse* at Detroit Opera, Leonardo in the world premiere of *El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego* at San Diego Opera, Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice* at Seattle Opera, Bertarido in *Rodelinda* at the Aspen Music Festival, Tolomeo at Red River Lyric Opera, and Asprano in Vivaldi's *Montezuma* with the America Baroque Opera Co. He has also appeared in concert with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Grand Rapids Symphony, American Spiritual Ensemble, and at the Théâtre du Capitole Toulouse and Houston Grand Opera. He is a former young artist at the Glimmerglass Festival and was a studio artist at Florida Grand Opera.



Davóne Tines

BASS-BARITONE (ORLEAN, VIRGINIA)

THIS SEASON The Baritone in *El Niño* at the Met for his debut and with the Houston Symphony Orchestra, Kaija Saariaho's *True Fire* and *Nativity Reconsidered: El Niño* with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, *Nativity Reconsidered: El Niño* on tour with the American Modern Opera Company, Fauré's Requiem with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, *Europa 4* in Cage's *Europeras 3 & 4* at Detroit Opera, the title role of Rufus Wainwright's *Hadrian* with the Brussels Philharmonic, performances at the Vail Dance Festival, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include the Jailer in David Lang's *Prisoner of the State* at Rotterdam's O. Festival for Opera. Music. Theatre. and in Malmö, Ned Peters in John Adams's *Girls of the Golden West* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Malcolm in Anthony Davis's *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* at Boston's Odyssey Opera and Detroit Opera. He has also starred in the world premieres of *Prisoner of the State* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and *Girls of the Golden West* at San Francisco Opera.