



For Immediate Release

TICKETS NOW ON SALE FOR WEST COAST PREMIERE OF

SOPHIA'S FOREST

LEMBIT BEECHER, COMPOSER AND HANNAH MOSCOVITCH, LIBRETTIST

FEBRUARY 24, 25 AND 26, 2022 AT GRACE CATHEDRAL

www.operaparallele.org

SAN FRANCISCO (December 7, 2021) — **Opera Parallèle** today announced tickets are now on sale for the highly anticipated West Coast premiere of composer **Lembit Beecher** and librettist **Hannah Moscovitch's** critically acclaimed opera, ***Sophia's Forest***, to be given four performances Thursday, February 24 through Saturday, February 26 at Grace Cathedral, 1100 California Street atop Nob Hill. Ticket prices are \$35, \$85 and \$145, and may be purchased via online at www.operaparallele.org.

An opera in one act, *Sophia's Forest* relates the story of a young girl, Sophia, who has recently immigrated to the United States, having survived a traumatic journey through the chaos of a civil war in her homeland. During the course of the lyric drama, we see Sophia as an adult remembering her childhood, as a nine-year old recent immigrant to the U.S., and in flashback to a couple of years earlier, as a child escaping her homeland with her mother, Anna, and sister, Emma.

Sophia's Forest is an exploration of both the lasting effects on families of the immigrant experience, and the ways in which children use their imaginations to deal with trauma. These themes are part of family lore for both librettist and composer: Moscovitch's great-grandparents escaped a wave of Eastern European massacres to find their way to Canada while Beecher's grandmother and then-two-year-old mother, escaped Estonia during WWII, having survived both Nazi and Soviet occupations of their country.

Sophia's Forest was presented in an initial, exploratory production at Philadelphia's Drexel University Black Box Theatre in 2017, conducted and directed by OP's creative team **Nicole Paiement** and **Brian Staufenbiel**, supported by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage. The opera received critical acclaim from David Patrick Stearns writing in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*: "A searingly introspective study on immigrant children, the opera was full of vocal lines reflecting psychological depths but also electronic music effects that added greatly to the dreamlike atmosphere."

A central part of the production is nine electronically-controlled sound sculptures placed across the stage. These were built in collaboration with the ExCITE Center at Drexel University, an interdisciplinary center for research and innovation that combines the arts and engineering. The sound sculptures featured in *Sophia's Forest* form part of the opera's set as well as functioning as an instrumental chorus, blending with the string quartet and percussion to create the fantastical and dream-like musical landscape of the piece.

Opera Parallèle's fully realized production of *Sophia's Forest* includes soprano **Maggie Finnegan** as Sophia; mezzo-soprano **Kindra Scharich** as Anna; baritone **Bradley Kynard** as Wes; young sopranos **Victoria Ko** and **Samantha Fung-Lee** as Emma; and actor **Charlotte Fanvu** as Young Sophia. The creative team is led by company General and Artistic Director **Nicole Paiement**, conductor; company Creative Director **Brian Staufenbiel**, concept and director; **Jessica Bejarano**, assistant conductor; **Mariseley Cortés Fonseca**, costume designer; **Jon Altemus**, scenic designer; and **Aaron Curry**, lighting designer.

The musical score will be performed by the **Del Sol Quartet**, percussion by **Divesh Karamchandani**, and Sound Sculpture electronics by **Lembit Beecher**.

During the month of February 2022, Opera Parallèle will be the Artist-in-Residence at San Francisco's Saint Joseph's Art Society, 1401 Howard Street, and will rehearse *Sophia's Forest* at this venue. The company will host an open rehearsal at Saint Joseph's on Tuesday, February 15 from 6.00 – 7.30 p.m.

Opera Parallèle's presentation of *Sophia's Forest* is made possible, in part, by **Bob Ellis, Stephen and Diane Heiman**, and **Paul L. King**, with support from Producer's Circle members **Donna Dubinsky** and **Len Shustek**.

For more information about Opera Parallèle's 2021-22 season, visit www.operaparallele.org.

###

PRESS CONTACT:

Jon Finck, jonfincksf@gmail.com / +1 415 577 1323

Please connect for production images, interviews with the creative team and artists, and press credentials.

Editor's Note: Lembit Beecher, age 41, an Estonian-American composer, grew up in Santa Cruz, CA.

For two orchestral interludes from *Sophia's Forest*, featuring the Aizuri Quartet and the composer, visit <https://youtu.be/twX3dU5iaqw>