



For Immediate Release

## OPERA PARALLÈLE ANNOUNCES 2023-24 SEASON OF EXCITING PREMIERES

***THE EMISSARY*, OCTOBER 27 – 28;**

**A DOUBLE BILL OF *BIRDS & BALLS*:**

***VINKENSPORT, OR THE FINCH OPERA & BALLS*, APRIL 5 – 7;**

***FELLOW TRAVELERS*, JUNE 21 - 23**

[operaparallèle.org/23-24](http://operaparallèle.org/23-24)

SAN FRANCISCO (May 31, 2023) — **Opera Parallèle** today announced the repertoire for the company's 2023-24 season, a new year of exciting debuts beginning October 27 and 28 with the world premiere of composer **Kenji Oh** and librettist **Kelley Rourke's** family opera, *The Emissary*, based on **Yoko Tawada's** award-winning novel.

The company's 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary continues April 5 – 7, with the innovative double bill premiere of *Birds & Balls* introducing composer **David T. Little** and librettist **Royce Vavrek's** hilarious comedy about Flemish sportsmanship in *Vinkensport, or The Finch Opera*, paired with composer **Laura Karpman** and librettist **Gail Collins'** witty tennis spectacle, *Balls*, based on the sensational 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" match. The season will conclude June 21 – 23 with the West Coast premiere of *Fellow Travelers*, the critically acclaimed story of forbidden love set within the 1950's McCarthy-era "Lavender Scare," by composer **Gregory Spears** and librettist **Greg Pierce**.

Opera Parallèle General & Artistic Director **Nicole Paiement** said, "OP's 2023-24 Season is a journey through time with four beautiful and relevant human stories. Beginning in the future, we explore our environmental issues through an intergenerational family relationship with *The Emissary*. Moving to the '70s-era, we then examine the spirit of competition through the comical lens of the double bill, *Birds & Balls*, and conclude the season with a profound depiction of love flourishing under persecution in the 1950s with *Fellow Travelers*. This is another season of all living composers and world or West Coast premieres, showcasing both new and established creators working at the height of their talents. OP is very proud to commission the first opera from Kenji Oh and to bring prolific film and tv composer Laura Karpman's work to San Francisco for the first time."

### **THE EMISSARY**

For its seventh iteration of the company's "Hands-On-Opera" initiative, Opera Parallèle has commissioned multi-faceted Japanese composer Kenji Oh and prolific librettist Kelley Rourke to create an adaptation of *The Emissary*, a new family opera based on the award-winning novel by celebrated Japanese author Yoko Tawada, featuring an English translation by **Margaret Mitsutani**. The *Emissary* audience will journey through a fractured future, a dystopian satire that addresses the alarming environmental angst of today, and the ever-increasing psychological stress on the younger generation.

*The Emissary* is scheduled for three performances Friday, October 27 and Saturday, October 28, 2023 at the ODC Theater, 3153 17<sup>th</sup> Street, San Francisco. The cast and creative team will be announced.

## **BIRDS & BALLS**

Opera Parallèle's spring season will offer the premiere of *Birds & Balls*, a novel pairing of two one-act chamber operas where competition meets comedy in a theatrical spectacle of sportsmanship, tennis balls and the 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" match between **Billie Jean King** and **Bobby Riggs**.

The operatic fun begins with *Vinkensport, or The Finch Opera*, a hilarious sendup of the obscure 400-year-old Flemish folk sport of professional Finch-Calling, where the contestants battle it out to see who has the most melodious bird. Coaxed by their owners, trained finches race to sing the most "susk-e-wiets" over the course of an hour, where every tweet is noted in chalk on a long stick. The winner, of course, is the finch who has tweeted the most, but beware of the trainers some noble, some not. Cheating can get you banned for life.

*Balls* is a multimedia opera dramatizing the famed tennis game between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs. The celebrated match changed not only the perception and treatment of women in sports, but significantly advanced the women's rights movement. The opera features a live tennis match as a central narrative device, along with actual commentary from the 1973 broadcast.

*Vinkensport*... David Little and Royce Vavrek's "chamber opera with wings," was originally commissioned by soprano **Dawn Upshaw** in 2010 for the Graduate Vocal Arts Program at the Bard Conservatory of Music. In 2017, *Balls* by Laura Karpman and Gail Collins was initially heard in a workshop by **The Industry** and though incomplete at the time, the work has now been finished and will debut anew with Opera Parallèle. At the suggestion of Opera Parallèle General & Artistic Director **Nicole Paiement**, both composers will collaborate on a sonic transition between the two works so they may be performed together seamlessly without interruption.

Opera Parallèle and SFJAZZ will present *Birds & Balls* Friday, April 5 – Sunday, April 7, 2024 for four performances at SFJAZZ, Miner Auditorium, 201 Franklin Street, San Francisco. The complete cast and creative team will be announced.

## **FELLOW TRAVELERS**

Opera Parallèle will conclude the '23-24 season with the West Coast premiere of *Fellow Travelers* by composer Gregory Spears and librettist Greg Pierce. Based on a novel of the same name by **Thomas Mallon**, *Fellow Travelers* was developed and co-commissioned by G. Sterling Zinsmeyer and Cincinnati Opera where it received its world premiere in June 2016. Since then, the opera has garnered widespread critical and popular acclaim at New York's 2018 Prototype Festival, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Minnesota Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera.

*Fellow Travelers* follows the story of Hawk and Tim who become clandestine lovers at the height of the McCarthy Era in 1950's Washington, D.C. Recent college graduate Timothy Laughlin is eager to join the crusade against communism, and a chance encounter with handsome State Department official Hawkins Fuller leads to Tim's first job—and his first love affair with a man. Drawn into a maelstrom of deceit, Tim struggles to reconcile his political convictions and his forbidden love for Fuller. The piece uses the love affair of Laughlin and Fuller to shed light on the "lavender scare," an often-overlooked period of McCarthyism that resulted in the mass firings of suspected homosexuals from the United States government.

"[A] heart-wrenching yet musically lucid drama ... The opening act is a near perfect example of fast-flowing musical drama ... With its smart music and sharp-edged romantic drama, *Fellow Travelers* seems assured of lasting appeal." —*The New York Times*

"*Fellow Travelers* is one of the most accomplished new American operas I have encountered in recent years. It deserves to travel widely." —*Chicago Tribune*

Opera Parallèle and Presidio Theatre will present *Fellow Travelers* Friday, June 21 – Sunday, June 23, 2024 for three performances at the Presidio Theatre, 99 Moraga Avenue, San Francisco. The cast and creative team will be announced.

Support for *Birds & Balls* is provided in part by **OPERA America's Next Stage** grant.

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Ticket prices and on-sale dates for all performances to be announced.

Complete casting and creative teams to be announced.

All operas will be sung in English with projected English supertitles.

All programming subject to change.