

LADIES FIRST | HONEYTRAPS | KGB ESPIONAGE MUSEUM
10.03.2019 | 7:00, 7:45, 8:30 PM
PROGRAM NOTES

1. Anna Veismane – Target for solo violin
Lynn Bechtold, violin

Lightness and virtuosity create a purposeful and insistent character of music. The title of the piece may impose different meanings – “target” as a game in which darts are thrown at a board and “target” as a purpose, the reason for the action. Or “target” as an assigned offering or assassination. Perhaps you can think of this as we listen...

2. Ann Warren – Dziady for chamber ensemble
Cheri Magid, actor; Erin Rogers, saxophone; Lynn Bechtold, violin;
Jennifer DeVore, cello

It's 1981 and the Solidarity movement is taking hold in Poland.

25 years ago, on a beautiful autumn day, my father, Uncle Janusz, and I visited my mother's grave on the outskirts of Warsaw. I had just turned 4. I never knew my mother. She died before my first birthday and it was something we didn't talk about.

My father and his brother Janusz were jazz musicians and they were going to have a “jam” session after we left the cemetery. But instead of making music they stayed up all night drinking vodka and arguing about politics. It turned out that they were not just there to make music, but to help lead a protest the next day.

So, October 19, 1956 was the last day that I saw my father.

Uncle Janusz was too hungover to join the protest, so my father went alone. And he was gone all that day and then all night. Uncle Janusz was frantic and went out searching. He didn't come back till dawn. He found out that my father had been identified as an agitator and a leader, and was arrested. I was afraid. Now I had no parents. But Janusz took care of me.

When I finished high school in 1968, Janusz took me to see Dziady at the National Theatre of Warsaw. I could hardly wait. We read Dziady in school, now I was going to see it live.

And, that day is when I learned about censorship when the government banned any future performances. They said the play was anti-Russian and had anti-socialist references. How could this be? The play was written in 1824. It's a drama about spiritual transformation, human liberty, the struggle for independence and Polish martyrdom under Russian occupation in the 19th century. Oh....

Until today, I've wondered, “Is my father even alive?”

3. Milica Paranosic – Don't Shoot My Face for voices and cello
Milica Paranosic & Hai-Ting Chinn, voices; Jennifer DeVore, cello

This is a story about Vera Pešić, the beauty from Leskovac, the Serbian Mata Hari. Many stories about her were told— stories which we cannot today identify as true or false. Intrigues. Secrets. Lies. Lusty visions. Smokey bars. Bright chandeliers. Intoxicating wine.

The beautiful things surround attractive, resourceful, intelligent, brave women. Was she even real? Only one photo remained after her. (Ange shows photo #1).

But many popular hotels, bars and restaurants are still around today: Mažestic, Balkan, Skadarlija (Ange shows her photo #2).

Her lovers were said to have been important, prominent men: mayor Julius Han, Richard Depre, Karl Lotar Kraus, Paula Bader, Ratko Sotirović, Tanasija Tasa Dinić, Radoslavom Đurić.

But tonight, we are remembering Vera's and her lover Lili.

4. Megan Curet – Josephine
Megan Curet, dancer

To realize our dreams we must decide to wake up.

One day I realized I was living in a country where I was afraid to be black. It was only a country for white people. Not black. So I left. I had been suffocating in the United States... A lot of us left, not because we wanted to leave, but because we couldn't stand it anymore... I felt liberated in Paris. I'm not intimidated by anyone. Everyone is made with two arms, two legs, a stomach and a head. Just think about that.

I shall dance all my life . . . I would like to die, breathless, spent, at the end of a dance.

Josephine Baker

5. Lynn Bechtold - Judy From Brooklyn, for violin duo & fixed media
Miolina: Mioi Takeda & Lynn Bechtold, violins

Judith Coplton was born in Brooklyn in 1921; went to Barnard College, where she graduated cum laude; worked for the Department of Justice; and was recruited to be a Soviet spy in 1945, at the end of World War II. Convicted of espionage and conspiracy, her cases were overturned on appeals, due to botched handling by the FBI. Coplton always maintained her innocence, saying that she was framed. She ended up marrying one of her attorneys, raising four children, earning a master's degree in education, and 'becoming an expert in bilingual education and literacy,' according to her daughter Emily Socolov. She never ever talked about the trials—perhaps it was too painful—and lived a quiet life with her family, tutoring women in prison in creative writing, standing up for immigrants' rights, and running two Mexican restaurants in Manhattan with her husband.

Was she guilty? Maybe she was just someone who believed in Soviet Ideology. Would the outcome have been different if her trial had taken place when the US was in the midst of the Cold War and McCarthyism, not immediately after World War II, when Russia was our ally?

Perhaps...but with her convictions overturned—rightfully or wrongfully—she led a full life and helped many women and immigrants along the way. She died in 2011. Now, let's listen to the two violins, interwoven with some sounds recorded right here in the museum. The two violins represent the possible states of mind that Judith had, that of loving her country, but perhaps trying to help another, with an ideology that she believed in. Melodies in the piece are inspired by Lenin's favorite tune, 'The Internationale;'

Russian immigrant Irving Berlin's 'God Bless America;' Russian song 'Dark Eyes;' and Barnard's alma mater 'College on a Hilltop.' The latter part of the piece is an obvious wink to the title of our concert.

6. Don Nigro – Mata Hari
Cheri Magid – actor

Don Nigro—An excerpt from MATA HARI, a play.

This play was first presented on June 15, 2013 at the Robert Moss Theatre, 440 Lafayette Street, New York City, by Nylon Fusion Theatre Company, as part of the Planet Connections Theatre Festival, with our award winner Tatyana Kot (to whom the play was dedicated) as Mata Hari.

7. Erin Rogers – Scarlett, for chamber ensemble
Hai-Ting Chinn, voice; Erin Rogers, saxophone;
Lynn Bechtold & Mioi Takeda, violins; Jennifer DeVore, cello.

Before the likes of Maria Butina, Anna Chapman was arrested in a spy ring in the U.S. in 2010 and extradited to Russia in a highly publicized swap of secret agents, pleading guilty to the charge of conspiracy to act as an agent of a foreign government. During her time in the US, Chapman quickly ascended social ladders posing as an entrepreneur with prior experience in finance. Her quick wit, charm, striking red hair, and model figure allowed her to maneuver within New York's elite and to gain secrets and financial gifts. Following her arrest and revoke of British citizenship (which she gained through marriage, allowing her access to the US), Chapman endured a brief stint in solitary confinement, returning to Russia as a celebrated agent and celebrity. She was tapped by Vladimir Putin to head the Molodaya Gvardiya, a Nationalist youth group, and became a catwalk model in Russian fashion shows. An instagram star and want-to-be actress, Chapman is currently a regular TV persona in Russia. She has pushed for a woman's right to wear makeup in the military and often shows off her shooting skills. On a talk show appearance, Chapman expressed her longstanding desire for a pet lion, whereby a lion on leash was immediately brought on the set for her.