

kallisti presents:



UC San Diego
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Department of Music



The Four Note Opera

by Tom Johnson

April 26, 28, & 29, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Music Center | Experimental Theater

The Four Note Opera, by American minimalist composer Tom Johnson, was first performed in The Cubicolo Theater in New York City on May 11, 1972. "The Cube," as it was affectionately called, was an intimate seventy-five seat theater in which experimental works of all genres were performed including Johnson's sixty-minute chamber opera for voices and piano, constructed with only four pitches. By some happy accident of fate, our production also references "The Cube" explicitly through production design and by embracing wholeheartedly the spirit of joyous experimentation so essential to the lifeblood of the Department of Music at UC San Diego.

What happens in *The Four Note Opera*? Not much in terms of a traditional operatic narrative. The singers describe what they are doing (singing a duet with ten variations, striking a single note on a woodblock). Sometimes they let us in on their reactions (lamenting that their single aria does not allow them to display their high C, being apprehensive about staying on pitch during an acapella solo, wondering if they will miss their entrance.) There are musical hijinks that threaten to dominate the proceedings and numerous recitatives that illuminate the behind-the-scenes relationships of the singers, playing into existing tropes about dueling divas, heroic baritones, and hapless tenors.

But as is true of most operas, there is much more beneath the surface. One of the recurring themes in *The Four Note Opera* is the tension between freedom and constraint. Johnson sets up strict musical parameters through the limited pitch material but still manages to create a great deal of variety in the piece. He also allows us to enter the meta-world of the world of opera singers. While the singers observe that their participation in the opera means that "they have no control over such things" (i.e., the restrictions of the material), they ultimately embrace the strange paradigm of the world of the piece. For to be an opera singer is to accept that variables and restrictions are pre-determined, that one will enter a community of individuals obsessed with an instrument that one cannot see but can only inhabit. But, as Johnson well knows, these limitations pale in comparison to the limitless joy of singing.

In the final scene of the opera, the singers converse amongst themselves:

Sometimes the scene seems very long.

Actually, the scene is not so long. It is just the pauses between lines that are long.

And the repetition.

And the fact that nothing happens.

Only the singing.

Only the music.

Only the singing.

And the music.

The piano accompaniment is quiet, repetitive, and static. The atmosphere is no longer super-charged but has become contemplative, dream-like. After all its energy and exuberance, *The Four Note Opera* leaves us in a timeless world of minimalism, constructed on the most ephemeral and sublime of materials: the sound of the singing voice.

-Susan Narucki

Distinguished Professor of Music

University of California San Diego

UC San Diego | School of Arts and Humanities | Department of Music

kallisti presents

THE FOUR NOTE OPERA

An Opera in One Act

for Soprano, Contralto, Tenor, Baritone and Bass
with piano accompaniment

Words and Music

by

Tom Johnson

Mariana Flores Bucio, soprano
Natalia Merlano Gomez, contralto
Jonathan Nussman, baritone
Miguel Zazueta, tenor
Kyle Adam Blair, piano

Susan Narucki, artistic director
Samantha Fox, stage director
Natalie Barshow, costume designer
Elba Emicente Sanchez, lighting designer
Michael Wogulis, production designer
Jared Blake Halsell, production stage manager

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

Friday, April 28, 2023

Saturday, April 29, 2023

at 7:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Music Center | Experimental Theater

Song Index

First Chorus (*Quartet, a cappella*)

“There are three choruses in this opera. This is the first one.”

Contralto Aria

“When the first chorus is over, that is the cue for my aria.”

Recitative 1 (*Soprano, Contralto*)

“But now the Soprano is joining me.”

Imitation Duet (*Soprano, Contralto*)

“She must respond to everything I sing.”

Recitative 2 (*Contralto, Tenor*)

“Now they have stopped and I have returned to help.”

Concentration Aria (*Baritone*)

“This would be a very easy aria.”

Recitative 3 (*Soprano Contralto*)

“Now we must introduce the Tenor’s aria.”

Tenor Aria

“Every time I sing this opera I find it more humiliating”

Variation Duet (*Soprano, Tenor*)

“This duet is a set of variations”

Recitative 4 (*Contralto, Baritone*)

“In the first production of this opera”

Soprano Aria (slow version)

“I sing this aria twice. This is the first time I sing it slowly”

Recitative 5 (*Quartet*)

“Since it is often difficult to understand sopranos”

Quartet

“This is the Quartet”

Bass Aria

“This is the only time in the entire opera that you shall see me or hear my voice.”

Second Chorus (*Quartet, a cappella*)

“There are three choruses in this opera. This is the second one.”

Recitative 6 (*Soprano, Contralto, Tenor*)

“Now the Baritone is going to sing another aria”

Long Aria (*Baritone, with Contralto*)

“This is one of the longest arias in the opera.”

Forty-Bar Duet (*Contralto, Baritone*)

“There are only forty bars in this duet.”

Unaccompanied Aria (*Contralto*)

“This aria has no accompaniment”

Recitative 7 (*Soprano, Contralto, Tenor*)

“Now we must introduce the next aria”

Wood Block Aria (*Baritone*)

“In a moment you shall hear the wood block. It is a minute event.”

Trio (*Soprano, Contralto, Tenor*)

“I sing long notes.”

Recitative 8 (*Contralto, Tenor, Baritone*)

“Now the soprano is going to sing the last version of her aria.”

Soprano Aria (fast version)

“I sing this aria twice...”

Recitative 9 (*Quartet*)

“We will not recapitulate what the Soprano was singing about.”

Interlude (*Piano*)

Third Chorus (*Quartet, a cappella*)

“There are three choruses in this opera. This is the third one.”

Final Scene (*Quartet*)

“Now the Third Chorus has ended”



MARIANA FLORES BUCIO, soprano

MARIANA FLORES BUCIO is a Mexican singer and actress specialized in Contemporary Music and Mexican Vernacular Music.

She has studied and collaborated with artists like Wilfrido Terrazas, Carmina Escobar and artistic groups like the Orquesta of Baja California, Teatro en el Incendio, 9Spiral Project, and the Italo-American Institute of International Cooperation. She has performed leading roles in classical and contemporary operas, premiered several new musical works, and performed on important stages as a vernacular Mexican music singer. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Music at the Autonomous University of Baja California and her MFA degree in Music Performance at UC San Diego under the tutelage of the

prestigious Soprano, Susan Narucki. She is co-director of the vocal ensemble “Radical Ensemble” at Tijuana, B.C. Mex., and she is currently pursuing a DMA in Performance at UC San Diego.



NATALIA MERLANO GOMEZ, soprano - “The Contralto”

Musician, singer, improviser, and creator. She has been captivated by Experimental Music, worldwide Folk Music, improvisation, graphical notation, and extended vocal sounds. Additionally, she is curious about theater and explorations around video and photography. She studied an M.A in Contemporary Music - Singing at Staatliche Hochschule fur Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Stuttgart, Germany, being part of different multidisciplinary projects combining music, theatre, dance, literature, and visual arts. Yielding good results, she did her undergraduate program at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas in Bogota, Colombia. She is pursuing a Doctorate in Music Arts at the University of California San Diego.

Since 2009, she has premiered many works by composers worldwide and commissioned new pieces. In 2021, she presented her first album called: *Resonancias Entrelazadas*. It includes 15 works written by women composers and improvisations with female performers. Also in 2022, she premiered the project CINCO with audiovisual pieces by Latin American composers written especially for her.



MIGUEL ANGEL ZAZUETA, tenor

MIGUEL ANGEL ZAZUETA is an interdisciplinary voice artist specialized in contemporary music and opera, from Tijuana, Mexico. He has studied and collaborated with artists like Wilfrido Terrazas, Carmina Escobar, Yuval Sharon, and Meredith Monk, as well as artistic groups like the LA Phil New Music Group, the Orquesta of Baja California, Teatro en el Incendio, Meredith Monk & Ensemble, and the ItaloAmerican Institute of International Cooperation. He obtained his MA in Contemporary Music Performance in UC San Diego, where he is currently pursuing a DMA degree on the same area, under the tutelage of the Soprano Susan Narucki. He is the founder and codirector of “Radical Ensemble”, an interdisciplinary vocal ensemble with singers from the Baja California Region.



JONATHAN NUSSMAN, **baritone**

Jonathan Nussman is a baritone whose varied interests include opera, theater, improvisation, and chamber music, with a special emphasis on works from the 20th and 21st centuries. Appearances include San Diego Opera, Opera Boston, Guerilla Opera, Juventas New Music Ensemble, Cape Cod Opera, the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra, Bodhi Tree Concerts, Project [BLANK], the La Jolla Symphony and soundSCAPE New Music Festival. As a performer of contemporary and experimental music, he frequently premieres his own compositions as well as pieces by composers from around the world.

In addition to originating prominent roles in over twenty world-premiere operas and theatrical works, he has performed extensively in more traditional repertoire, with notable roles including Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Count Almaviva (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Larry Foreman (*The Cradle Will Rock*), and Sid (*Albert Herring*). Jonathan is originally from Charlotte, North Carolina, and lives in San Diego, California. He holds a doctoral degree in Contemporary Music Performance from UC San Diego, and master's degree from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee.



KYLE ADAM BLAIR, **pianist**

KYLE ADAM BLAIR, D.M.A. is a pianist, music director, and vocal coach currently residing in San Diego, California. His major focuses include the performance of new works in collaboration with composers, and the performance of works from the art music and song repertory of the 20th and 21st centuries.

In addition to multiple concerts with Bang-On-A-Can All-Stars in Seattle and Los Angeles in the last decade, Blair's most recent and memorable performances have included three world premieres: Stephen Lewis' *Radium Butterfly* in Portland, Oregon, Bruno Ruviano's *twelve Pos-Tudos piano etudes* in San Francisco, and Stuart Saunders Smith's *Family Portraits: Sylvia at 70* in Hartford, Connecticut.

Blair released his solo debut album in July 2019. Entitled *Palm Sunday*, the album features four premiere recordings of recent solo piano works composed by Stuart Saunders Smith, including the namesake title piece which Blair commissioned. He can also be heard on Edgetone Records, Another Timbre, and Open Space Publications, and has produced for two Bridge Records releases.

Beyond concert music, Blair's passion for text and theatre often fosters collaborations with actors, singers, and dancers. As the Staff Pianist for the UC San Diego Department of Music, he has worked closely with Grammy-winning soprano Susan Narucki in the creation of contemporary operatic projects, most notably the premieres of Lei Liang's *Inheritance* and Stephen Lewis's *Noon at Dusk*.

Also currently a Lecturer in UC San Diego's Department of Theatre and Dance, he has musically directed new musicals by Deborah Stein and Nadine George-Graves, composed music for plays written by graduate student playwrights, and played roles as an on-stage performer in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*, and Denis O'Hara/Lisa Paterson's *An Iliad*.

Though multifaceted, Blair's passions for music and performance simultaneously inhabit the realms of complexity, dissonance, and lyricism.



SAMANATHA FOX, stage director

Samantha Fox (she/her) is a stage director, theatre-maker, and mezzo-soprano with a passion for making work that disrupts the status quo. She takes a particular interest in creating immersive theatrical worlds and experimenting with the mechanics of multimedia performance, in both operatic and non-musical settings. Striving to bring deep emotional integrity and a renewed sense of humanity to her work, she is excited by distinct creative palettes, the telling of new and uncommon stories, and work that reshapes the traditional performer-audience relationship.

Samantha recently graduated from The Guildhall School in London, England, where she received a Master of Arts in Collaborative Theatre, Production, & Design and directed *Residue*, *Georgie & Gadget*, *Unearthed: Kinship*, and *The Kind of Flag I Would Make*. Her work explores an array of mediums, including opera, straight theatre, puppetry, contemporary circus, and live multimedia performance. In addition to receiving a Bachelor of Music from The New England Conservatory, she has also worked with her alma mater as an assistant director for productions of *La voix humaine*, *L'elisir d'amore*, and *The Turn of the Screw*. She looks forward to continuing her work as Assistant Director with Opera Neo and Chicago Summer Opera during their upcoming summer seasons.



NATALIE BARSHOW, costume designer

Natalie Barshow is a costume designer for stage and film, whose credits include: *La Belle et La Bete* (Opera Parallele); *Riley* (Windsor Film); *In the Red and Brown Water*, *Orestes 2.0*, *Letters From Cuba*, *An Iliad*, *The Underground*, *Monster* (UC San Diego); *Calafia at Liberty* (WOW '19); *Bondage* (Alter Theatre); *The Jungle Book* (MTC); *What we carry what we keep*, *Path of Miracles*, *News of the World*, *One Long Breath*, *Gifts of Solace* (ODC/Dance). Assistant credits: *Exotic Deadly or the MSG Play*, *The XIXth*, *Come Fall in Love*, *Henry V*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Shakespeare: Call and Response* (The Old Globe); *Mirrorflores* (MAW); *War of the Roses*, *Everybody*, *Quixote Nuevo*, *As You Like It*, *black odyssey*, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Cal Shakes). Natalie is a media artist whose

work explores embodiment and identity through clothing, fabric, projections, and animation. Natalie is a graduate of University of California San Diego, holding their MFA in Costume Design. Website: nataliebarshow.com



ELBA EMICENTE SANCHEZ, lighting designer

Elba Emicente Sanchez is a Mexican lighting designer for dance, theatre, and music performance. She started her career in 2010, in Puebla, Mexico. Since then, her work has been shown across Mexico, Spain, Canada and the United States.

Elba has experience working as a lighting designer in the academic institution Universidad de las Américas Puebla (MX) and with the inclusive platform for people with disabilities Ballet Incluyente (MX).

Her work has been supported by the State Council for Culture and Arts in the City of Puebla Mexico (PECDAP 2015-2016) and recently she won the Community Connections Fellowship given by the UC San Diego Division of Arts and Humanities in order to support her project *Lights On!*

Currently, Elba is a second year MFA Lighting Designer at UC San Diego and she is about to start her residency as an assistant lighting designer with La Jolla Playhouse in the production *Is It Thursday Yet?*



MICHAEL WOGULIS, production designer

Michael Wogulis (he/him/his) is a scenic designer originally from Laguna Beach, CA. He is a recent graduate of the MFA program in Design at the UC San Diego Department of Theatre and Dance, and previously received a BA in Theatre and Communications from the University as well. UC San Diego design credits: *Blu*, *Machinal*, *Hells Canyon* (Wagner New Play Festival), *Napoli*, *Peerless*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Dry Land*, and *Our Town*. Other credits include: *Ariodante* with Opera Neo (scenic designer), *La Lucha* with Optika Moderna (assistant), and *Here There Are Blueberries* with the La Jolla Playhouse (assistant).



JARED BLAKE HALSELL, production stage manager

Jared Blake Halsell is an equity stage manager based in San Diego and is originally from Ione, CA. Prior to moving to San Diego, he worked at The Harris Center for the Arts (formerly Three Stages) as a stage technician from 2011 – 2016. He graduated from SDSU in 2019 with his Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts, and UC San Diego in 2023 with his Master's Degree in Stage Management. Select credits: *Spring Awakening* (PSM; 2014), *The Who's Tommy* (PSM; 2016), *James and the Giant Peach* (ASM; 2019), The Old Globe's premiere of *Almost Famous: The Musical* (SM Intern; 2019), *Napoli* (PSM; 2022), *Perpetual (E)motion* (PSM; 2023), *Bunny Bunny* (PSM; 2023).



SUSAN NARUCKI, artistic director / producee

Susan Narucki serves as Distinguished Professor of Music in the Department of Music at UC San Diego. Over the span of thirty-five years, the American soprano has forged a unique path. Her dedication to the music of our time has led to critically acclaimed performances with musicians of the first rank, award-winning recordings and close collaborations with generations of composers.

Since joining the faculty at UC San Diego in 2008, Professor Narucki has been deeply engaged in commissioning, performing and producing chamber operas that illuminate critical issues in society. Her projects have earned support from Creative Capital, the MAP Fund for the Performing Arts, UC MEXUS, New Music USA and multiple awards from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Her most recent project was *Inheritance* (2018), a chamber opera composed by Grawemeyer Award winning composer Lei Liang. Co-presented by ArtPower and the Department of Music at UC San Diego, *Inheritance* addressed the complex issue of gun violence in America, earning praise as a powerful and haunting work.

Professor Narucki also commissioned, produced, and performed *Cuatro Corridos* a chamber opera with libretto by renowned Mexican novelist Jorge Volpi. Based on true events, the opera confronted the subject of trafficking of women across the U.S.-Mexican border. The project's unique combination of art and advocacy created remarkable partnerships between cultural, civic and academic institutions. Premiered in 2013, *Cuatro Corridos* garnered support and critical praise in the United States, Mexico, and Latin America. The opera was performed in San Diego, Tijuana, Dallas, Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Guadalajara, Colorado Springs, Amherst (MA) and Mexico City. A film of the opera produced by Imaginante Productions has had multiple broadcasts on CANAL 22, Mexico's Art and Culture Broadcast station. *Cuatro Corridos* was recorded for Bridge Records and earned a 2017 Latin Grammy Nomination.

Susan Narucki's most recent recording was *The Edge of Silence: Vocal Chamber Music of György Kurtág* (AVIE Records) The recording was included in the New York Times Best Classical Tracks and earned a 2019 Grammy nomination for Best Classical Vocal Recording.

The soprano's extensive discography ranges from operas of Louis Andriessen (Nonesuch), music of Claude Vivier (Phillips), works of Schoenberg and Zemlinsky (Chandos), Tavener's *Song of The Angel* (Angel/EMI), a solo disc of music of Aaron Jay Kernis (Koch) and music of Mario Davidovsky and James Primosch, both on Bridge Records.

Ms. Narucki's lifelong fascination with the songs of Charles Ives culminated in *The Light that is Felt* (New World) with longtime collaborator pianist Donald Berman. The disc earned international acclaim and was selected as Editor's Choice of BBC Music Magazine. The soprano earned a 2000 Grammy award for her participation on George Crumb's *Star-Child*, and a 2002 Grammy nomination for Best Classical Vocal Performance for Elliott Carter's *Tempo e Tempi*, both on Bridge Records.

As a soloist, Susan Narucki has earned international acclaim for luminous tone, superb musicianship, and distinctive artistry. With over a hundred and fifty world premieres, she is considered one of the leading interpreters of contemporary music of her generation.

She has appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, MET Chamber Ensemble, on the Great Performers Series at Lincoln Center, and at Carnegie Hall and with conductors including, Pierre Boulez, James Levine, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Michael Tilson Thomas, Oliver Knussen, Reinbert de Leeuw, Herbert Blomstedt, and Kent Nagano.

The soprano has been a featured soloist with contemporary music ensembles across the globe, including Asko/Schoenberg, London Sinfonietta, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Ensemble Modern, Nieuw Ensemble, ELISION, International Contemporary Ensemble, Alarm Will Sound, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Speculum Musicae, NYNME, Network for New Music and Collage. She has appeared at major European festivals in Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Warsaw, Torino, London, Vienna, Lisbon, Munich, and Amsterdam, at the Aspen and Ojai Festivals and at the Cabrillo Festival of New American Music with conductor Marin Alsop.

Ms. Narucki made her Netherlands Opera debut creating the role of Catherina Bolnes in Louis Andriessen's *Writing to Vermeer*, and traveled with the production to the Adelaide and Lincoln Center Festivals. She was also featured in the world premiere of Claude Vivier's *Rêves d'un Marco Polo*, directed by Pierre Audi. Of her performance, Vrij Nederland wrote "...one name we will never forget: Susan Narucki, the American soprano, who gave us all goosebumps and moved us to tears."

Her portrayal of "Mama" in Elliott Carter's *What Next?*, directed by Christopher Alden was praised by the New York Times as "compelling and luminous." Ms. Narucki reprised the role at the Opera de Montpellier in a double bill that included the world premiere of Mathis Nitschke's *Jetzt*. In addition, she created the role of Nora Lear in Pulitzer Prize winning composer Anthony Davis' opera *Lear on the Second Floor*.

A distinguished chamber musician, she has appeared at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Santa Fe, Norfolk, Da Camera, Bridgehampton, Moab, and Yellow Barn Chamber Music Festivals. Ms. Narucki has been a guest of the Brentano, Orion, and Schoenberg String Quartets. Her numerous recital appearances include Kleine Zaal in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Tisch Center for the Arts at the 92nd Street Y, Liszt Academy in Budapest, Princeton University, American Academy in Rome, and on the Horowitz Recital series at Yale University with pianist Boris Berman.

A dedicated mentor to the next generation of singers, Ms. Narucki has presented lectures and master classes at leading conservatories and universities around the globe. Her kallisti ensemble, formed in 2009, has introduced San Diego audiences to beautiful and unusual repertoire for voice. With repertoire ranging from Baroque to modern, kallisti's innovative concerts and chamber opera productions feature graduate vocalists from UC San Diego's Department of Music alongside distinguished guest artists. Professor Narucki is the inaugural director of Arts and Community Engagement, a new initiative of the Division of Arts and Humanities at UC San Diego that seeks to increase the connection of the vibrant UC San Diego campus arts community to the broader San Diego-Tijuana border region.

kallisti

kallisti was established in 2009 by Distinguished Professor of Music and award-winning soprano Susan Narucki, affording high quality collaborative experiences for graduate student singers in the DMA program in conjunction with guest artists. *kallisti's* performances and repertoire have been as singular and eclectic as the ever-changing musical landscape of UC San Diego. Our community of singers have performed numerous premieres in chamber opera and concert music and have been featured with the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus (Berio: *Sinfonia*) on the Green Umbrella Series at the Los Angeles Philhamonic (Reich: *Music for 18*) and in collaboration with San Diego Symphony's It's About Time Festival at Copley Symphony Hall. *kallisti* chamber operas have brought rarely heard masterworks and world premieres to the San Diego community, including Anthony Davis' [*Lear on the Second Floor*](#), Lei Liang's [*Inheritance*](#) and the San Diego premiere of Viktor Ullman's 1943 chamber opera [*Der Kaiser von Atlantis*](#) (2012) in a critically acclaimed production that has been viewed over 13,000 times worldwide on Vimeo.

Special thanks to:

The Department of Music, UC San Diego

Anthony Burr, Chair

Barbara Jackson, MSO

Jessica C. Flores, Production Manager

Jeremy Olsen, Production Specialist

David Espiritu, Production Specialist

Neal Bociek, Facilities Management

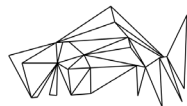
Olivia Rochelle and Maria Pineda, Fiscal Management

Judith Dolan, Distinguished Professor, Theater and Dance

Victoria Petrovich, Professor, Theater and Dance

Lisa Porter, Professor, Theater and Dance

Chris Kuhl, Assistant Professor, Theater and Dance



UC San Diego
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Department of Music

Contact us for information on upcoming concerts:

Music Box Office: (858) 534-3448 | <http://music.ucsd.edu/concerts>

Audience members are reminded to please silence all phones and noise-generating devices before the performance, and to remain seated during the performance. As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photography is allowed in the hall.

UC San Diego is a non-smoking campus.