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**RIOT**  
ENSEMBLE

## SINGERS OPEN CALL: SKY IN A SMALL CAGE 2024

**We are looking for six dynamic performers to form an ensemble of singers for our new commission by Rolf Hind and Dante Micheaux**

*If it would be more accessible to have this information in another format, please email [bridget@mahoganyopera.co.uk](mailto:bridget@mahoganyopera.co.uk)*

**Mahogany Opera** presents *Sky in a Small Cage*, a contemporary staged oratorio by **Rolf Hind**. It tells the story of the extraordinary life of Sufi poet, Rumi – and focussing on his relationship with his master, muse and beloved Shams who was (it is suspected) murdered at the hands of Rumi's brothers. The story will be told with words written specifically by award-winning poet, **Dante Micheaux** together with translations of Rumi's own poetry. An exceptional multi-disciplinary cast and mixed ensemble will bring each dramatic tableau to life using song, musical interludes and dance.

We're delighted to be partnering with Copenhagen Opera Festival and the Barbican to present the premiere performances of this production in August and September 2024.

***Drum sound rises on the air, its throb, my heart. A voice inside the beat says, 'I know you're tired, but come. This is the Way.'*** Rumi

***Lone flames burning near each other sometimes meet; come together without fear to share the air – beloved's feat when two the same endear.*** Dante Micheaux

### CREATIVE TEAM

Composed by **Rolf Hind**

Text for music by **Dante Micheaux**

With additional text from **Jelaluddin Mohammed Rumi**

Dramaturgy and direction **Frederic Wake-Walker**

Music Director **Aaron Holloway-Nahum**

Movement Director **Rosabel Huguet**

Designer **Sasha Balmazi-Owen**

### CAST

The Narrator – **Elaine Mitchener**

Rumi – **James Hall**

Shams – **Yannis François**

Kerra (Rumi's wife) / The Shaman of the birds – **Lore Lixenberg**

Onstage musicians - **Athelas Sinfonietta (Copenhagen) and Riot Ensemble (London)**

**We're now launching an open call to find the ensemble singers for the production: soprano, 2 altos, tenor, baritone, bass.**



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### **WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?**

We value diverse perspectives and would like to receive applications from a broad range of artists. We are committed to making these opportunities as inclusive and accessible as possible, including – but not only – by budgeting for access costs.

The six singers will be playing townspeople among other roles, and we are looking for a wide range of people in terms of appearance. Movement and physicality will play a prominent role in the production from all the singers and players (but no formal dance training is required).

You should have experience of performing contemporary work and be comfortable performing off copy. Although the six singers function as an ensemble, there are solo lines for all the parts.

### **VOCAL RANGE**

Soprano: A3 - A5  
Alto 1: G3 - F#5  
Alto 2: F#3 - D5  
Tenor: C3 - A4  
Baritone: A2 - F#4  
Bass: E2 - D4

### **DATES**

Singers must be available for rehearsals and performances in London and Copenhagen on the following dates: **5-9 August, 19-24 August, 7-8 September 2024.**

*NB Successful candidates will need to guarantee availability for these dates; NAs will not be granted.*

### **FEES AND EXPENSES**

The fee for this project will be based on a day rate of £265. We anticipate approximately 10 days' work in rehearsal and performances for the ensemble singers; a detailed schedule and therefore final total fee will be agreed at contracting stage in early 2024.

Travel, accommodation and per diems will be provided for time away from your home base.



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## **HOW TO APPLY**

To apply please submit:

- EITHER a written statement, no more than one side of A4 OR a video/audio recording of up to 3 minutes introducing yourself, explaining why you'd like to be part of this project and how it fits in with your current artistic practice or professional development, plus anything else you think is relevant.
- A CV or biography
- One recording of up to five minutes of you performing a contemporary piece. This can be video or audio and doesn't need to be professionally recorded.

Please email to Bridget Rennie at Mahogany Opera [bridget@mahoganyopera.co.uk](mailto:bridget@mahoganyopera.co.uk) by **9am on Friday 17 November 2023**. To enable us to monitor the diversity of the candidates we are attracting, we also ask all applicants to complete our anonymous diversity monitoring form; this can be done online here: <https://forms.gle/9MzKCt33Be6zqiVT8>

- We will make a shortlist, and notify all applicants by the end of the day on Friday 24 November 2023
- Working sessions to select the singers will take place on Tuesday 12 and Wednesday 13 December 2023 in London. If these dates or the location are impossible for you, please let us know in your application and we will discuss options if you are shortlisted.
  - For the working session, we will ask you to prepare a section of the score as well as a piece of your own choice (in English) which can be performed unaccompanied. The working session will be a group session with other candidates. Further details will be supplied if shortlisted.
- Some travel bursaries are available.
- We will hold sessions in an accessible venue.
- Please let us know after shortlisting if you have any access queries about the working sessions.

## MORE INFORMATION

In their third collaboration, Wake-Walker and Hind explore the life and poetry of the 13th-century Sufi poet and mystic Rumi. The main focus is his relationship with Shams, the teacher and spiritual friend who inspired the blazing passion and despair of his finest work.

The team are joined by the outstanding poet Dante Micheaux, in this work called *Sky In A Small Cage*. Micheaux, a longstanding fan and student of Rumi's work and of poetry in different spiritual traditions, has created a parallel contemporary language, which is used to flesh out the incidents in Rumi's life that continue to resonate through the ages: his meeting with Shams, the various stories around their relationship and Shams' subsequent disappearance, leading in turn to the agonising woe of Rumi as he grieves for his friend and ultimately becomes the progenitor of the devotional movement of the Whirling Dervishes (Mevlevi Sufis).

Along the way, Micheaux's new text examines the thoughts of Rumi's wife, his heirs, his townspeople in the city of Konya, the superstitious and lazy and those who plot against him; building to a panoptic scene in which all voices comment on Rumi's journey from object misery to a renewed acceptance and joy.

Other scenes are oratorio-like in flavour, and evoke a mood - the arrival of the caravan of players, the intense union of the two men in their forty-day solitary cloistering - through using Rumi's original poetry, largely in the justly famous and voluptuous translations by Coleman Barks.

Hind's music ranges from a landscape of bleak loneliness and silence at the heart of the tragedy, to a wild qawwali-inspired ecstasy in the scenes of dance and communal singing which bookend the work. There are sounds that nod strongly to the influence of Turkish and Arabic music in their use of modes, tunings and instruments, whilst at the same time creating a fresh language that conjures a sound world of 13th century Seljuk Turkey and yet stands out-of-time and place in its combination of instruments and sounds that evoke central Europe, Java, India, and Moorish civilisation.

There is also a strong flavour of campfire-like story-telling music in the scenes for the Narrator.

**Rumi** was a 13th-century [Persian Sunni Muslim poet, jurist, Islamic scholar, theologian,](#) and [Sufi mystic](#). Rumi's influence transcends national borders and ethnic divisions: [Iranians](#), [Tajiks](#), [Turks](#), [Greeks](#), [Pashtuns](#), other [Central Asian Muslims](#), and the Muslims of [South Asia](#) have greatly appreciated his spiritual legacy for the past seven centuries. His poems have been widely translated into many of the world's languages and transposed into various formats. Rumi has been described as the "most popular poet" and the "best selling poet" in the United States.



**Rolf Hind**'s career has established him as a major force as soloist, composer, recording artist, chamber musician, pedagogue, collaborator and concert planner. He has given recitals at many of Europe's leading new music festivals, and at Carnegie Hall, Sydney Opera House and on tours of Korea, Taiwan and Cuba.

Rolf has worked with many leading conductors, including Ashkenazy, Knussen, Rattle, David Robertson and Andrew Davis and appeared seven times at the BBC Proms. Orchestras he has worked with include the [Chamber Orchestra of Europe](#), [Munich Philharmonic](#), Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, [Malmö Symphony](#), and [Baltimore Symphony Orchestra](#), many appearances with the [London Sinfonietta](#), the [LPO](#), [RPO](#), and with all the BBC orchestras.

Composers who have worked with Rolf or written for him include Tan Dun, John Adams, Helmut Lachenmann, Unsuk Chin, Elliott Carter, George Benjamin and James MacMillan. Rolf's compositions include a piano concerto, *Maya-Sesha* (nominated for a British Composer's Award) and a concerto for accordion, premiered at London's Barbican Centre. Much of his music is inspired by India, where he travels often, while drawing on the technical adventurousness of performers including himself. An interest in new dance has resulted in collaborations including with choreographer Rui Horta on a large-scale tour of a new work, *Danza Preparata*, featuring John Cage's Sonatas and Interludes for prepared piano, with dancer. Other music, including chamber operas (*Way Out East*, for Copenhagen Opera House) a clarinet concerto *Sit Stand Walk* (CHROMA at Spitalfields Festival) and *Tiger's Nest*, a concerto for percussion, pianos and gamelan (Cheltenham Festival/South Bank Centre) has been commissioned and played widely throughout Europe. He is published by Ricordi and recorded on Da Capo, NMC and Neos labels.



**Dante Micheaux** is the author of *Circus* (Indolent Books, 2018), which won the Four Quartets Prize from the Poetry Society of America and the T. S. Eliot Foundation, and *Amorous Shepherd* (Sheep Meadow Press, 2010). His poems and translations have appeared in *African American Review*; *The American Poetry Review*; *Callaloo*; *Literary Imagination*; *magma*; *Poem-A-Day*, *Poetry*; *Poetry London*; *PN Review*; *The Rialto* and *Tongue*—among other journals and anthologies. Micheaux's other honours include the *Ambit Poetry Prize*, and fellowships from *The New York Times Foundation* and *Cave Canem Foundation*.

"The loved one is all, the lover just a screen." — Jalal Al-Din Rumi (1207-1273)



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**Frederic Wake-Walker** directs and produces opera and contemporary music theatre at major international opera houses and concert halls while also creating new, ground-breaking work with the independent scene in unconventional spaces. He has directed productions at La Scala Milan, Glyndebourne Festival and the Berlin Philharmonie. He was awarded best director at the inaugural Oper! Awards in Berlin in 2019.

He is one of the team behind Mica Moca Berlin, with whom he curates large-scale multi-disciplinary performances in found spaces.

As artistic director of Mahogany Opera, he conceives new works in collaboration with a diverse range of composers and makers with the aim of stretching the boundaries of what opera can be and who it is for.

### **About Mahogany Opera**

[Mahogany Opera](#) is a leading commissioner and producer of new opera and music theatre. Since 2014, we have created 23 new commissions and toured them extensively across the UK and internationally, receiving many accolades and awards for our boundary-pushing and inclusive work.

We are committed to developing diverse artists and audiences through three programmes:

Snappy Operas – award-winning participatory young people’s programme.

Various Stages – R&D programme supporting artists and new ideas.

Commissioning innovative work for the stage through partnerships.

### **About Copenhagen Opera Festival**

The [Copenhagen Opera Festival](#) lives, breathes and thrives in the heart of our beautiful city. Each summer, world-class artists take over the streets, canals, halls and homes with the ultimate combinations of song, theatre, film, drama, dance and storytelling: OPERA!

The Festival seeks out inspiring, passionate and bold artists and visionary spaces for Opera to flourish as well as keeping our much-loved traditions alive. The story first began in 2009, and in 2019, more than 40,000 people attended our events.

### **About Barbican**

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. We inspire more people to discover and love the arts. Our boundary-pushing music programme cuts across all genres, including work by contemporary artists, experimental collaborations and visits from the world’s best orchestras and soloists.



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### **About Riot Ensemble**

[Riot Ensemble](#) connects people to great contemporary music in concerts and events that are just as innovative, vibrant and rewarding as the music itself. The members of Riot are some of the top European soloists in new music, and with Riot they work as performers, curators, commissioners, and collaborators, creating and producing a diverse array of projects.

Based in London with a national and international reach, Riot is particularly active in bringing emerging international voices to the British new-music scene and since 2012 has given over 250 World and UK premieres by composers from more than thirty-five countries. In 2023, their annual call for scores received more than 500 submissions, and in the past six years has resulted in more than twenty commissions. Riot enjoys close working relationships with some of the most important composers of our time, including Liza Lim, Clara Iannotta, Chaya Czernowin, Ann Cleare, and Georg Friedrich Haas whose evening length piece *Solstices* was commissioned by Riot.

### **About Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen**

Since its formation in 1990, [Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen](#) has made a name for itself not only as a very active but also as a truly ground-breaking ensemble. Thanks to the high professional standards of all the musicians the ensemble has been able to take up a position as one of the most acclaimed and important Danish chamber ensembles.

The main emphasis is on contemporary music, from both Denmark and abroad. During the lifetime of the ensemble, they have given some 350 performances of works from the last half of the twentieth century, including many premieres, often written specifically for Athelas.