

London Festival of American Music presents the UK premiere of *As One*, a chamber opera about the journey of a transgender woman by Laura Kaminsky, Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed



Wednesday 15, Friday 17 & Saturday 18 September 2021, 19:30
The 8th London Festival of American Music
The Warehouse, Waterloo, London

As One

Music and Concept by **Laura Kaminsky**
Libretto by **Mark Campbell** and **Kimberly Reed**
Film by **Kimberly Reed**

Simon Wallfisch Hannah before, baritone
Arlene Rolph Hannah after, mezzo-soprano

Benjamin Davis director
Odaline de la Martinez conductor
Jarry Glavin dancer, choreographer
Lontano String Quartet

"As One forces you to think, simultaneously challenging preconceptions and inspiring empathy."
The New York Times

"Its universality is key to As One's becoming the hottest new American opera of recent years. It challenges us to ponder questions of authenticity, identity, compassion and self-love. And it does so without preachiness."
The Chicago Tribune

This year's **London Festival of American Music** is headlined by the **UK premiere of *As One***, a critically-acclaimed chamber opera by Laura Kaminsky, Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed. *As One* has had close to 50 productions across the US and abroad since its premiere in 2014 and, according to OPERA America, has become the most produced contemporary opera in North America.

Laura Kaminsky conceived of *As One* after reading an article in *The New York Times* about a transgender man in New Jersey and realized she wanted to create an opera about a transgender individual seeking their truth. In researching source material for the story, she saw **Kimberly Reed's** award-winning documentary, *Prodigal Sons* and reached out to the filmmaker to collaborate with the storytelling and to create an original film that would create the visual landscape for the opera. Kaminsky's concept was to write a monodrama, where a baritone and mezzo-soprano shared one role, "Hannah", a character in dialogue with herself. And, to create an intimate sonic setting for the opera, she scored it for string quartet. After meeting the Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award winning librettist **Mark Campbell**, she asked him to join the team and create a story for the opera. Mark proposed a narrative based partially on Kimberly's experiences as a trans person, structured the work as a song cycle in three parts and, together, they co-wrote the libretto.

As One is a universal story of self-discovery told from the point of view of a young transgender woman. With empathy and humour, the 15 songs trace Hannah's experiences from her youth in a small town to her college years – and finally traveling alone to a different country, where she realises some truths about herself.

***"Now I live in two cities
Adjacent to each other.
To one I bring
The outward trappings
Of femininity
In a small bag
And drive across
The bridge that connects them."***
Excerpt from *As One*

Pioneering Cuban-American conductor-composer and Festival Director **Odaline de la Martinez** conducts her **Lontano Ensemble** in the chamber opera, written for string quartet and two voices – Hannah after and Hannah before – sharing the part of a sole transgender protagonist. Starring **Arlene Rolph** and **Simon Wallfisch** as Hannah and dancer **Jarry Glavin**, the production will be directed by **Benjamin Davis**.

Composer **Laura Kaminsky** said:

"Hannah's story, so sympathetically crafted by Mark and Kim, is but one story of one transgender individual seeking their truest self, and finding joy in the process, despite the struggles along the way. At the same time, Hannah's story has a universality to it. She is not an archetype, but is fully human, sometimes goofy, sometimes self-absorbed, but always a real person that everyone can relate to and empathise with. As One has been produced close to 50 times across the US and abroad, and at every show, someone in the audience recognises Hannah in themselves – I hope this will be the case at its UK premiere."

Co-librettist **Kimberly Reed** said:

"Though the story of As One is in part based on my own experience as a trans person – a good place to start with any art, if you ask me – Mark and I also tried to tell a broader story in the libretto. Hannah's story isn't the story of every trans person, but we hope London audiences will see the universal in Hannah's specific experience. Like all of us, Hannah lives in a world bifurcated by traditional notions of gender, but we hope her internal dialogue between these two poles of gender lets every audience member see themselves in the same way Hannah sees herself: free."

Co-librettist **Mark Campbell** said:

"It has been one of the best experiences of my creative life attending the many productions of As One around the country and abroad, and connecting with the transgender community wherever the opera has played. The libretto's message of inclusivity has arrived at a time when transgender rights have been under attack in the U.S. and violence against trans

people continues to rise. I am indebted to Kimberly Reed for agreeing to write this story with me."

The premiere will be followed by a Q & A session with the cast, director and music director.

"The real secret of the opera's success [...] is that under everything lays a winning coming-of-age story. [...] In fact, As One is not so much an opera of ripped-out-of-the-headlines relevance than a traditional, if unconventional, love story. [...] In the end, As One boils down to the easily relatable condition of a person learning to love one's self. [...] By moving beyond the daily news, "As One" approaches admirable universality."

The Los Angeles Times

"a thoughtful and substantial piece as well as that rarest of operatic commodities – a story that lends itself to dramatization in music. [...] an insightful text that avoids the pitfall, all too easy with this material, of becoming sanctimonious. [...] effective, direct music"

The Washington Post

Further concerts in the eighth biennial London Festival of American Music, to be held from **Monday 13 – Saturday 18 September** at The Warehouse, London, will celebrate the Black Renaissance of Harlem and Chicago with pianist Samantha Ege (16 September), a focus on the composer Daniel Asia and 2021 Pulitzer Prize winner Tania León with the Lin-Linder Duo (14 September), and Lontano celebrates Black Culture in the US and the Caribbean with Mezzo Soprano Simone Ibbett-Brown (13 September). Ibbett Brown sings settings by the African American poet Langston Hughes in works by Margaret Bonds and Florence Price and Odaline de la Martinez *Four Afro Cuban Poems of Nicolas Guillen*. Afro Cuban poet Nicolas Guillén's poems were greatly influenced by the "Negritude" (Blackness) movement begun by Langston Hughes in Harlem, a movement that reached Europe and the Caribbean.

The week-long **London Festival of American Music** created by Odaline de la Martinez aims to promote the work of outstanding American composers who are well established in America but less well known to UK audiences. **Fourteen UK premieres** will be presented at this year's Festival. Continuing the Festival's long-standing commitment to equality, over half of the composers featured are women, and three quarters come from an ethnic minority background.

The award-winning Cuban American composer-conductor **Odaline de la Martinez** is one of Britain's most dynamic and gifted musicians, in 1984 becoming the first woman in history to conduct a BBC Promenade Concert at the Royal Albert Hall, later conducting Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* there in 1994.

Her chamber ensemble **Lontano** was formed in 1976 to commission, produce, perform and record the work of contemporary composers female composers and Latin American Classical music. In 2020, she co-curated Juilliard's Focus Festival to highlight *Pioneering Women Composers of the 20th Century* on the occasion of the centenary of women's suffrage in the USA.

London Festival of American Music: Listings

Monday 13 September 2021, 19:30

The Warehouse, London

Margaret Bonds *Three Dream Portraits*
by Langston Hughes

Augusta Read Thomas *Dream Catcher*
UK PREMIERE

Augusta Read Thomas *Caprice* UK
PREMIERE

Odaline de la Martinez *Four Afro Cuban*
Poems by Nicolas Guillén WORLD PREMIERE

Fred Lerdahl *Three Diatonic Studies* UK
PREMIERE

Florence Price *Four Songs: Fantasy in*
Purple; Forever; Song to the Dark Virgin;
Travel's End

Lontano Ensemble

Simone Ibbett-Brown mezzo-soprano

Pre-concert panel on the Black
Renaissance in the US and abroad with
Joan Anim Addo

Tuesday 14 September 2021, 19:30

The Warehouse, London

Daniel Asia *No Time*

Daniel Asia *Piano Set II* UK PREMIERE

Daniel Asia *IRIS* UK PREMIERE

Yuanyuan He *Lost In Colors* UK PREMIERE

Gabriela Lena Frank *Seis Cantos de los*
Campos UK PREMIERE

Tania León *Satiné* UK PREMIERE

Daniel Asia *Ragflections*

Lin-Linder Duo

Fanya Lin piano

Dan Linder piano

Pre-concert panel with Yuanyuan He,
Daniel Asia and Odaline de la Martinez

**Wednesday 15, Friday 17 &
Saturday 18 September 2021, 19:30**

The Warehouse, London

Laura Kaminsky/Mark
Campbell/Kimberly Reed *As One* UK
PREMIERE

Simon Wallfisch Hannah before,
baritone

Arlene Rolph Hannah after, mezzo-
soprano

Benjamin Davis director
Odaline de la Martinez conductor
Lontano String Quartet

Post-concert Q & A session with Benjamin
Davis, Odaline de la Martinez and the
cast of *As One*

Thursday 16 September 2021, 19:30

The Warehouse, London

William Grant Still *Summerland* UK
PREMIERE

Florence Price *Fantasie Nègre No. 4*

Florence Price *Fantasie Nègre No. 3*
WORLD PREMIERE

Zenobia Powell Perry *Homage*

Betty Jackson King *Four Seasonal*
Sketches

Nora Holt *Negro Dance* UK PREMIERE

Florence Price *Fantasie Nègre No. 2*

Margaret Bonds *Spiritual Suite* UK
PREMIERE

Florence Price *Fantasie Nègre No. 1*

Samantha Ege piano

Post-concert Q & A session with Dr
Samantha Ege

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Laura Kaminsky



Cited by *The Washington Post* as “one of the top 35 female composers in classical music,” Laura Kaminsky frequently addresses critical social and political issues in her work, including sustainability, war, and human rights. Possessing “an ear for the new and interesting” (*The New York Times*), “her music is full of fire as well as ice, contrasting dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection. It is strong stuff.” (*American Record Guide*). *Hometown to the World* (librettist Kimberly Reed; Santa Fe & Opera for All Voices, a co-commission with Hawai'i Opera Theatre) premieres in November 2021. *Finding Wright* (librettist Andrea Fellows Walters) premieres with Dayton Opera (2022). As co-librettist with novelist Lisa Moore, she is composing the score for *February* (Canada's Opera on the Avalon, 2023). *Fantasy: Oppens Plays Kaminsky*, featuring pianist Ursula Oppens, Cassatt String Quartet, pianist Jerome Lowenthal, and the ASU Symphony Orchestra/Maestro Jeffery Meyer was released in 2021 on the Cedille label. Kaminsky is head of composition at Purchase College Conservatory of Music /SUNY. She is a BMI composer.

laurakaminsky.com

Mark Campbell

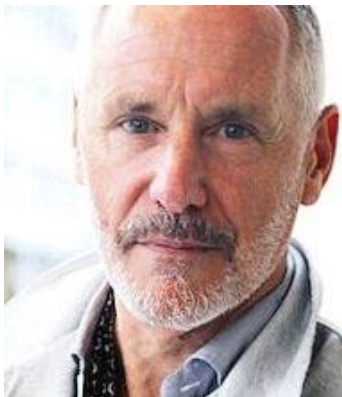


Photo: Marshall Light Studio

The Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning work of librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell is at the forefront of the contemporary opera scene in the U.S. He has written 39 opera librettos, lyrics for 7 musicals, text for 5 song cycles and 2 oratorios—and his works have been performed at more than 85 venues around the world. His best-known operas are *Silent Night*, *The Shining*, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, *Stonewall*, *Bastianello/Lucrezia*, *Volpone*, *Later the Same Evening* and *Elizabeth Cree*. Upcoming premieres include: *Edward Tulane* for Minnesota Opera, *A Nation of Others* for the Oratorio Society of New York, *The Secret River* for Opera Orlando, *Supermax* for Opera Saratoga, *A Thousand Acres* for Des Moines Metro Opera and the musical *Les Girls* for Théâtre Du Châtelet.

Kimberley Reed



Librettist and filmmaker Kimberly Reed was commissioned by a consortium of opera companies led by Santa Fe Opera to write *Hometown to the World*, along with composer Laura Kaminsky. With Mark Campbell she co-wrote the libretti for *Today It Rains* (Opera Parallèle, 2019), *Some Light Emerges* (Houston Grand Opera, 2017), and *As One* (the American Opera Project, 2014), which is the most frequently produced new opera in North America, according to Opera America magazine. Her film projections have been called "worthy of Fellini or Bergman" (SF Classical Voice). Ms. Reed's song cycle *Fierce Grace: Jeannette Rankin* premiered at the U.S. Library of Congress in 2017. Her nonfiction writing was published in "The Moth," a New York Times best-seller. Kim's documentary film *Prodigal Sons* won 14 awards and was

released in theaters and broadcast worldwide, and her Sundance award-winning 2018 documentary *Dark Money* was promptly named by Vogue magazine as one of the 66 Best Documentaries of All Time and shortlisted for the Academy Awards. She is a fellow of Yaddo and New York Foundation for the Arts.

Odaline de la Martinez



The award-winning Cuban American composer-conductor **Odaline de la Martinez** co-founded **Lontano**, her chamber ensemble, in 1976 whilst studying composition at the Royal Academy of Music, and the ensemble's impact on the perception of new music has been profound and enduring. With Lontano she commissions, produces, performs and records with the primary aim of bringing to the fore the work of living contemporary composers, female composers from all periods, and Latin American classical music. The ensemble's sphere of activity includes contemporary opera, music theatre, concerts, workshops, education projects, tours, broadcasts and recordings.

Always at the front of music innovation, Lontano was one of the first ensembles to form its own record company when in 1992 it established the **LORELT** label (Lontano Records Ltd). Now with a catalogue of 44 recordings, LORELT features soloists as well as other ensembles and is noted for its archive of important and often neglected composers.

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