



HUB CITY
OPERA AND DANCE™
COMPANY NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ



藤原光起筆

Composer: **MICHI WIANCKO**
Librettist: **DEBORAH BREVOORT**
MURASAKI'S MOON

Commissioned by OnSite Opera, MetLive Arts, and American Lyric Theater



Prelude to the opera
TRADITIONAL JAPANESE DANCING
The Japanese Folk Dance Institute of New York

An opera for all ages, **Murasaki's Moon** is a journey into the world of Lady Murasaki, the 11th century lady-in-waiting at the imperial court of Japan who changed the world of literature with her ground-breaking creation, **The Tale of the Genji**. Her extraordinary creation is attributed to be the first novel ever written.

The opera, set to music that includes beautiful Japanese instrumentation, is an inspiring story that connects present-day audiences to Murasaki's struggles, which are not unlike our own in the 21st century.

Hub City Opera and Dance Company

President: Annamaria Stefanelli

presents:

Prelude to the Opera:

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE DANCING

Japanese Folk Dance Institute of New York

Artistic Director: Momo Suzuki

Director: Kevin Suzuki

and

MURASAKI'S MOON

Composer: MICHİ WIANCKO

Librettist: DEBORAH BREVOORT

Produced by On Site Opera and The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Created for The Astor Chinese Garden Court, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Premiered on May 17, 2019

Commissioned by On Site Opera, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and American Lyric Theater

MURASAKI'S MOON is produced by special arrangement with the Author and Elaine Devlin Literary, Inc.,

1115 Broadway, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10010

Sunday, May 19, 2024 – 2:00 p.m.

Avenel Performaing Arts Center

Avenel, NJ

PROGRAM TEAM

Conductor: **David Brown**
Stage Director: **Annamaria Stefanelli**
Costume Designer: **Beth Goldenberg**

CAST

Lady Murasaki: **Huijie Sun**
The Genji: **Giwooung Kim**
The Priest: **Yunxuan Zhu**

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Cello: **Ansel Cohen**
Koto: **Yoko Reikano Kimura**
Percussion: **Julian Dippolito**
Viola: **Tina Wagner**
Violin I: **Francine Bloom**
Violin II: **Ashlyn Olson**
Taiko, Japanese Flutes: **Fumi Tanakadate**

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Manager: **Rachel Resnik**
Assistant Production Manager: **Charlie Delaney**
Assistant Stage Manager: **David Manning**
Lighting Design: **Jason Harrell**
Technician: **Sean Donohue**

SCENIC DESIGN TEAM

Rory Angelicola
Rand Angelicola

PROJECTION SLIDE DESIGN

Géza G. Schenk

CONDUCTOR'S NOTES

Michi Wiancko's alluring, dramatic, colorful setting of Deborah Brevoort's libretto is a masterclass in modern opera composition. Unbound by the confines of meter, Wiancko fluidly adapts speech to melody in conversational rhythm, fully immersing the listener into the story of Lady Murasaki. Wiancko's approach to melody and harmony unapologetically embraces tonality while exploring conventional dissonances as a catalyst for drama rather than a foundational idiom. The orchestration seamlessly integrates Eastern timbres—the Japanese flute, koto, and taiko drum—with the Western string quartet and percussion to depict Brevoort's florid imagery as a tapestry of auditory pigments both conducive to the story and tantalizing to experience.

The characters of **Murasaki's Moon** are heralded not only by leitmotif, but by elaborate soundscapes, disseminating nuanced facets of their personalities to the listener. From Lady Murasaki's first entrance, leaping the wide and unusual interval of a major 9th, we understand her ambition and creative spirit. Like an artist's mind, Murasaki's music, and that of the characters from her novel that she plays, is ornate, melismatic, and deeply evocative of her emotional state. Genji, Murasaki's creation and title character of her exalted text, is a seductor whose presence is almost mystical. A fictional character with self-awareness, Genji's music juxtaposes the ethereal and the romantic. In stark contrast, the Buddhist Priest is a disciple of the old guard, imposing tradition and scorning Murasaki's creative endeavors. His music is a dichotomy of conservatism and piousness, bound to unwavering meter and rhythm; and alternatively, sheer off-kilter indignation.

— David Brown

STAGE DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The brilliant libretto written by Deborah Brevoort, coupled with the moving and dramatic music of Michi Wianko, was a joy to stage. The story is woven with so many multidimensional realities, much like our own world that is filled with contradictions – the mundane coupled with the quest for fulfillment, and the recognizable struggle that Murasaki has as a woman and artist. When does reality become passion and passion translate into reality? What happens when the world is not shaped to who you really are? What happens when beauty becomes suffering? The story weaves themes of tradition with the creative genius of a woman who defied her century – a century when women were not supposed to write and read as Murasaki did, where her name was not even recorded when she was born because she was not a boy.

In speaking with Deborah Brevoort, I was moved by her statement about her work. She said, “The story is about the psychological damage of searching for the perfect woman.” Isn’t this what we struggle with today? The perfection of an image, particularly with younger girls who grow up wondering what it is to be perfect. And the young men too, who struggle with our society’s own ideas of perfection. The story is so beautifully expressed in Genji’s and Lady Murasaki’s relationship – he is her creation and yet in being so masterfully created, he takes on a life of his own. Additionally, we see in him Murasaki’s own reflection. Her own struggle with this idea of beauty and truth, as Genji struggles to capture what beauty and perfection is himself. Murasaki struggles as she looks at the ladies-in-waiting trying to be perfect. Perhaps we too see a little of Murasaki in ourselves and can relate to her struggles.

In the end, it is Murasaki’s own creation, Genji, that gives her the light of truth – follow what is honest and genuine; follow who you are: the author of your life and of your creation. Murasaki’s Moon is a story of opposites that come together as one in the final genius that is Lady Murasaki. And it pays tribute to the genius in all of us. Can we stand for our freedom and the freedom of all the Lady Murasaki’s of the world, the creative genius that causes a brilliant light? It is worth it, in my opinion. Thank you to the authors for this marvelous work!

— Annamaria Stefanelli

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Deborah Brevoort, librettist, writes plays, musicals and operas. In 2023, she was awarded the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize from Opera America and served as the Librettist Mentor for Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative at the Kennedy Center. Deborah is best known for her plays *The Women of Lockerbie*, which is produced internationally, and *My Lord, What a Night*, about Marian Anderson and Albert Einstein, which was produced at the historic Ford's Theatre in Washington DC. Her Noh Drama about Elvis Presley, *Blue Moon Over Memphis*, will tour Japan in 2024. A three-time winner of the Frontiers Festival at Ft. Worth Opera, she has written ten opera librettos which were commissioned and produced by leading companies in the U.S. such as *Glimmerglass*, *Cincinnati Opera*, *Chicago Opera Theater*, *On-Site Opera*, *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, *Opera Colorado*, *American Lyric Theater*, *The Decameron Opera Coalition*, and *Fargo Moorhead and Ft. Worth Operas*. Her operatic works include: *The Knock*, with Aleksandra Vrebalov (made into a film, available on YouTube); *Murasaki's Moon* with Michi Wiancko; *Embedded* and *Albert Nobbs* with Patrick Soluri; *Dinner 4 3* with Michael Ching; *Quamino's Map* with Errolyn Wallen; and new adaptations of Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* (The Polar Bat) and Mozart's *The Impresario* for the Anchorage Opera. She is a two-time winner of the Frederick Loewe award in musical theatre for *Coyote Goes Salmon Fishing*, with Scott Davenport Richards, and *King Island Christmas*, based on the Alaskan children's book, with David Friedman.

She teaches in the NYU Graduate Musical Theatre Writing program and is a mentor to the NBO Musical Theatre Initiative in Nairobi, Kenya. She will also be the librettist mentor for the 2024 Composer Librettist Development program at ALT. In 2024 she was named a Fulbright Specialist in theatre, musical theatre and opera by the US State Department.

David Matthew Brown is the founder and Artistic Director of *illumine*, a violin-voice-piano trio ensemble concert series that champions its unconventional instrumentation, works by living composers, obscure works of history, and performance practice reform. He has performed as a soloist with orchestras including the *Csik Chamber Orchestra* (Romania)—with which he was also guest concertmaster—the *Vidin Sinfonietta* (Bulgaria), and the *Newark Symphony*. Equally active as a

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composer, David's compositions have been performed, commissioned, and/or recorded by the New Russia State Symphony Orchestra, Csik Chamber Orchestra, Vidin Sinfonietta, International Opera Theater, Network for New Music, LINK Ensemble, 6ixwire Project, Hub City Opera, and Alter Ego Chamber Opera, of which he was a founding member. Moreover, David is a tuba player; Celtic and Klezmer multi-instrumentalist; and has composed over fifty Celtic jigs, reels, hornpipes, and other dance forms. He holds music degrees from West Chester University (BM, '11) and the University of Delaware (MM, '13); and currently serves as Music Director of the Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, PA. By night, he is a grassroots activist, progressive campaign consultant, host of the Unreasonable podcast for the separation of Church & State, and Chair of the Secular Democrats of Pennsylvania.

Beth Goldenberg, costume designer, is a New York-based costume designer for opera, theatre and dance. Selected design credits include: Macbeth, Stabat Mater, the little match girl passion (Glimmerglass Opera); The Mother of Us All (Metropolitan Museum of Art & Juilliard); The Immersive Coffee Cantata Experience, Murasaki's Moon, The Guilty Mother, The Secret Gardener (On Site Opera); Der Freischütz, La Susanna, Don Giovanni, Carmen, Lucia di Lammermoor (Heartbeat Opera); Circus: Wandering City (BAM Next Wave); Fiddler on the Roof (Philadelphia Orchestra & University Musical Society); and Henry V, Queens For A Year (Hartford Stage). Associate Artist, Heartbeat Opera. MFA, NYU-Tisch.

Giwooung Kim (Genji) from South Korea, studied voice at Seoul National University Music College. He made his operatic debut in 2007 as Gastone in Verdi's La Traviata with the Seoul Metropolitan Theater. After his debut, he performed in several operas, including Don Carlos, La Forza del Destino, Andrea Chenier, Manon Lescaut, and Tosca between 2007 and 2010. After graduating Seoul National University in 2013, Giwooung worked in the Ministry of National Defense Military Band and performed for VIPs such as President Barack Obama and Pope Francis. After his military service, he was accepted to the Cleveland Institute of Music in 2018, and completed his P.S.D. (Professional Studies Diploma) in May 2020. He also completed his M.M. (Master of Music) at the Manhattan School of Music in 2022. During his studies in the States, Giwooung

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Kim has performed many leading tenor roles such as Rodolfo (La Bohème), Tamino (The Magic Flute), Prunier (La Rondine), Fisherman (Le Rossignol), and he joined Lee Mingwei's project You are not a stranger as a male soloist.

Giwooung Kim joined Festival Napa Valley: Manetti Shrem Opera program in 2022 and Sarasota Opera Apprentice Artist Program in 2023 winter. Currently, Giwooung Kim is active as a professional opera singer predominantly in the New York and New Jersey areas.

Yoko Reikano Kimura (Koto) is one of the most captivating artistic voices of Japanese koto and shamisen, consistently praised by critics for her musical elegance and versatile repertoire. The New York Times described her playing and singing as "superb." San Francisco Examiner also praised, "an elegant refined presence perfectly poised, she played with precision, beauty and the utmost confidence."

Based in New York and Japan, Kimura has concertized around the world, including prestigious venues such as the Warsaw Autumn Festival, Nova Arts in Bordeaux, Vilnius Festival, The Uijeongbu Music Theatre Festival, Israel Festival, Le Festival Mondial des Theatres de Marionnettes in France.

Since Kimura moved to the US in 2010, her performances has been featured at renowned venues such as John F. Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Boston Symphony Hall, the United Nations, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Park Avenue Armory, New York Live Arts, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Asia Society Texas Center and Japan Society.

Kimura has worked with world-renowned musicians and artists such as Heiner Goebbels, Daron Hagen, Toshi Ichianagi, Wiener Soristen Trio, Basil Twist, Yasuko Yokoshi, among many others. Kimura has recorded for Albany Records, MSR Classics and various labels in Japan, and her performances have been broadcasted on NPR's Performance Today, WQXR, WKCR, NHK-FM and Nippon TV's The MUSIC DAY.

As part of her mission to promote the brilliance of traditional Japanese music, which is still being passed on from generation to generation after many centuries, Kimura has been presenting her concert series, Four Seasons in New York - Gems of Japanese Music since 2015 and

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has performed over 60 traditional Japanese masterworks. Her awards include the First prize at the prestigious 10th Kenjun Memorial National Koto Competition, the First prize at the 4th Great Wall International Music Competition and the Osaka Chinese Counsel Award. Kimura graduated from the Tokyo University of the Arts and Music, where she was awarded the top prize for her graduation recital and continued her studies at the NHK (Japanese national broadcasting corporation) School for Young Professionals.

Annamaria Stefanelli (stage director) is a professional opera singer, director, editor, published poet, and songwriter, playwright, and educator who also owns her own companies, A&R Artists and A&R Music Education. She has a B.A. in Drama and English from Franklin and Marshall College, a Masters in English and American Literature from New York University and is currently studying for a degree in Opera Studies from Rose Bruford College in the United Kingdom. Annamaria has directed both straight plays, musicals, and operas, including three productions for Hub City Opera and Dance: *Goyescas* by E. Granados, *Le Pauvre Matelot* by D. Milhaud, and *La Serva Padrona* by G. B. Pergolesi. She is the creator and principal artist of an opera program for children called Opera Fun, which she has performed to over 900 students. She is also the creator of a lecture performance program on the history of Italian Opera. Ms. Stefanelli has also released a CD, *The Gifts of a Classical Christmas*.

Huijie Sun (Lady Murasaki) is making her professional debut in the United States in the role of Lady Murasaki for Hub City Opera and Dance's production of *Murasaki's Moon*. Ms. Sun is currently studying at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, pursuing a Graduate Performance Diploma under the guidance of Professors Margarete Baroody and Denyce Graves. Sun grew up in Hohhot, the capital city of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. She has performed the role of Prince Orlovsky in *Die Fledermaus* at the Peabody Opera and was a recipient of the Platinum Prize at the Canadian International Music Competition. Ms. Sun was also awarded Second Prize in the London Classical Music Competition in 2022.

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Fumi Tanakadate (Taiko, Japanese Flute) is a versatile music artist, specializing in piano, Japanese percussion and bamboo flute, with a unique combination of expertise in European Classical music and a background in traditional folk dance and music from Japan. Fumi studied and worked extensively with Kaoru Watanabe, performing at such venues as Joe's Pub, National Sawdust, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, BAM, Pioneer Works, the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, the Rubin Museum of Art, Super Deluxe in Tokyo, National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts in Taiwan and at PASIC, Percussive Arts Society International Convention. Fumi has also collaborated with Shane Shanahan of the Silkroad Ensemble, Brooklyn Raga Massive, Chieko Kojima and Yuta Sumiyoshi of KODO, Alicia Hall Moran, Sonoko Kawahara (theater director), Parijat Desai (dancer), Garrett Fisher (composer), Satoshi Takeishi, Kiyohiko Semba, Ying-Chieh Wang, Woonjung Sim, and Niles Luther. Fumi currently teaches at Wesleyan University and serves as the primary instructor at Kaoru Watanabe Taiko Center, giving classes and educational workshops at local schools and colleges. She has also taught at North American Taiko Conference, East Coast Taiko Conference, and European Taiko Conference. As a classical pianist, Fumi has performed throughout Japan, the Tri-State Area, Austria, and Spain. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Earth and Environmental Sciences from Wesleyan University and a Master of Music degree in piano performance from Manhattan School of Music.

Michi Wiancko, composer is a versatile and highly imaginative composer, violinist, and collaborator, whose multi-faceted creative projects and organizational work prioritize artistic discovery, as well as community resilience and social change. Recent chamber music commissions include works for Boston Chamber Music Society, Carnegie Hall's Ensemble Connect, Schubert Club, Accordo, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, East Coast Chamber Orchestra, Anne Akiko Meyers, Ecstatic Music Festival, Aizuri Quartet, Parker Quartet, Friction Quartet, and the Jupiter Quartet, to name a few. Michi's first opera, Murasaki's Moon, for which she was a 2018 recipient of an Opera America Commissioning Grant, premiered at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in May of 2019 and was commissioned by Met Live Arts, On Site Opera, and American Lyric Theater. Since then, she has composed two more operas: Arkana

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Aquarium, commissioned by Experiments in Opera premiering in 2021, and The Stream, commissioned by Baldwin Wallace and the Cleveland Lyric Theater, premiering in 2022. Michi has also composed music for short and feature-length films, commercials, and for her own band, Kono Michi.

A passionate collaborator, Michi has been fortunate to work and tour with renowned artists from across a vast musical spectrum: Gabriela Lena Frank, Missy Mazzoli, PaviElle French, Vijay Iyer, Steve Reich, Jenn Wasner, Emily Wells, Laurie Anderson, Judd Greenstein, William Brittelle, Paula Matthusen, Kaoru Watanabe, Qasim Naqvi, Mark Dancigers, Satoshi Takeishi, Mazz Swift, Cristina Pato, Sandeep Das, Jessie Montgomery, Emanuel Ax, Yo-Yo Ma, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Matt Berninger, Dolio the Sleuth, and Rench. A member of Silkroad and the East Coast Chamber Orchestra, she has also performed with The Knights, A Far Cry, Mark Morris Dance Group, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Alarm Will Sound, and International Contemporary Ensemble. Described by Gramophone Magazine as an "alluring soloist with heightened expressive and violinistic gifts," Michi gave her violin solo debuts with the New York Philharmonic and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, performed her recital debut in Weill Hall, and released a solo album of new works on New Amsterdam called Planetary Candidate, as well as an album of the complete violin solo works of Émile Sauret on Naxos. She has recorded collaborative projects for Nonesuch Records and Tzadik Records. A native of California, Michi holds degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music and Juilliard, where she studied with Donald Weilerstein and the late Robert Mann, respectively.

Yunxuan Zhu (The Priest) is a tenor based in New York City, and studies under the tutelage of Michael Paul. Recently, Yunxuan demonstrated remarkable flexibility by stepping in as Goro in Madama Butterfly with less than two day's notice with New Jersey Lyric Opera. This season, audiences can see his portrayal of the Buddhist Priest in Murasaki's Moon with Hub City Opera and Dance Company, as well as the Baker and the Cat in the educational outreach production of Krása's Brundibár, and Marjorie Margery Ensemble in the world premiere of Welcome to the Madness with Opera Steamboat. Additionally, Yunxuan will undertake the

preparation of Alfredo from *La Traviata* and Rodolfo from *La Bohème* with Vincerò Academy. Yunxuan previously captivated audiences as Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* with Miami Music Festival. Prior to the 2023-2024 season, Yunxuan earned acclaim as Stan in *Soup Stone*, David in Jake Heggie's *If I Were You*, Tamino from *Die Zauberflöte*, Basilio from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Nemorino from *L'elisir d'amore* with Opera Steamboat, Nightingale Opera Theater, Butler Opera Center, Operativo Houston, Opera in the Heights, and Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Houston, among others. Additionally, Yunxuan was featured as the tenor soloist in Schubert's *Mass No.2* with Houston Baptist University under the baton of Dr. Terre Johnson, where he was also a two-year finalist for the Aria and Concerto Competition. He was one of the finalists in the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Houston Inaugural Vocal Scholarship Competition. Born in China and raised as a child actor in Singapore, Yunxuan brings a diverse background to his performances.

