



Jeffrey Mousseau & Paul Ricciardi
Directors

PRESENTS



August 7 - 16, 2020

Photo: Maria Baranova



HEATHER CHRISTIAN
None:
A Practical Breviary



FRANK BOYD
Live from
Lodge # 274 :
Auction Preview
(working title)



MARIAH AYSCUE
Mother Hope



**Council on
the Arts**

Ancram Opera House 2020 season is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

SUMMER PLAY LAB

It is an honor to be collaborating with three visionary theatre artists—Heather Christian and Frank Boyd who we are pleased to welcome back to AOH and Mariah Ayscue who we are so excited to introduce—as part of our first Summer Play Lab.

In moving to a virtual platform this season, we wanted to find a path to making theatre that would feel rewarding and complete. A full production didn't seem viable, however, the prospect of supporting new work in its formative stages struck us as a worthy endeavor with a potentially lasting impact. These projects, ultimately destined for in-real-life productions, are in many ways going through a typical development process and benefiting from you, through your presence tonight, informing the artists as they continue their work well after this presentation.

Central to AOH's mission is the act of telling stories—whether through spoken word, song or other means—as a way for our community to connect and learn. While we didn't ask Mariah, Frank or Heather to address these extraordinary times in their work, each is ultimately responding in a unique, powerful and deeply personal way to the magnitude of this moment. By forging ahead to make new performances right now, these artists offer us an opportunity to see ourselves anew in a changing world.

Thank you for being here.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Paul". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jeff Mousseau & Paul Ricciardi
Directors



MOTHER HOPE

written and directed by Mariah Ayscue

Presented in collaboration with Girl Be Heard

Characters

Buffy, an Indigenous, Queer woman who grew up as a foster child until she was adopted in NYC. She works as an activist and longs to be a social worker.

Liv, a Black, Queer woman who grew up in the South End of Montclair, NJ. She also has Bipolar 1 disorder and is recovering from an eating disorder. She works as a barista, movie theater employee, activist and poet.

Time

Covid-19 era

Setting

A blank space that is sometimes their apartment in the South End of Montclair, NJ and sometimes a poetic projection of the world they're living in.

Approximate running time is 50 minutes

Bios

MARIAH AYSCUE (She/Her/Queen) is a spoken word poet, playwright, director, performer, activist, healer and liberator from Montclair, New Jersey. Mariah has trained at ATC Studios in Clifton, New Jersey and is a graduate directing fellow and company member with Girl Be Heard in Brooklyn, NYC. She dreams of reclaiming the narratives, education and healing of the QTBIPOC community. It is the work she wants to do for the rest of her life. Instagram: @mariah.ayscue

CAMERON SILLIMAN (Liv) received a BA in Theater and Spanish at Muhlenberg College in 2018. Their most recent professional credits include Maria in *Twelfth Night* (Hamlet Isn't Dead) and Louise in *Ghost, The Musical* (Winnepesaukee Playhouse). Other credits include *For Colored Girls...* (Lady in Red), *Hair* (Sheila), and *Avenue Q* (Gary Coleman). When Cameron isn't performing they are marathoning *Lord of the Rings* (again) or practicing a foreign language.

CLARA TRISTAN (Buffy) is a New York-based actress. Born and raised in Panama City, Republic of Panama, where she started her training and career. Her profound love for experiencing and developing her craft as an actress has led her to New York. She is a fierce actress with a huge heart and immense vulnerability. She speaks Spanish and English. New York credits include *Pegao* written by Cin Martinez which also had a regional run, and the Off-Broadway run of *Two Girls* directed by Karen Carpenter. Among her film credits include *The Unknown* (TVN Series), *The Retrievers* (Adam Johns), and *Hands of Stone* (Fuego Films). She has received training worldwide with international figures such as Tito Ochoa, Ted Gregory, Susan Aston, Juanfer Andrés and Esteban Roel; all in different techniques for film and stage. She feels honored to be part of this project and fortunate to be telling this story. “Mother Hope, I won’t forget you and maybe through this experience maybe the world won’t either.”

GIRL BE HEARD, based in NYC, develops, amplifies, and celebrates the voices of young women through socially conscious theatre-making. Building self-esteem, growing individual talents and empowering girls to become leaders in and advocates for their communities is Girl Be Heard’s unique model. Founded in 2008, GBH reaches over 200 youth each year through year-long programs and thousands more through performances—including at the White House, United Nations, State Department, TED conferences, and in underserved communities locally and globally. GBH’s leadership team includes executive director Chiwoniso Kaitano and artistic director Kim Sykes who, as a performer, appeared at AOH in last year’s Crystal Radio Sessions.



LIVE FROM THE LODGE #272: AUCTION PREVIEW

(working title)

written and performed by Frank Boyd

FRANK BOYD is a NY-based actor and writer. Original works include *The Holler Sessions* (Guthrie Theater and performed at Ancram Opera House in 2017) and *Patti & The Kid* (On the Boards). In 2020, Frank performed in NYC and on tour with Half Straddle in *Is This A Room*. Frank has also performed with Elevator Repair Service in *Gatz* and *The Select*, with Young Jean Lee’s Theater Company in *Straight White Men*, and with the TEAM in *Architecting*. TV: *Z Nation*. Film: *Thin Skin*.

Approximate running time is 30 minutes



NONE: A PRACTICAL BREVIARY Composed, written and performed by Heather Christian

A note from Heather Christian:

A Breviary (also referred to as “The Divine Offices” or the “Canonical Hours”) is a series of 8 short masses that are sung at 3-hour intervals throughout the day by Catholic cloistered nuns and monks.

A Practical Breviary is an attempt to adapt these masses for atheists and agnostics and amateur physicists and devout of all religions. The “None” (the piece you will spend time with tonight) is a mass that takes place at 3pm, which, in Christian traditions, is an hour of despair and isolation. To me, in this current pandemic, it’s not particularly important we do this at 3pm today, as in our current moment, time seems to have gone haywire.

This rendition of a “None” is meant to be an alchemistic ritual that helps shift our rooms of isolation into those of solitude, which is a small color shift, but an important one nonetheless. The sound design you will hear up against this mass is taken from NASA recordings of the “music” different planets in our solar system are making, and I have used them inside the music metaphorically so that the “heavens” can respond to or join in these refrains. We start at the sun and move outward until we are out of the solar system, and hopefully back into our own rooms, where we’ve cleared out a little bit more space for contemplation and peace.

Text in the final piece lovingly adapted from James Baldwin

Approximate running time is 55 minutes

HEATHER CHRISTIAN is an Obie Award-winning composer/performer and 2018 Sundance Institute Time Warner Fellow. Recent composing/performing credits include her own work *Oratorio for Living Things* (Ars Nova), *Prime: A Practical Breviary* (Playwrights Horizons Soundstage), *Animal Wisdom* (The Bushwick Starr) in addition to being a lead artist on devised works *Mission Drift* (Nat’l Theater London), *The World Is Round* (BAM). Recent Film and TV: *The Shivering Truth* (Adult Swim), *Lemon* (Dir. Janicza Bravo). She was named one of *Time Out NY’s* Downtown Innovators To Watch and is a 2019 Harold and Mimi Steinberg Trust commissionee. She’s released 10 records, taught at NYU and Princeton, operates her own recording studio in Beacon, NY, and can be seen regularly in concert as *Heather Christian & the Arbournauts*. www.heatherchristian.com. Instagram: @hcarbournauts



The Angram Opera House presents a mix of contemporary theatre, alternative cabaret, storytelling and community programs. Located in a former grange hall in rural Columbia County, AOH offers a unique opportunity to directly engage, up close with visionary theatre artists at the top of their field, yet rarely seen in our region.

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ABOUT ANCRAM OPERA HOUSE

AOH, celebrating its fifth anniversary under new leadership, offers an April through December season of theatre, cabaret, literary, storytelling and community programs.

AOH's theatre productions include *HOMEBOY* (Berkshire Theatre Critics Award for Outstanding Solo Performance); *WE'RE GONNA DIE*; *THE BROTHERS SIZE* (Berkshire Theatre Critics nominations for Outstanding Ensemble and Outstanding Play); the American premiere of *IN PRAISE OF ELEPHANTS*; *PERFORMING OLANA*, an original site-specific piece staged at Olana; *AUNT LEAF*, also presented in Aguascalientes, Mexico; and the premiere of a new musical adaptation of *THE SNOW QUEEN*.

As an incubator of alternative cabaret, AOH hosts acclaimed artists including Taylor Mac in *HOLIDAY SAUCE* which went on to NYC's Town Hall and San Francisco's Curran Theater, Diana Oh who was subsequently produced at The Bushwick Starr in Brooklyn, and Stew and longtime collaborator Heidi Rodewald in *STAGED DIVES* which was then performed at Joe's Pub in NYC.

CRYSTAL RADIO HOUR features new short stories written by Hudson Valley and Tri-state regional writers, including Wesley Brown, David Rabe and Courtney Maum, that are read by professional actors.

Community storytelling and theatre-making programs are very much at the heart of AOH's programming. *REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES (RPRS)*, presented twice a year, features local residents sharing personal, authentic narratives. *LOCAL CHARACTERS*, debuting this year, showcases community members in fun, free-wheeling conversations. AOH leads storytelling workshops for young people at the Northeast Community Center and, this fall, 5th and 6th graders at the Taconic Hills School. For adult learners, AOH also offers an annual spring intensive workshop focusing on a particular area of theatre-making such as songwriting in 2019 and playwriting in 2020.

AOH MISSION

Ancram Opera House creates meaningful encounters through the performing arts that forge connection. Through its productions, AOH offers a unique opportunity to directly experience, up close, visionary theatre artists at the top of their field yet seldom seen in the region. AOH's community-based arts and storytelling programs with local residents encourage day-to-day participation in the performing arts. AOH seeks to foster a sense of place for a rural region and contribute to a healthier and happier community.

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To help bring performances and educational programs to the region, we invite you to become a Friend of the Ancram Opera House. We need the help of individuals like you who understand what it means to have an arts and culture space like this in Ancram.

Friends of Ancram Opera House will be thanked in printed programs, and also receive invitations to special Friends' events. Most importantly, by becoming a Friend of AOH, you join a very special community of individuals ensuring that our activities can benefit all in the area, including free performances and theater workshops for kids.

Ancram Opera House is a 501c3 nonprofit organization; contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law. All funds raised go directly to support annual programming costs. Thank you for whatever you can do!

Yes, I'd like to become a friend of Ancram Opera House!

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