

MOTHER

MENARCHE

IN COSMIC UTERO

M.T.H.R

THE LULLABY

A co-production of NIDA and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music

This special collaboration premieres four short new operas created by postgraduate students from NIDA and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music that explore aspects of the mother and motherhood, from personal to political, from quirky to queer. From the bloodlines of womanhood to the birth of a Star Baby, from a snakeskin nightmare to the finale of a reality television competition to find the next pop superstar, these captivating music dramas range across musical idioms and showcase a new generation of musical storytellers.

This co-production is directed by Lindy Hume, one of Australia's great directors with more than 50 major productions across Australasia and a long line of international work stretching from Berlin to London to Seattle.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In music, sound, text, narrative and style the four operas of MOTHER are four entirely different worlds, thus the order in which they are experienced by an audience becomes a major dramaturgical decision. We split the evening into two parts with an interval allowing the audience to breathe and absorb the first two operas, *Menarche* and *In Cosmic Utero*. These two inhabit an abstracted space where the cycles of the natural world and cosmos embrace the narratives. The space for *M.T.H.R* and *The Lullaby* is affected by destructive human behaviour, fantasies and nightmares.

Through the simple visual gestures of a meadow then a burned-out car, the two parts of MOTHER are visually and thematically 'opposites' of one another: alive/dead, untouched/ruined, beautiful/ugly, poetic/brutal... These elements flex to encompass our four wildly disparate narratives ranging from *Menarche*'s spiritual ceremony of ancient knowledge passed from mother to daughter to *In Cosmic Utero*'s childlike universe, *M.T.H.R*'s high-camp reality television show and finally the bleak urban wilderness of *The Lullaby*. It's quite the journey.

We celebrate the musicians bringing these new compositions to life by bringing them onstage instead of hiding them in an orchestra pit.

Directing any new opera has its rewards and challenges. Directing four World Premieres to be performed in one evening multiplies those challenges and rewards by four. MOTHER is a collaboration between two of Australia's leading arts training institutions adding complexity and almost limitless creative scope. While the sheer scale of this undertaking has sometimes been bewildering, it has been joyful over these last few weeks to watch these works take shape through the skills of all the brilliant artists, artisans and technicians who have thrown themselves so completely into MOTHER.

Lindy Hume

Conducted by

Stephen Mould
Simon Lobelson
Aija Draguns

Directed by

Lindy Hume

Dramaturgy

Sally Blackwood

Venue

Parade Theatre

When

28 Oct - 02 Nov

Run Times

Part 1 - 55mins

Interval 20 mins

Part 2 - 60 mins

**There will be a short scene change in each part.
Please remain seated.**

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In 2023, I designed a project to draw upon and deepen the existing collaboration between SCM and NIDA, involving the creation and performance of new operas. This became the 'Word, Text, Voices, Music' Project in which NIDA MFA (Dramatic Writing) students (librettists) teamed up with SCM composers to produce works under the overall supervision of Paul Stanhope. The four works that emerged underwent a process of creative development, led by director Lindy Hume, who has created the production. The project has resulted in the creation of four very strong works, all exploring the idea of 'MOTHER' from very different perspectives. The production is a collaboration among NIDA students, under Lindy Hume's guidance and follows a 'hi-tech' approach which is increasingly a feature of opera/music-theatre works. The cast feature students from the SCM Opera Masters course, joined by a group of undergraduate vocal students. The 'orchestra' for the production is the SCM Contemporary Music Ensemble, who feature onstage as a part of the overall scenic environment.

To conduct the evening of operas, I am delighted to be joined by Simon Lobelson, and Aija Draguns who will conduct her own work.

Stephen Mould

Content advice This performance contains haze and smoke effects, strobe and flashing lights and adult themes.

MENARCHE

Music by Jessica O'Donoghue
Conductor Stephen Mould
Libretto by Rebecca Duke and Karina Young

Menarche explores themes of shame, intergenerational trauma, and the oppression of women throughout history. In three scenes spanning different eras, the opera follows young girls at the time of their menarche. As they connect with the Divine Feminine and unlock the wisdom of their foremothers, each girl reaches a new level of empowerment. The opera challenges societal norms and explores the profound impact of women being seen, honoured, and respected—in all their wisdom, power, and vulnerability and through all stages of womanhood.

CAST

Communicant	Georgia Cooper
Scout	Galatea Kneath
Mother	Megan Kim
Menarche	Molly Ryan
Mum	Sophie Blades
Spirits	Charlotte Crowe, Hazel Bington, Leyang Hong
Friends	Astrid Girdis, Bridget Power, Christopher Whalley, Daniel Kramer, Eleanor Edwards, Ella Briggs, Matthew Hilberts, Sam Elmi, Wesley Yu

IN COSMIC UTERO

Music by Aija Draguns
Conductor Aija Draguns
Libretto by Bianca Watkins

Inspired by traditional Latvian folklore, whimsical drama *In Cosmic Utero* explores the collision between celestial mother nature and the mundane human world. This opera delves into the trials of womanhood through personified nature characters, including the sun goddess Mara and the Moon who dedicate themselves to their cosmic role in the sky, supported by their loyal Tree guardians. The birth of a Star Baby brings fanciful disruptions of the day and night, as the story contemplates the duty of motherhood, human greed and the continuity of time.

CAST

Moon	Megan Kim
Mara	Sophie Blades
Pot	Matthew Hilberts
Pan	Daniel Kramer
Star Baby	Christopher Whalley
Trees	Galatea Kneath, Georgia Cooper, Leyang Hong, Molly Ryan
Nut	Sam Elmi
Bolt	Wesley Yu

M.TH.R

Music by Oliver John Cameron
Conductor Stephen Mould
Libretto by Xavier Hazard, Megan Rundle and Oliver John Cameron

Set inside a reality TV show, flamboyant rivals compete to succeed the biggest pop icon cult superstar: *M.TH.R.* We meet the final four contestants: Angelina, Aurora, Desmond and Nova as each make their definitive appeal to the Kindercorps (*M.TH.R.*'s loyal fanbase) to win the popular vote. This is darkly comic camp Eurovision meets Opera in a high stakes showdown complete with backstage admissions which challenge ideas of truth and identity...who will be the last diva standing?

CAST

M.TH.R	Georgia Cooper
Nova	Wesley Yu
The Host	Daniel Kramer
Angelina Crescenzi	Galatea Kneath
Desmond Showboat	Sam Elmi
Aurora Vainheart	Megan Kim

THE LULLABY

Music by Hao Zhen
Conductor Simon Lobelson
Libretto by Lily Thomson

The Lullaby is an eerie and subversive fairytale that twists and turns between reality and a nightmarish dreamscape. A lullaby works in reverse and sends Mother into a nightmare where she meets her shadow in the form of a serpent, who confronts her with a dark wish she has involving her children, June and Scout. Trapped inside this dark trance, her children resort to singing an anti-lullaby to wake their mother up and in turn help her defeat the beast.

CAST

Mother	Molly Ryan
June	Leyang Hong
Scout	Wesley Yu
Snake Skin	Galatea Kneath Sam Elmi Matthew Hilberts

THE COMPANY

Programme Developer/ Musical Direction/ Conductor Stephen Mould***
Director Lindy Hume*
Producer/Artistic Strategy Manager Scott Ryan***
Costume Designer Andrea Knezevic
Lighting Designer Matthew Marshall*
Set/Props Designer Lochie Odgers*
Sound Designer Oliver Brighton*
Video Designer Mic Gruchy**
Dramaturg Sally Blackwood**
Movement Choreographer Troy Honeysett*
Assistant Director Nelson Blake
Assistant Conductor Panagiotis Karamanos
Vocal Advisor & Conductor Simon Lobelson***
Conductor Aija Draguns
Principal Repetiteur & Music Advisor Alan Hicks***
Repetiteur Ingrid Sakurovs***
Composer Supervisor Paul Stanhope***
Composer Supervisor Liza Lim***
Composer Supervisor Damien Ricketson***
Artistic Operations Manager Nick Munro ***
Production & Orchestra Manager Kate Middleton-Olliver ***
Producer (Development Workshops) Tom Westley***
Technical Director Ben McPharlin**
Technical Manager Topaz Marlay-Cole
Company Stage Manager Claire Edmonds-Wilson
Deputy Technical Manager Finlay Hogan
Deputy Stage Managers Guinevere Fisher
 Poppy Townsend
Assistant Stage Managers Max Bradley
 Lilly Green
Construction Manager Nicholas Day**
Costume Supervisor Kit Moore
Costume Supervisor Lisa Mimmocchi*
Props Supervisor Freyja Meany
Sound System Supervisor Jun Tung
Video System Supervisor Madeleine Picard*
Head Electrician Cameron Russell*
Head Rigger/Flyman Finton Mahoney*
Head Flyman Danny Persee*
Head Mechanist Grant Finlay*
Mechanist /Set Assistant Eryn Douglas*
Costume Makers Raphaella Kuhn
 Siann Lau
 Katrina Mark
 Danielle Schache
Puppet Maker Indigo Redding*
Properties Maker Caleb Jackson

Set Assistant Vincent Day*
Costume Design Assistant Danielle Rodriguez
Costume Assistant/Dressers Karamea Gostt
 Sean Farnworth
Dressers Rachael Cherry*
 Nicole Gandy*
Properties Assistant Chris Hosea
Followspot Operators(s) Bella Muslado
 Alexandria White
Microphone Technician Brent Russell
Makeup Artists Abbey Conroy
 Abbey Hardwick
 Theodore Herbert
 Olivia Lovelock
 Lily New
 Miranda Reid
Surtitles Operator Lucy Blomfield***
Surtitles Preparation Hannah Burton

THE ORCHESTRA

Violin 1 Isaac Shatford
Violin 2 Violeta Shopova
Viola Somerset Peede
Cello Francis Yoon
Double Bass Alexandra Thompson
Flute Sam Roberts
Oboe Theodore Brown
Clarinet Tim Roberts
Bassoon Summer Edwards
Saxophone Sherman Swing
Saxophone Holly Williams
Horn Kit Stone
Trumpet Cindy Hu
Trombone Josh de Haan
Harp Paul Nicolaou
Percussion Bill Chen
Percussion Anneke Brahe
Drum Kit Natalie Iacullo
Piano Alan Hicks ***
Piano / Synthesizer Channing Chu
Piano / Synthesizer Cara Eccleston

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