

Harold Washington Library &
Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival present

Theodora Skipitares:
Grand Panorama

US/New York

January 22-24, 2023, Harold Washington Cindy Pritzker Auditorium

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Conceived, Designed and Directed by Theodora Skipitares

Composer, Musician	<i>Mazz Swift</i>
Original Choreography	<i>Christina CocoMotion Smith</i>
Set Design	<i>Donald Eastman and Theodora Skipitares</i>
Lighting	<i>Robert Hill-Guardino</i>
Costumes	<i>Ramona Ponce</i>
Video	<i>Kay Hines</i>
Puppetry Direction	<i>Jane Catherine Shaw</i>
Dramaturgy	<i>Andrea Balise</i>
Stage Manager	<i>Karen Oughtred</i>
Special Projects	<i>Jim Freeman</i>
Animation	<i>Shraddha Tiwari</i>
Nick Biddle Panorama	<i>Klara Vertes & Trevor Legeret</i>
Scenic Artists	<i>Mona Maria Damian, Lizzy Duquette, Brooke van Hensbergen</i>

CAST

Puppeteers:

Jayson Kerr (Narrator)
Brittany Harris (Cello/Narrator)
Jane Catherine Shaw (Lead Puppeteer/Chorus)
Jorge Ariel Blanco Muñoz (Puppeteer/Chorus)
Christian "Coco" Garcia San Miguel (Puppeteer/Chorus)
Alondra Soto (Puppeteer/Chorus)
Kimori Zinnerman (Puppeteer/Chorus)

SCENES

Part 1

- 1 Daguerre
- 2 Lecture #1
- 3 Origins
- 4 Blackbird
- 5 Lecture #2
- 6 Freedom
- 7 Lecture #3
- 8 The Photo Studio
- 9 Nick Biddle
- 10 Riding the Trains
- 11 Lecture #4

Part 2

- 12 Du Bois
- 13 The World's Fair
- 14 Selfie
- 15 The Ear
- 16 Shirley
- 17 Andy
- 18 Algorithmic Justice League
- 19 The Face

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

“The whole soul of man is a sort of picture gallery, a grand panorama.”

Frederick Douglass was in love with photography. He wrote more extensively on the subject than any other American and he was the most photographed American of the nineteenth century. He loved photography because he believed in its truth value, or objectivity. Photographers knew that photographs lied.....but Douglass and most patrons of photography believed that cameras told the truth. Douglass believed photography revealed the essential humanity of its subjects,

In 1900 Du Bois picked up the work that Douglass had begun, when he gathered 400 photos of African American communities at work and exhibited them.

Scenes 2,5,7 and 11 are excerpts of Douglass' lectures on photography

Scenes 3, 4, and 6 are from Douglass' My Bondage and Freedom

Scenes 12 is excerpted from W.E.B. Du Bois' The Souls of Black Folk

Scene 18 is based on interviews with the computer scientist Joy Buolamwini

Theodora Skipitares

THEODORA SKIPITARES (Director & Designer) is an interdisciplinary artist and theater director based in New York. Trained as a sculptor and theater designer, she began creating personal solo performances in the late 1970's. She has created 30 works featuring as many as 300 puppet figures, live music, film, video and documentary texts. These projects include *Under The Knife*, a site-specific history of medicine and *Body of Crime*, a history of women in prison. In 2014, she devised *The Chairs*, a reflection on Ionesco's absurdist classic, and in 2016, she created *Six Characters*, a response to Pirandello's play. In 2018, she presented *There's Blood at the Wedding* with music by Sxip Shirey. Set within six giant-scale pop-up book constructions, this play reflected on the lives and deaths of six victims of police violence. In 2020, she created *The Transfiguration of Benjamin Banneker*, a multi-disciplinary project incorporating street performance, a high school marching band, and various forms of puppetry and object theater.

Skipitares has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, UNIMA, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rockefeller Fellowship and a McKnight Playwriting Fellowship, among others. Her visual work has been exhibited widely in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, most recently at the Whitney Museum. She has worked frequently in India as a Fulbright Fellow, as well as in Vietnam, Cambodia, Korea, Iran and Brazil, and Greece. Skipitares is Professor of Art and Design Education at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

MAZZ SWIFT (Composer, Musician) is a composer, conductor, singer, bandleader, educator, and Juilliard-trained violinist. Improvisation is a throughline in their practice across genres and instrumental configurations, and can be found in most of their works.

As violinist and singer, Mx. Swift has performed on many of the world's greatest stages including Royal Albert Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Stern Auditorium/Perelman Stage at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, Müpa Budapest, and David Geffen Hall, Alice Tully Hall and Damrosch Park at Lincoln Center in New York City. As composer, Swift's works include commissions by The Los Angeles Philharmonic, Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity, and the Blaffer Foundation. As an educator, Swift has performed and taught workshops in free improvisation and "conduction" (conducted improvisation) on six continents and is a performing member and teaching artist with the acclaimed Silkroad Ensemble. They are also a Carnegie Hall teaching artist, where they write and record lullabies with incarcerated mothers and mothers-to-be at Rikers Island, and coach incarcerated men at Sing Sing Penitentiary on string studies and composition.

Mazz is a 2021 United States Artist, and 2019 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow, continually creating orchestral compositions that involve Conduction, and solo works that are centered around protest and freedom songs, spirituals, and the Ghanaian concept of 'Sankofa': looking back to learn how to move forward.

BIOS (CONT.)

DONALD EASTMAN (Set) made his La MaMa debut with 3 Solo Pieces by Winston Tong. His work here with Theodora Skipitares includes her productions of *Under the Knife* (The History of Medicine), *There Will Be Blood at the Wedding*, *The Transfiguration of Benjamin Banneker*, and *Six Characters*. He has received numerous awards across the country including an OBIE Award for Sustained Excellence and is a grantee of the NEA/National Opera Institute.

ROBERT HILL-GUARINO is a recent graduate of the California Institute of the Arts, where he lit five productions with the theater and dance departments. He has also lit productions in the Cincy Fringe and Hollywood Fringe Festivals. He would like to thank Molly, Wendy, Robin, and Marty for their support. rghgdesigns.com

RAMONA PONCE (Costumes) nominated for both the Innovative Theater and Henry Hewes Design awards, has spent the last 40 years costuming downtown theater, opera, dancers and rock-and-rollers, including many of La MaMa's artists. In addition to costume work, she does specialty needlework for fashion designers and fine artists, and styles visual elements for a variety of applications. Her artwork has been displayed at galleries in New York and Arizona. She designs special occasion wear for women and men, lectures on costume topics whenever an opportunity comes her way, and greatly enjoys a fine glass of Champagne.

KAY HINES (Video) has worked as a media artist in video and installation work since the mid-1970s, and as a video cameraperson and editor since 1981, when she and husband, artist, Dieter Froese established a video production company, Dekart Video, specializing in media services for artists and Independents. Hines has received various awards for video and artwork including, an NEA, a NYFA, and a Cine Golden Eagle. She is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Digital Arts, Pratt Institute where she has served on the faculty for the past 19 years.

JANE CATHERINE SHAW (Puppetry Director/Lead Puppeteer) is a member of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab and graduated on the Dean's List with an MFA in Directing from Brooklyn College. She is curator of La MaMa's Puppet Slam and co-founded the Voice 4 Vision Puppet Festival in 2004. Ms. Shaw was puppetry director for Theodora Skipitares' *The Transfiguration of Benjamin Banneker* at La MaMa ETC (2020). She was puppetry co-director and master puppeteer for Mabou Mines' *Peter and Wendy* and built and directed the puppetry sequence for Lee Breuers' *Dollhouse*. She often worked with Ellen Stewart to re-create costumes from historic La MaMa shows from the 60's and 70's. Ms. Shaw was nominated for a 2014 New York Innovative Theatre Award for her work with Theodora Skipitares on *The Chairs*. She creates and directs her own work for puppet theatre, among them, *The Three Dolls* (co-created with Clayton Daniel Briggs and Molly Riesman), *Framed*; *The Mother Goose Chronicles*, *Calpurnia Coyote Comes To The Big City*, *The Blue Marble*, *Following the Wind*, *Folktales of Asia and Africa*, *Pelandok the Mousedeer*, as well as adult works: *Thirst: Memory of Water*, *The Lone Runner*, *Bed of Light*, and *Universe Expanding*, all of which premiered at La MaMa. She has worked

BIOS (CONT.)

with Theodora Skpitares since they met in 1989, helping to build her shows and puppets, and puppeteering in many of her productions. She has been a teaching artist with the Brooklyn Arts Council for 9 years, and recently joined the teaching artist team at Arts Connection. She created and taught a lab/course titled Puppetry and the Digital Avatar at The New School in 2018. In Nov of 2019 she presented her paper The Puppet Body as Archive of Performance in a working session at the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) and is currently working on an extended version of the paper.

ANDREA BALIS (Dramaturg) has been the dramaturg for Skysaver productions for many years. In addition, they have worked as a director, playwright and author of both fiction and nonfiction articles and books. They are also on the faculty of John Jay College.

KAREN OUGHTRED (Stage Manager) is a multidisciplinary theater artist, actor and teacher. She is thrilled to be working with Theodora again. Stage Management includes the Panto Project at Abrons Arts Center, the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, Theatre at St John's, NOMAD Theatrical Co., Untitled Theater Co. No. 61, visual artist Theresa Byrnes, John Jahnke's Hotel Savant, La MaMa, BAM, the Town Hall, PS 122, National Museum of the American Indian. Director: interactive museum theater, Striving for Freedom, Jay Heritage Center. Actor: Ridiculous Theatrical Company, Theatre at St John's. Puppetry: Most recently, Inseparable, Object and Shadow Theater co-created with puppetry artist, Spica Wobbe. A poetic exploration of our common humanity through the transformative lens of 6 extraordinary older New Yorkers. Karen co-created The Memory Project, storytelling through visual arts, theater & puppetry with Spica Wobbe in 2016. They conduct in-person and virtual workshops with older adults at a variety of senior centers and libraries.www.facebook.com/thememoryproject.storytellingthememoryproject.blogspot.com/

CHRISTINA COCOMOTION SMITH (Original Choreography) Dancer, choreographer and New York native Christina Smith, better known under the moniker CocoMotion serves as the founder and artistic director of NuTribe Dance Company. The company's rituals in dance explore a fusion of black dance vernacular including hip hop, funk (waacking and locking), African, Krump, stepping and spoken word. NTDC's mission is to address the marginalization of blacks in dance while addressing the under-representation of black dancers performing street dance. Overall, the company's goal is to provide audiences with an array of black excellence. We aim to showcase street dance in concert dance venues that have previously closed their doors to such an idea.

JAYSON KERR (Narrator) born and raised in Springfield, MA, has been working in and out of NYC for the past 16 years. After studying Musical Theater at Circle in The Square Theatre School he went on to travel with the national tour of Evita, Jesus Christ Superstar w/ Ted Neeley, and Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas. He was most recently a part of the Grammy Award winning production of Porgy and Bess at The Metropolitan Opera House.www.JaysonKerr.com

BIOS (CONT.)

BRITTANY HARRIS (Narrator/Cellist) is a Brooklyn based multi-instrumentalist and composer, Brittany Harris has performed all over New York's major venues such as Saturday Night Live with Shawn Mendez, The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon with Liam Gallagher, Carnegie Hall with the Manhattan Symphonie, The Apollo Theatre, Lincoln Center and many more!

Brittany has over 20 years of musical experience in performance, education, and composition. She holds a Masters in Music Theory and Composition - Film Scoring from New York University, a Bachelors in Music Performance - Cello, and Bachelors in Music Education from Western Michigan University.

Current work: Service on the Executive Board of The BRIDGE, a Brooklyn based Hip-Hop Orchestra, as the Senior Talent Acquisition Partner and Cellist.

Metadata Specialist for 4 Elements Music - Library productions

Studio Session Recording Artist, Freelance Cellist

Private Instructor: Electric Bass, Cellist, Singer/Songwriter in the duo, The Royal Green Rangers.

Composer/ Co-creator of Good Night Black Child, a podcast of meditations and original folk-tale stories for children.

JORGE ARIEL BLANCO MUÑOZ (Puppeteer/Chorus) is a theater artist based in Brooklyn via San Juan, Puerto Rico. University of Puerto Rico, B.A., Drama. Traveled Spain as a member of the "Teatro Rodante" performing different theater styles. Spain: Elisava: School of Design and Engineering, M.A. Design and Art Direction (Barcelona). London: Art Director and Performer, CASA Latin-American Theatre Festival. Puerto Rico: Universidad Internacional de la Rioja (UNIR), M.A., Advanced Theatre Studies, (2017). Jorge concentrated in direction and worked with "Teatro Breve", one of the top theater companies in Puerto Rico. In July 2021, Jorge moved to NYC and is currently working on a music album and making performance art.

ALONDRA SOTO (Puppeteer/Chorus) born and raised in Brooklyn New York; Alondra is a high school student aspiring to be a pediatric nurse. Her elective in school is biomedical sciences. Science and biology is something she loves to learn and talk about. Alondra strives to excel in her classes and always remains confident about the choices she is making for her future.

KIMORI ZINNERMAN (Puppeteer/Chorus) is an aspiring actor who has many talents. At the tender age of 17 she is a high achieving student at Benjamin Banneker. She learns fast when passionate about something. She carries a smile with style and grace and stands tall. Kimori got a start on her career by experiencing various forms of acting in front of many audiences. Growing up in New York has allowed her to adapt to any environment. Being exposed to so much diversity in this city has shown her the significance of all cultures, not just what she's familiar with.

CHRISTIAN "COCO" GARCIA SAN MIGUEL (Puppeteer/Chorus) is based in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico. He is a clown, theater maker, scenery builder, musician and writer.....in other words, a multidisciplinary artist. His work is directed towards social impact. He develops an idea and materializes it according to the possibilities of the project, always keeping in mind, in body and soul, that the impossible is what he seeks and achieves with love.

BIOS (CONT.)

JIM FREEMAN (Special Projects) has been building lately for Tristan Allen's Tin Iso and the Dawn and Nick Coppola's Puppetworks, as well as for Theodora Skipitares. As an actor, he performs with the Ridiculous Theatrical Company and Theater at St. Johns. You can see his films at YouTube channel "Eurekajim Films". Thanks to Futureworks Makerspace NYC, and love to his wife Eureka.

SHRADDHA TIWARI (Animator) is an Experimental Filmmaker from New Jersey. Trained as an Animator, Shraddha has always been interested in exploring material and using it in filmmaking. She is a storyteller who is focusing on excavating long-lost narratives and uplifting traditional art forms which are fading away with time.

TREVOR LEGERET (Nick Biddle Panorama) is a stop-motion animator, filmmaker and musician. A graduate of Pratt Institute, he is currently producing branded content at Brothers Guitar Shop. Trevor focuses on surreal horror in his stop-motion and makes monsters in a creative FX duo with Klara Vertes.

KLARA VERTES (Nick Biddle Panorama) is an interdisciplinary artist, poet, and researcher. Since graduating from Pratt Institute, Vertes has been working as an archivist at the Ray Johnson Estate. In her studio practice, Vertes creates archives populated by found objects and fabricated artifacts. She often collaborates with Trevor Legeret as a creative duo specializing in animation and special FX.

MONA MARIA DAMIAN (Scenic Artist) recently moved to the US, in the third year of the second MFA (primarily Scenic Design & Costume Design). US: Scenic Designer & Artist, Teaching Assistant in Columbia, SC, the internship at LaMaMa. First Masters in Europe in 2002 in Fine Arts and Interior Design, other degrees include Fine Arts Highschool and Fine Arts University, Special Effects Make up and Prosthetics in Belfast, NI and 2D and 3D Design Studio Cad and Vectorworks in Dublin, Ireland. 20 years' experience in Europe in Film as Set Decorator / Set Dresser, Art Director, Scenic FX Painter and Sculptor Costume Dept., Special Effects Make-up, but also Theatre, Stage and Costumes Designer, Fashion and Interior Design, in Romania, UK, Scandinavian Countries, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Austria and The Netherlands

LIZZY DUQUETTE (Scenic Artist) is a puppet maker, scenic artist, and muralist based in Cincinnati, OH. Lizzy is the resident production designer for Queen City Opera, creating fantastical puppets, sets, and costumes. They work as a puppet maker and puppeteer with Jesse Mooney-Bullock at MoonBull Studio. With MoonBull, they have performed at the Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival, BLINK Cincinnati, and Price Hill Creative Community Festival and have built puppets for House Theatre of Chicago, Cabinet of Curiosities, and Nashville Children's Theatre. Lizzy assisted scenic and puppet production for Theodora Skipitares' The Transfiguration of Benjamin Banneker in 2020. www.lizzyduquette.com (she/they)

BROOKE van HENSBERGEN (Scenic Artist) is a Brooklyn based artist with experience in Theater, Film, and Television. She graduated from Pace University with a design degree and continues to work as a Scenic Painter, Fabricator, and Prop Master. Puppet Credits include The Transfiguration of Benjamin Banneker, Stanzas Sun To a Tatar Reed Whistle, Glass Guignol: A Brother and Sister Play.

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Grand Panorama is dedicated to David Gilden.