

Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)

'The art of losing isn't hard to master...' Elizabeth Bishop's poem One Art is a tribute to the inevitability of loss and an imperative for creatives to transform personal pain into artwork. Hailed as one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century, Bishop was Poet Laureate of the United States and a Pulitzer Prize winner. Orphaned at a very early age, she travelled widely as an adult, and lived in New York, Key West, San Francisco, Boston, and Brazil. Her poetry shielded her private life, expressing her feelings and experiences indirectly; a clearer picture of her life emerges in her correspondence, detailing her struggles with life, love, poetry, and alcohol.

Aubert's duet Nocturne, Strauss' Ruhe, meine Seele, and Debussy's Spleen, as featured in this performance, are from the companion CD, also titled ONE ART, which includes other art song by Strauss and Debussy as well as Kimper's settings. The CD was launched and the songs made their debut at Conquest House, Canterbury, England, on 21 October, 2016, under the auspices of the Canterbury Festival.



Copies or download cards may be purchased after the performance, or ordered via www.femmelunatiqueproductions.com

Opera America
National Opera Center
330 7th Avenue
New York, NY
10001

Femme Lunatique Productions presents

In association with the Paula Kimper Ensemble

A Femme Lunatique and Mosaic Cat co-production

ONE ART

Elizabeth Bishop in (mostly) her own words:
an opera / cabaret*

Script developed by Brigitte Baden-Rennie and Laure Meloy from the letters and poetry of Elizabeth Bishop

Songs: ONE ART

Three Bishop Songs for Soprano*

1. Casabianca
2. Objects & Apparitions
3. One Art

Music by Paula M. Kimper

Poetry by Elizabeth Bishop

19 November, 2017

1pm

*North American Premiere

In a world where winning is everything, it is a risk to praise the mastery of the art of losing...and yet, Elizabeth Bishop's villanelle has inspired books, films, and now art songs. One Art catalogs personal loss, and emphasises the duty of artists to create meaningful work in response. Casabianca, a playful yet complex take on Felicia Dorothea Heman's poem, and Objects & Apparitions - her translation of Octavio Paz' tribute to Joseph Cornell (who made his artworks out of things that others had lost or discarded) - both echo the theme of artistic creation as an act of defiance against the inevitable. In this performance, Paula Kimper's unaccompanied settings of Bishop's poetry are used as a framework, punctuating a first-person telling of the poet's life story, using letters from her abundant correspondence and poems that are pertinent to events in her life (although Bishop was never explicitly autobiographical in her poetry.) Elizabeth Bishop sometimes felt she had become a poet 'by accident.' For the rest of us, it was a happy accident: her poetry shows the power of art to turn disaster into beauty, to put us in touch with the truth of what it is to be human.

- Laure Meloy

Paula M. Kimper's music was described as 'Ravellian' by the New York Times. Her operas have illuminated the stories of many unconventional women, from the pioneering lovers in *Patience & Sarah* to the trailblazing activist Sojourner Truth, and have been performed in the United States, the U.K., and Macedonia. These new songs, composed to be sung without accompaniment, reveal the melodies inherent in the poetry.

Soprano **Laure Meloy** has made a specialty of challenging twentieth century and contemporary repertoire. Her Ariel in Thomas Adès' *The Tempest* with Hungarian State Opera was 'astounding,' and her Hecuba in English Touring Opera's Olivier Award-winning *King Priam* 'outstanding' 'mesmerising' and 'passionate.' Her credits also include engagements with the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, English National Opera, and Welsh National Opera. Ms. Meloy appears courtesy of the Metropolitan Opera.

Performed by **Laure Meloy**

Music by **Paula M. Kimper**

Poetry & letters of **Elizabeth Bishop**

Script and concept developed by Brigitte Baden-Rennie and Laure Meloy

Femme Lunatique Productions collaborates with composers, visual artists, writers and theatre makers to create new music, unique interpretations and site-specific performances. ONE ART is the company's inaugural project.

Brigitte Baden-Rennie established the **Mosaic Cat** in 2012. In an artistic career spanning over 30 years, she has performed in cabaret, film, television, theatre, musicals, and concerts throughout the UK and Australia, and appeared with artists such as Frances Knight and Jamie Moore. Her cabaret performances have been awarded five stars by the Adelaide Fringe. In addition to her work with the Mosaic Cat, her production and directing credits include musical theatre projects in Australia and festivals in Broadstairs and Margate, as well as running the Festivals & Events programming for Conquest House.