



MOSS  
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CENTER

Friday, March 24, 2023, 7:30 PM

## *Book of Mountains and Seas*

Composer and librettist: Huang Ruo

Director and production design: Basil Twist

Moss Arts Center  
Street and Davis Performance Hall  
Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre



VIRGINIA  
TECH

# *Spring at a Glance*

Just Added: Guest Curated  
Thursday, March 30-Friday, March 31, 8 PM

**Rissi Palmer**

Just Added: Guest Curated  
Friday, April 7, 8 PM

**Shirlette Ammons**

Just Added: Guest Curated  
Friday, April 14, 8 PM

**Sonny Miles**

Sunday, April 23, 4 PM

**Opera Roanoke and Blacksburg Master Chorale**  
Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*

Saturday, April 29, 7:30 PM

**Cécile McLorin Salvant**

Tickets are available now at the box office and online. See the complete schedule of performances, exhibitions, and engagement activities at [artscenter.vt.edu](http://artscenter.vt.edu).

# Book of Mountains and Seas

## 山海經

**Composer and librettist:** Huang Ruo  
**Director and production design:** Basil Twist  
**Lighting designer:** Ayumu "Poe" Saegusa  
**Featuring** Ars Nova Copenhagen  
**Conductor:** Miles Lallémant  
**Presented by** Beth Morrison Projects

Lute Breuer, *puppeteer*  
Ben Elling, *puppeteer*  
Rosa Elling, *puppeteer*  
Alexandra Goss, *puppeteer*  
Rachel Schapira, *puppeteer and puppet build chief*  
Ashley Winkfield, *puppeteer*

Michael Murphy, *percussion*  
Ryan Scott, *percussion*

### **Vocalists:**

Madeline Apple Healey  
Mari Øyrehagen  
Ann-Christin Wesser Ingels  
Hanne Marie le Fevre  
Laura Lamph  
Elenor Wiman  
Luís Toscano  
James Robinson  
Jakob Skjoldborg  
Asger Lynge Petersen  
Rasmus Kure Thomsen  
Mikkel Tuxen

**Ars Nova Copenhagen Manager:** Thomas Kiørbye

Beth Morrison, *creative producer*  
Roderick Murray, *director of production*  
Michelle Danahy, *company manager*  
Vicky Voketaitis, *director of touring*  
Natalie Wagner, *stage manager*  
Daniel Neumann, *sound engineer*

This production is dedicated to Stuart Nelson. *Book of Mountains and Seas* was commissioned by Beth Morrison Projects, Ars Nova Copenhagen, the Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech, Toronto Soundstreams, Koorbiennale, Hong Kong New Vision Festival, and Linda and Stuart Nelson. The production is also supported by the Canada Council for the Arts.

*Book of Mountains and Seas* is made possible by the Jim Henson Foundation and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Additional commissioning support providing by the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts.

# Program Notes

***Book of Mountains and Seas*** 《山海經》 is a work of vocal theatre for 12 singers, six puppeteers, and two percussionists. It is inspired by the ancient Chinese compilation of early myths of the same title, which was first transcribed in 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Over the years, these mythological stories have become part of Chinese written and oral history, shifted and reshaped to match our contemporary times. The vocal-theatre work *Book of Mountains and Seas* is a 21<sup>st</sup>-century adaptation and expansion of four of these tales. Its lyrics are based on the original Chinese texts from the book, with additional newly created words to complete the soundscape and symbolic drama. As the four tales are ancient, they are abstract and timeless. *Book of Mountains and Seas* contains timeless codes about the Universe, creation, planet, nature, life, human ambition and fate, the relationship and interaction between mankind and the planet, etc.

## **Scene One: *The Legend of Pangu*** 《盤古開天地》

The creation of our planet is told through *The Legend of Pangu* 《盤古開天地》. *The Legend of Pangu* illuminates Earth's birth from a cosmic egg, which contained the hairy giant Pangu. He separates the egg's parts — the yin and the yang — to create the Earth and the sky, which he held apart for 18,000 years. As Pangu grew, the sky moved further from the Earth; when he died, his body became the Sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, animals, minerals, vegetation, rains, winds, and finally, humans of our planet.

## **Scene Two: *The Spirit Bird*** 《精衛填海》

*Spirit Bird* focuses on the relationship between a tiny helpless bird and the vast powerful sea through a tale of an impossible yet persistent revenge. A princess named Nǚ Wá drowns at sea. Her spirit takes over the body of a bird, and for the rest of time she attempts to exact revenge on the water, filling the sea with twigs and pebbles.

## **Scene Three: *The Legend of Ten Suns*** 《后羿射日》

A continuation of the creation story, scene three is based on the story of the 10 Suns, who are the children of Mother Xī Hé and Dì Jùn, God of the Eastern Heaven. The 10 Suns peacefully resided on a mulberry tree in the eastern sea. Each Sun revolved around Earth in formation riding a Sun bird, a routine that they tired of. One day, the 10 Suns decided to fly out together, which shriveled the crops, dried up the water, and caused animals and humans to die. Hou Yi, God of Archery, was called upon to help control his children. Hou Yi killed nine of the suns, sparing the last to leave Earth with light. Out of fear, the remaining sun remains faithful to his fixed schedule of flight, which creates night and day.

#### **Scene Four: Kuā Fù Chasing the Sun 《誇父逐日》**

Kuā Fù is a giant who wished to capture the Sun. Kuā Fù was perplexed by the Sun's whereabouts at night and decided to chase and catch the Sun. With each stride he gets closer to the Sun, however, he could never catch up to it. He followed the Sun from the East to the West, draining all rivers and lakes crossing his path as sources of water to quench his burning thirst as he closed in on the star. However, he couldn't finish his quest because he died of the extreme heat and exhaustion. When he died, he dropped his walking stick on the ground, which grows into forests of peach blossom trees.

These myths will be reinterpreted through the lens of our modern-day relationship with the world we live in. The two creation stories conjure a sense of respect and awe for the Universe and environment. In *The Legend of Pangu*, the humble lesson to learn is that humans, although are the rulers of our planet now, are created last. They are created as equally as with everything else. However, do humans respect the nature and the natural process of Universal order? In *The Spirit Bird*, this intriguing story asks important questions: is weak force always meant to submit and surrender to strong force? Is endless revenge always meaningless? In *Kuā Fù Chasing the Sun*, it is illustrated that the ambition of human beings and the belief that nature can be conquered and consumed endlessly will eventually backfire on us. Maybe in this apocalyptic moment of the world, nature gets the last laugh and will survive beyond us.

*Book of Mountains and Seas* runs around 75 minutes without intermission.

— Huang Ruo, 2021

# Libretto

*This original text served as a foundation for the text of Book of Mountains and Seas.*

## Scene I:

《盘古开天地》

### *The Legend of Pangu*

天地浑沌如鸡子，盘古生其中。

*Tiāndì hún dùn rú jīzǐ, pángǔ shēng qízhōng.*

The heaven and the earth were at first one blurred entity like an egg. Pangu was born into it.

万八千岁，天地开辟，阳清为天，阴浊为地。

*Wàn bāqiān suì, tiāndì kāipì, yáng qīng wéi tiān, yīn zhuó wéi dì.*

After 18,000 years, the heaven and the earth are separated; the Yang, which was light and pure, rose to become heaven, and the Yin, which was heavy and murky, sank to form the earth.

盘古在其中，一日九变，神于天，圣于地。

*Pángǔ zài qízhōng, yī rì jiǔ biàn, shén yú tiān, shèng yú dì.*

Pangu lived between them, and went through many changes every day, his wisdom greater than that of the heaven and his ability greater than that of the earth.

天日高一丈，地日厚一丈，盘古日长一丈，如此万八千岁。

*Tiān rì gāo yī zhàng, de rì hòu yī zhàng, pángǔ rì zhǎng yī zhàng, rúcǐ wàn bāqiān suì.*

Every day the sky rose 10 feet higher, the earth became 10 feet thicker, and Pangu grew 10 feet taller, another 18,000 years passed.

天数极高，地数极深，盘古极长，后乃有三皇。

*Tiānshù jí gāo, de shù jí shēn, pángǔ jí zhǎng, hòu nǎi yǒusān huáng.*

The sky was extremely high, the earth was extremely thick, Pangu was extremely tall, only after then, the lords of heaven, earth, and mankind are created.

数起于一，立于三，成于五，盛于七，处于九，故天去地九万里。

*Shù qǐ yú yī, lì yú sān, chéng yú wǔ, shèng yú qī, chǔyú jiǔ, gù tiān qù de jiǔ wàn lǐ.*

Numbers started from one, built on three, established at five, flourished at seven, ceased at nine. Therefore the distance between the heaven to the earth is 9 million miles.

首生盘古。垂死化身，

*Shǒu shēng pángǔ. Chuísǐ huàshēn,*

Pangu was born first, and then by the time when he was dying, he transformed:

气成风云，声为雷霆，

*qì chéng fēngyún, shēng wéi léitíng,*

His breath became wind and clouds; his sounds became thunders;

左眼为日，右眼为月，

*zuǒ yǎn wéi rì, yòu yǎn wéi yuè,*

his left eye became the sun; his right eye became the moon;

四肢五体为四极五岳，

*sìzhī wǔtǐ wéi sì jí wǔyuè,*

his four limbs and five body parts became four pillars to support the heaven and five mountain peaks;

血液为江河，筋脉为地里，肌肉为田土，

*xiěyè wéi jiānghé, jīn mài wéi dì lǐ, jīròu wéi tiántǔ,*

his blood became rivers; his nerves and veins became mountain ranges, canyons, and paths; his muscles and flesh became fields and soils;

发为星辰，皮肤为草木，

*fā wéi xīngchén, pífu wéi cǎomù,*

his hairs became stars; his skin became grasses, bushes, and trees;

齿骨为金石，精髓为珠玉，汗流为雨泽，

*chǐ gǔ wéi jīnshí, jīngsuǐ wéi zhūyù, hàn liú wéi yǔ zé,*

his teeth and bones became gold and stones; his semen and marrow became pearls and jades; his sweat became rains and lakes;

身之诸虫，因风所感，化为黎甿。

*shēn zhī zhū chóng, yīn fēng suǒgǎn, huà wéi lí méng.*

all kinds of worms on and in his body, weathered by the wind, became humans.



# Libretto, continued

## Scene II:

《精卫填海》

### *The Spirit Bird*

又北二百里，曰發鳩之山，其上多柘木。

*Fā jiū zhī shān, qí shàng duō zhè mù.*

Going north 200 miles, there is a Fajiu mountain, which has many Chinese mulberry trees.

有鸟焉，其状如乌，文首，白喙，赤足，名曰“精卫”，

*Yǒu niǎo yān, qí zhuàng rú wū, wén shǒu, bái huì, chì zú, míng yuē “jīng wèi.”*

There is a kind of bird, its shape is like a crow, its head has patterns, its mouth is white, and its feet are red. Its name is “jīng wèi.”

其鸣自洌，是炎帝之少女，名曰女娃。

*qí míng zì xiǎo, shì yándì zhī shàonǚ, míng yuē nǚ wá.*

It sounds like calling its own name. It was the youngest daughter of Emperor Yan, named Nǚ Wá.

女娃遊於東海，溺而不返，故爲精衛，

*Nǚ wá yóu yú dōnghǎi, nì ér bù fǎn, Gù wèi jīng wèi,*

Nǚ Wá swam in the Eastern Sea, was drowned, and never returned. Therefore, she is called “jīng wèi.”

常銜西山之木石，以堙於東海。

*cháng xián xīshān zhī mùshí, yǐ yīn yú dōnghǎi.*

She often carries small pieces of branches and rocks from the Western mountain, and throws them into the Eastern Sea to try to fill it up.

漳水出焉，東流注於河。

*Zhāng shuǐ chū yān, dōng liú zhù yú hé.*

Zhāng River started from the Fajiu mountain, flowing East into the Yellow River.

## Scene III:

《大羿射日》

### *The Legend of Ten Suns*

东南海之外，甘水之间，有羲和之国。

*Dōngnán hǎi zhī wài, gān shuǐ zhī jiān, yǒu xī hé zhī guó.*

Beyond the South-Eastern sea, between the gān shuǐ, there is a xī hé kingdom.



有女子名曰羲和，方日浴于甘渊，

*Yǒu nǚzǐ míng yuē xī hé, fāng rì yù yú gān yuān,*

There is a woman named Xī Hé, she is bathing the Suns at gān yuan.

羲和者，帝俊之妻，生十日。

*xī hé zhě, dì jùnzhī qī, shēng shí rì.*

Xī Hé, the wife of Dì Jùn, gave birth to 10 Suns.

大荒之中，有山名曰孽摇顛羝，

*Dàhuāng zhī zhōng, yǒu shānmíng yuē niè yáo yūn dī,*

In the distant bare land, there is a mountain named Niè Yáo Yūn Dī.

上有扶木，柱三百里，其葉如芥。

*shàng yǒu fú mù, zhù sānbǎi lǐ, qí yè rú jiè.*

There are fúsāng trees in the mountain, 300 miles tall, their leaves are like mustard leaves.

有谷曰溫源谷。湯谷上有扶木，

*Yǒu gǔ yuē wēn yuán gǔ. Tānggǔ shàng yǒu fú mù,*

There is a valley named Wēn Yuán Gǔ, also called Tānggǔ Valley, it also has a fúsāng tree.

一日方至，一日方出，皆載於烏。

*yī rì fāng zhì, yī rì fāng chū, jiē zài yú wū.*

One Sun just arrived, another Sun just departed, they are all riding on three-legged Sunbirds.

湯谷上有扶桑，十日所浴，在墨齒北。

*Tānggǔ shàng yǒu fúsāng, shí rì suǒ yù, zài mò chǐ běi.*

Tānggǔ Valley has a fúsāng tree, it is where the 10 Suns bathed, in the north of mò chǐ.

居水中，有大木，九日居下枝，一日居上枝。

*Jū shuǐzhōng, yǒu dà mù, jiǔ rì jū xiàzhī, yī rì jū shàngzhī.*

In the water, there is a big tree; nine Suns stay under the branches, and one Sun stays above the branches.

尧时十日并出，草木焦枯，

*Yáo shí shí rì bìng chū, cǎomù jiāokū,*

At the time of the Emperor Yao, all 10 Suns came out all at once, all the grasses and trees were burned to death due to the heat.

尧命羿射十日，中其九日，

*yáo mìng yì shè shí rì, zhōng qí jiǔ rì,*

Emperor Yao ordered Yì to shoot down the 10 Suns, Yì shot down nine Suns.

# Libretto, continued

## *The Legend of Ten Suns, continued*

日中九乌皆死，堕其羽翼，故留其一日也。

*rì zhōng jiǔ wū jiē sǐ, duò qí yǔyì, gù liú qí yī rì yě.*

The nine sunbirds in the nine Suns all died, all their feathers and wings fell down. Therefore, only one Sun was left.

## Scene IV:

《夸父逐日》

## *Kuā Fù Chasing the Sun*

夸父与日逐走，入日；

*Kuā fù yǔ rì zhú zǒu, rù rì;*

Kuā Fù was chasing the Sun, all the way to the place where the sun sets.

渴，欲得饮，饮于河、渭；

*kě, yù dé yǐn, yǐn yú hé, wèi;*

He was thirsty and wanted to drink water. He then drank from the Yellow River and the Wèi River.

河、渭不足，北饮大泽。

*hé, wèi bùzú, běi yǐn dà zé.*

The water from the Yellow River and the Wèi River were not enough for him, he then went north to drink water from the big lake.

未至，道渴而死。

*Wèi zhì, dào kě ér sǐ.*

Before he could get there, he died from thirst.

弃其杖，化为邓林。

*Qì qí zhàng, huà wéi dèng lín.*

The walking stick he left behind was transformed into forests of peach trees.

# Guest Essay

*This essay is part of a series of writings by Virginia Tech faculty, staff, and community members that contextualize Moss Arts Center visiting artist performances.*

In China, there is no question: the egg came first. Other cultures may count their chickens, but China places this common symbol of fertility at the heart of its most widespread creation myth. Bursting from this primordial egg, the giant Pangu continues to push the purer parts of the egg upward to become the heavens and the less pure elements downward to become the earth, thus instilling the new cosmos with the Daoist duality of yin and yang.

The power of such legends, as well as their countless variations through the millennia, stems in large part from the nature of their literary source, the *Shanhai jing*, commonly translated as the *Book of Mountains and Seas*. Though codified in its present form for the imperial library during the early Han Dynasty (202 B.C.E.–9 A.D.), many of the texts had already circulated for hundreds of years and the stories, themselves, long before that. Divided into 18 sections, *Mountains and Seas* describes many landscapes and creatures (both largely mythical) in a series of standardized, highly elliptic vignettes.

What these texts lack in narrative clarity finds compensation in the cumulative power of their imagery, which not only forms a core of Chinese sensibility but often taps into corners of a collective unconscious of human concerns and experience. Their brevity and very lack of concrete detail practically invites Chinese readers to view the stories in modern trappings, and non-Chinese readers to reframe them through a different cultural lens. In addition to Pangu (who resonates as part Adam, part Atlas), we meet such characters as a princess turned into a bird and a reckless figure venturing too close to the sun, neither of whom would feel out of place in European legends.

For the composer Huang Ruo, adapting such poetic stories for the stage was daunting — not on a verbal level, since he had previously worked with operatic texts in Chinese (*Dr. Sun Yat-Sen*), English (*M. Butterfly*), and a dialect entirely of his own creation (*Paradise Interrupted*) — but rather in his musical language. He describes *Book of Mountains and Seas*, a 75-minute work in four scenes, as “vocal theatre,” with 12 singers surrounded by two percussionists — singing and beating things being the most basic and primal forms of music-making.

Within those vocal forces, though, comes a variety of musical textures: his vocal ensemble periodically divides in separate male and female choruses, as well as all possible permutations of solo and smaller groupings. Treading a

# Guest Essay, continued

fine line between ancient ritual and contemporary theatre, singers sometimes perform as specific characters, other times offering omniscient commentary.

Given the calculated timelessness in Ruo's musical conception and the mythic imagery of director Basil Twist's production design, the four stories of their *Book of Mountains and Seas* often mirror current matters. Following the introductory *Legend of Pangu*, we veer into *The Spirit Bird*, where the spirit of a young princess embodies a bird after her body drowns at sea and she begins a long and relentless campaign to take revenge on the water by dropping twigs and pebbles. "In Chinese, we have this expression, 'Dripping water can penetrate rock,'" Huang says. "For me, this simple story sends a clear message. Even if you think something is impossible, never underestimate the strength of one's determination, or the power of revenge."

From there, we encounter *The Legend of Ten Suns*, picking up the creation story after Pangu's death. The Earth is now guarded by 10 suns, each revolving in turn, riding on a large and graceful bird. One day the suns all decide to come out together, and their combined heat dries up the rivers and shrivels the crops, imperiling the Earth. Their father, the God of Heaven, employs the God of Archery to shoot them down, but after the ninth has fallen he asks that the 10<sup>th</sup> be spared; so fearful is the remaining sun that he keeps his scheduled revolution faithfully, clearly marking day and night.

From that cautionary tale extolling moderation, we turn to *Kuā Fù Chasing the Sun*, where the giant Kuā Fù, trying to discover where the sun goes at night, spends his days chasing it from east to west. Exhausted and overheated, he keeps drinking water from one river to the next until they all run dry and he finally dies of thirst. After his death, however, his walking stick falls to the ground and grows into a forest of peach blossoms, a long-held symbol of paradise. "For us today, this story is so rich in meaning," Huang says. "First of all, we see the danger in mistreating the environment by trying to control nature. But then, nature will always have the last laugh."

His original conception of the story, however, notably changed during the pandemic lockdown. "I was working on the part with the peach trees when the pandemic hit," Huang recalls. "I'd wanted it loud, bright, with everybody singing and glorifying nature. But once the pandemic hit, I couldn't write that. It was so different from what any of us were experiencing."

After a long period of contemplation, during which he completed his meditative string quartet, *A Dust in Time*, Huang returned to the scene anew. "It was a 180-degree turnaround," he says. "The sun was no longer burning, but quiet and warming. Survivors crawl out of the post-apocalyptic

debris trying to find each other, humbled and now valuing how precious life is."

The essential message, though, remains the same. "No matter how much destruction occurs, nature will always grow again," Huang maintains. "Whether or not humans will be there depends on what we decide to do."

© Ken Smith

*Author and critic Ken Smith has covered arts and culture on five continents for a wide array of print, broadcast, and internet media. Since the early 2000s he has divided his time between New York and Hong Kong, where he writes for the Financial Times of London. Winner of the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for distinguished music writing and the 2020 SOPA Award for arts and culture reporting, he is a consulting editor and monthly columnist for Opera magazine of China and a regular commentator for Hong Kong's RTHK Radio 4. With his wife, Joanna C. Lee, he co-founded Museworks Books, publishers of Pocket Chinese Classics and the annual Pocket Chinese Almanac.*

## Biographies



**HUANG RUO**, *composer and librettist*

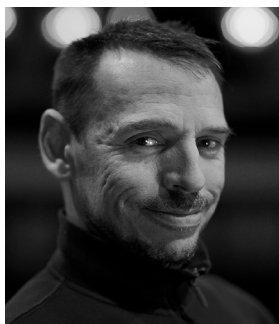
Huang Ruo has been lauded by the *New York Times* for having "a distinctive style." Ruo's vibrant and inventive musical voice draws equal inspiration from Chinese ancient and folk music, Western avant-garde, experimental, noise, natural and processed sound, rock, and jazz to create a seamless, organic integration using a compositional technique he calls "Dimensionalism." His diverse compositional

works span from orchestra, chamber music, opera, theatre, and dance, to cross-genre, sound installation, architectural installation, multimedia, experimental improvisation, folk rock, and film. His music has been premiered and performed by the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, National Polish Radio Orchestra, Santa Fe Opera, Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Asko/Schoenberg, Ensemble

# Biographies, continued

## **HUANG RUO**, *continued*

Modern, London Sinfonietta, and conductors such as Wolfgang Sawallisch, Marin Alsop, Andrew Davis, Michael Tilson Thomas, and James Conlon. His opera, *An American Soldier* (with libretto by David Henry Hwang), received its world premiere at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis in June 2018, and was named one of the best classical music events in 2018 by the *New York Times*. Ruo is a composition faculty at the Mannes School of Music in New York, and is the artistic director and conductor of Ensemble FIRE. He was selected as a Young Leader Fellow by the National Committee on United States–China Relations in 2006. Ruo’s music is published by Ricordi.



## **BASIL TWIST**, *director and production designer*

Basil Twist is a third-generation puppeteer. Twist is the sole American to graduate from the École Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mezieres, France. His showmanship was spotlighted in New York by the Jim Henson International Festival of Puppetry with his award-winning *The Araneidae Show*. This recognition coupled with the groundbreaking and multiple award-winning *Symphonie Fantastique*, Twist

was revealed as a singular artist of unlimited imagination. Subsequently Twist has created over 20 original full-length works for the stage. Highlights include *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring* (Lincoln Center), *Dogugaeshi* (Barbican, Paris, Charleveille-Mezieres), *Behind the Lid* (New York), and *Arias with a Twist* (Paris, Stockholm). He was set designer and co-director for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (La Comédie Française) Other operas he has directed and designed include Respighi’s *La bella dormiente nel bosco* (Lincoln Center Festival, Spoleto) and *Hansel and Gretel* (Houston, Atlanta, Michigan Opera). Ballet collaborations with Christopher Wheeldon include *Cinderella*, (Dutch National and San Francisco Ballet), *The Winter’s Tale* (Royal Ballet), and *The Nutcracker* (Joffrey). His honors include Obie, Henry Hewes, and Doris Duke Performing awards; multiple UNIMA and Bessie Awards; a Guggenheim fellowship; a MacArthur Fellowship; and the Rome Prize. Twist directs the Dream Music Puppetry Program at HERE in New York City.



**MILES LALLEMANT**, *conductor*

Miles Lallemand began his formal musical education as a Cathedral Chorister at Llandaff Cathedral in South Wales. Lallemand was awarded a music scholarship to Monmouth school and studied piano with Richard McMahon at the Welsh College of Music and drama, receiving his Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music at age 16. He won a choral scholarship to Robinson College, Cambridge, where he read classics and continued his piano studies with Peter Katin in London. Subsequently Lallemand lived in Ireland for several years, during which he sang in the choir of St. Patrick's Cathedral and worked as keyboard player with such outfits as Opera Ireland, Northern Ireland Opera, Ulster Orchestra, and RTE Concert Orchestra. After Ireland, he lived on a volcano in Sicily and directed the music at St. George's, Taormina, before moving to London. Three of his six siblings are professional pianists, so there was always plenty of playing to do in London, whether playing cocktail jazz at the Ritz for his brother; working with Chelsea Chamber Choir, Sloane Street Choral Society, or the Chelsea Arts Club; or playing on four grand pianos as the Lallemand Quartet. He was director of music at St. Matthew's Kensington Olympia and co-founded the Kensington Olympia Festival of Music and the Arts (KOFMA) with Denis Moriarty. As musical director of KOFMA, Lallemand directed a variety of productions, including *Dido and Aeneas*, Handel's *Messiah*, a variety of Purcell's *Odes*, and most recently Pärt's *Berliner Messe*. As well as organizing a variety of musical events, the festival exists as a charitable foundation to give performance experience and other assistance to young musicians. Lallemand has worked with Paul Hillier for 14 years, during which he has performed and recorded a large variety of music from the earliest chant to the most recent commissions as part of Chamber Choir Ireland, Ars Nova Copenhagen, and Theatre of Voices. Currently Lallemand is the chorus master of Ars Nova and lives in Copenhagen with his harpsichord; organ; baby grand; partner mezzo-soprano, Laura Lamph; and baby, Lysander.

## **ARS NOVA COPENHAGEN**

Founded in 1979, Ars Nova Copenhagen is a 12-piece vocal ensemble widely recognized as one of the world's finest of its kind. The ensemble's chief conductor and artistic director since 2003 is the acclaimed British conductor Paul Hillier. Ars Nova has also worked with, among others, Bo Holten, Tamás Vető (both former chief conductors), Kaspars Putniņš, Andrew Lawrence



# Biographies, continued

## **ARS NOVA COPENHAGEN**, *continued*

King, Anthony Rooley, Kees Boeke, Michael Bojesen, and Søren K. Hansen, all of whom have appeared as guest conductors. Ars Nova has recorded a large number of CDs winning numerous awards, including a Grammy for *The Little Match Girl Passion* with music by David Lang (Harmonia Mundi). In 2020 an album entitled ... and ... (NAXOS) with music by Arvo Pärt, Julia Wolfe, Caroline Shaw, and a number of Italian medieval songs was released in the autumn. *BBC Music Magazine* wrote, "This recording offers spiritual revelation and sonic pleasure from start to finish" and in *Chorzeit*, "The longing for divine purity, clarity, and steadfastness that one can directly experience here is timeless." The ensemble specializes in the interpretation of the polyphonic choral music of the renaissance and new vocal music. Ars Nova is also building collaborations with creative artists in different fields such as drama, film, and ballet, as well as cultivating new modes of concert performance and innovative repertoire. The group's performances are marked with precision and nerve and with a sound that attracts attention worldwide.

## **LUTE BREUER**, *puppeteer*

Lute Breuer's Broadway credits include *War Horse* at Lincoln Center, *The Pee Wee Herman Show* at the Stephen Sondheim Theater, and *The Radio City Christmas Spectacular* at Radio City Music Hall. Breuer has performed regionally at the New Victory Theater, the La Jolla Playhouse, The Geffen, the Public Theater, Shakespeare in the Park at the Delacorte Theater, and many others. Internationally he has toured as a performer or director to Russia, Brazil, Korea, China, and Ireland, among others. Festivals include Spoleto, Edinburgh, and Lincoln Center. He is a longtime collaborator with Basil Twist and very happy to be working with him again. Most recently he worked on Twist's production of *Hansel and Gretel* at the Detroit Opera House. When he's not in puppet land, Breuer works as a screenwriter.

## **BEN ELLING**, *puppeteer*

Ben Elling is a puppeteer and theatrical technician. Elling has worked extensively as an audio/video engineer and as a freelance technical director for several off-Broadway productions. In addition to his technical work, Elling has puppeteered in Basil Twist's *Rite of Spring* at Lincoln Center and *Symphonie Fantastique* at HERE.

### **ROSA ELLING**, *puppeteer*

Rosa Elling is a performer and puppet maker from Sheffield, England. Elling trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama puppetry program, then worked as a fabricator for Nick Barnes Studios before moving to New York City in 2015. Elling has worked on Tandem Otter projects ever since. Yay puppets.

### **ALEXANDRA GOSS**, *puppeteer*

Alexandra Goss is a Philadelphia-based multimedia artist and puppeteer. Since 2016, Goss has toured with Australia-based Snuff Puppets and director Steffi Oberhoff performing in Taiwan, the U.K., Germany, and most recently at the Basel International Figure Theatre Festival. Their work has been seen at The Tank, La Mama, Dixon Place, Coney Island Sideshows, Puppet Showplace Theatre, The Wassaic Project and in internet chatrooms. For more information, please visit [alexandragoss.com](http://alexandragoss.com).

### **RACHEL SCHAPIRA**, *puppeteer and puppet build chief*

Rachel Schapira is a co-founder of Eat Drink Tell Your Friends Puppetry Collective. Schapira has worked with Basil Twist, Welcome to Campfire, Ripe Time, the Story Pirates, New Georges, Opera Slavica, and Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew. Schapira is a teaching artist with Red Hook Art Project, a 2019 Henson Grant recipient, and a member of a monster trux collective.

### **ASHLEY WINKFIELD**, *puppeteer*

Ashley Winkfield (xe/them) is a multidisciplinary artist with a focus on puppetry, poetry, and performance arts. Introduced to puppetry through Basil Twist's *Rite of Spring*, Winkfield has found ways to include puppetry in every artform they encounter, including Only Child's immersive aerial experience, *Two Fold*. They have also puppeteered in Rachael Shane's *The Paper Piece*, Mabou Mine's China tour of *Animal Magnetism*, and Torry Bend's *The Paper Hat Game* and *Dreaming*. For more about Winkfield, please visit [ashleywinkfield.com](http://ashleywinkfield.com) or check out their Instagram at [@ashleyk.music](https://www.instagram.com/ashleyk.music).

### **MICHAEL MURPHY**, *percussion*

Michael Muphy has been hailed as "captivating" and "just a boy toying around with his electronic drum" (*Myanmar Times*, 2018). The Chinese-Canadian percussionist has traveled North America, Japan, Myanmar,

# Biographies, continued

## **MICHAEL MURPHY**, *continued*

Armenia, Denmark, and throughout Europe as a solo and chamber musician. Murphy is an avid performer of contemporary music and is currently working on a series of new works for percussion solo from composers in Canada, Germany, Japan, and the U.S. As a researcher, his focus in Japanese traditional aesthetics has been funded by the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung, and in connection to the Université Franco Allemande, he is currently completing a Ph.D. at the Hochschule für Musik Freiburg. Recent highlights include recording xylophone for the video game *Cuphead* and the commissioning of a new series of works for Shō, with future performance plans in Germany and Japan. For more information, please visit [murphy-percussion.com](http://murphy-percussion.com).

## **RYAN SCOTT**, *percussion*

Ryan Scott has been hailed as “Fierce and delicate...a chameleonlike virtuoso who triumphs over the varied colouristic demands and technical challenges” (*Gramophone*). As a marimba and multipercussion soloist he has performed in contemporary music festivals around the globe. He has also performed as guest soloist with the Esprit Orchestra, the National Arts Centre Orchestra, and numerous other orchestras and chamber ensembles across North America. Scott is a stalwart figure in the Toronto contemporary music community and has performed in over 300 world premieres. In addition to his work as a regular guest artist with NEXUS, principal percussionist of the Esprit Orchestra, and percussionist in the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra since 1996, Scott is also a sought after chamber musician and teacher. A core member of Continuum Contemporary Music (founded 1985), he also serves the organization as artistic director. Scott serves on the faculty at the National Youth Orchestra of Canada.

## **PRODUCTION STAFF**

### **NATALIE WAGNER**, *stage manager*

Natalie Wagner is a multi-arts stage manager with a focus on opera, new work, and movement-based theatre. Wagner’s recent credits include *Turandot*, *Le Comte Ory*, and *Zorro* at Opera Southwest (PSM); *Sky on Swings* at Opera Saratoga (ASM); *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Manhattan School of Music (ASM); and *The Servant of Two Masters* at Syntetic Theater Company (SM). Wagner has also worked in dance and storefront theatre in Chicago, as well as on many New York Musical Festival productions.

**KATE BREHM**, *assistant director*

Kate Brehm directs and designs visual theater with puppets, physical acting, and scenic dramaturgy. Brehm is certified in the Margolis Method of physical theatre and has taught Movement for Puppeteers and Visual Storytelling for the Stage at Harvard University and elsewhere. Brehm's credits include *The Poofs*, *Dark Space*, *Things Fall Apart*, and *Discrepancies* (director/designer); *Hansel and Gretel* at Michigan Opera Theater, *Dorothy and the Prince of Oz* at Tulsa Ballet/Ballet Met, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* on Broadway (puppet movement direction with Basil Twist); and *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Dogugaeshi*, *Rite of Spring*, *Arias With a Twist*, *Petrushka*, *Sister's Follies*, and *Seafoam Sleepwalk* (performing puppeteer – Basil Twist).

**DANIEL NEUMANN**, *sound engineer*

Daniel Neumann is a sound artist, organizer, and audio engineer living in New York City. Neumann holds a masters degree in media art from the Academy of Visual Art Leipzig and also studied electronic music composition. His artistic work has been presented internationally and is represented by Fridman Gallery. As an audio engineer, he has 20+ years of professional experience, and his focus is on multi-channel sound, installations and contemporary music. Neumann is a member of Alarm Will Sound and works with BlankForms, Ambient Church, ACME, Diamanda Galás, and many more. For more information, please visit [danielneumann.org](http://danielneumann.org) and [ctswam.org](http://ctswam.org).

**AYUMU "POE" SAEGUSA**, *lighting designer*

Ayumu "Poe" Saegusa started stage lighting design in 2000 in Tokyo. Saegusa moved to New York City in 2005 and became the resident lighting designer at HERE Arts Center. He also works as a freelance lighting designer for various types of shows, from New York Fringe festival to Lincoln Center Festival. He is a good collaborator for multimedia opera and all sorts of puppet shows. His credits include *Looking at You* (HERE Main stage, 2019, New York) by Kristin Martin, and *Rite of Spring* (White Light Festival at Lincoln Center 2014, New York) by Basil Twist. Saegusa has served as lighting designer to Basil Twist since 2008.

# Biographies, continued

## BETH MORRISON PROJECTS

Beth Morrison Projects (BMP) is one of the foremost creators and producers of new opera-theatre and music theatre, with a fierce commitment to leading the industry into the future, cultivating a new generation of talent, and telling the stories of our time. Founded by “contemporary opera mastermind” (*LA Times*) Beth Morrison, who was honored as one of Musical America’s Artists of the Year/Agents of Change in 2020, BMP has grown into “a driving force behind America’s thriving opera scene” (*Financial Times*), with *Opera News* declaring that the company, “more than any other... has helped propel the art form into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” Operating across the U.S. and internationally, with offices in Brooklyn and Los Angeles, BMP’s unique model offers living composers the support, guidance, and freedom to experiment, allowing them to create singularly innovative and impactful projects. Since forming in 2006, the company has commissioned, developed, produced, and toured over 50 works in 14 countries around the world, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning chamber operas *Angel’s Bone* and *p r i s m*. In 2013 BMP co-founded the PROTOTYPE Festival with HERE, which has been called “utterly essential” (*New York Times*), “indispensable” (*New Yorker*), and “one of the world’s top festivals of contemporary opera and theater” (*Associated Press*).

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This is the first performance by Huang Ruo, Basil Twist, and Ars Nova Copenhagen at the Moss Arts Center.

# Tell Us What You Think!

We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to Cécile McLorin Salvant on Saturday, April 29, 2023.



[bit.ly/book-mountains-seas-feedback](https://bit.ly/book-mountains-seas-feedback)

## Engagement Events

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22-FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2023**

**UNIVERSITY CLASS VISITS: MUSIC AND THEATRE ARTS**

Huang Ruo and Basil Twist led four classes, including music composition and scene design, in the School of Performing Arts.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2023**

**LEARNING LUNCH AT THE ASIAN CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT CENTER**

As part of the Asian Cultural Engagement Center's guest speaker series, Huang Ruo spoke with university students about his path through higher education to the world of new music.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2023**

**PRE-PERFORMANCE TALK: HUANG RUO**

The composer discussed the development of the new work and its role in his broader canon of "dimensionalist" music.

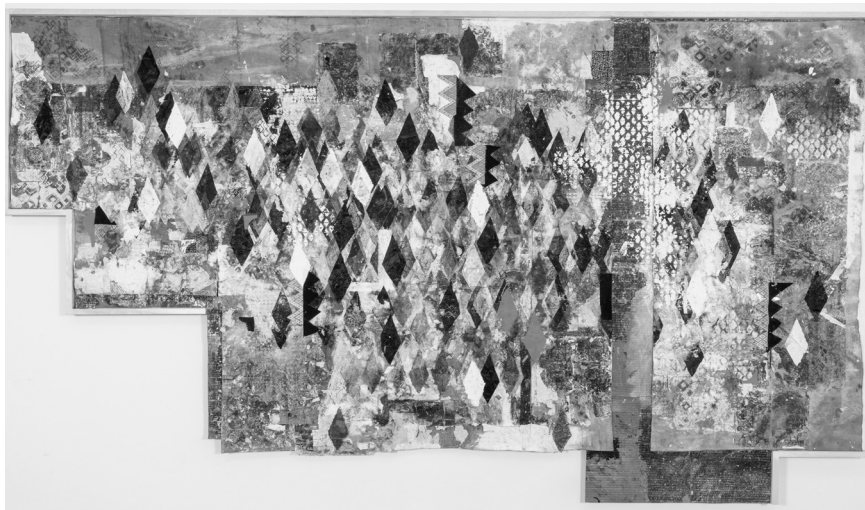
*Special thanks to the Asian Cultural Engagement Center, Mozaiko Living-Learning Community, Ico Bukvic, Kate Burnham-Hull, Nina Ha, Iuliia Hoban, Eric Lyon, Helen Schneider, Charles Nichols, Yong Xu, and Danfeng Yao*

# Go Deeper

In an interview with Soundstreams, Huang Ruo said that *Book of Mountains and Seas* is “like a map.” How does the music’s composition and performance create a “landscape” for the ancient text’s tales of cosmic proportions?

## In the Galleries

Through Saturday, April 22



**Anne Samat**

***Follow Your Heart Wholeheartedly 2***

**Ruth C. Horton Gallery**

In her fiber-based reliefs, Malaysian artist Anne Samat meticulously juxtaposes beadwork and traditional South Asian weaving techniques with common items, a project that questions the boundaries of craft and art.

**Yanira Collado**

***Zafa/ A Spellworking of Temporal Geometry***

**Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen**

**'71 Reception Gallery**

In the face of inevitable change and displacement, memories find a home in the relic. Yanira Collado explores the ideas of migration, reliquary, and memory through construction and ritual.

▲ Yanira Collado, *Areíto #2*, 2020-2023, paper, carbon transfers, gel medium transfers, carbon paper, textile, paint, drywall compound, 65½ x 107 ½ inches, courtesy of the artist



# K-12 Programs at the Moss



Experiences with the arts cultivate the next generation of creative thinkers, engage learners of diverse backgrounds, and foster community dialogue. The Moss Arts Center has been dedicated to providing K-12 students in the region with free, high-quality, and exciting arts programming since opening our doors in 2013. Through school-day matinee programs, gallery tours, in-school performances, and workshops with artists, we are passionate about serving our youngest community members and schools. Learn more at [bit.ly/moss-k12](https://bit.ly/moss-k12).

## Did You Know?

The Moss Arts Center has commissioned 21 performances and visual arts works to date, including *Book of Mountains and Seas*. Commissioning means supporting the creation of new work — advancing resources to develop a work of art. As one of this country's leading campus-based arts institutions, the center has an important responsibility to support the creative efforts of established and emerging artists.

# Land Acknowledgement and Labor Recognition

Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that legislation and practices like the Morrill Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands, both locally and in western territories.

We understand that honoring Native Peoples without explicit material commitments falls short of our institutional responsibilities. Through sustained, transparent, and meaningful engagement with the Tutelo/Monacan Peoples and other Native Nations, we commit to changing the trajectory of Virginia Tech's history by increasing Indigenous student, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention, diversifying course offerings, and meeting the growing needs of all Virginia tribes and supporting their sovereignty.

We must also recognize that enslaved Black people generated revenue and resources used to establish Virginia Tech and were prohibited from attending until 1953. Through InclusiveVT, the institutional and individual commitment to *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence, we commit to advancing a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

## Health and Wellness

The Moss Arts Center adheres to the guidelines of the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Tech in its operations, including protocols for distancing, face coverings, and cleaning and sanitation. Our status may change according to changes in university operating procedures. Find the most up to date information at [artscenter.vt.edu/visit](https://artscenter.vt.edu/visit).

We ask patrons to do their part in keeping our community healthy. If you feel unwell, please stay home.

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# Special Thanks

We are grateful for the generosity of our patrons and donors who sustain the Moss Arts Center with their annual gifts. The impact of all contributions, no matter the amount, is significant in helping us transform lives through exploration and engagement with the arts and the creative process. We are honored to have received donations during the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, from the following:

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