

# Program

*Ariadne in America*, a new short film  
dir. Kevin Newbury

*Threadbare*, for solo piano (2025, world premiere)  
Lucas Tahiruzzaman Syed (b. 1987)

*Arianna a Naxos* (1790)  
Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809)

*intermission*

*From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* (1974)\*  
Dominick Argento (1927-2019)

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LMCC serves, connects, and makes space for artists and community.

# Cast and Creative

ARIADNE - Jordan Rutter-Covatto

THESEUS - Marty Keiser

director - Kevin Newbury

piano - David Sytkowski

stage lighting - Julian Wild

videography and film editing - Ian Chen

sound engineering - Lucas Tahiruzzaman Syed

screenplay and projection design - Jordan Rutter-Covatto

voiceover - Joseph Valle Hoag

supertitles - Megan Gillis

pre-show - Master R.

promotional photography - Austin Ruffer

promotional makeup artist - Nick Lujan

film documentation - David Wadsworth

photo documentation - Steven Pisano

producer - Vincent Rutter-Covatto

## WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO SUPPORT FROM

Anonymous Anonymous Anonymous Lewis Baratz William Booth

Joshua Brown Mark Campbell Dennis Corbett Bryan deParsia

Garrett Eucker Erica Fagundes Evans Haile Hope Hutman Michael Jeavons

Thom Kam Corey Kinger Daniel Klein Mirabai Knight Robert E. Lee III

Arthur Leonard Nick Lujan Wayne Murphy Zephyr Merkur

Fred Sauter Jeremy Sivitz Patrick Owens Jenna Rich Frank Salerno

Diego Segalini Steven Tietjen John Thomas Pelé Sanchez Tormes

Dona D. Vaughn Stefan Weisman Libby Whittaker Zia

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)

The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC)

# Artist Statement

For those who studied operatic singing, few figures are as universally known as Ariadne, the daughter of Minos and princess of Crete who helped Theseus defeat the Minotaur and escape the labyrinth—only to be abandoned by him on the desert island of Naxos. Her famous lament “Lasciatemi morire” from Monteverdi’s lost opera *Arianna* remains a rite of passage for young singers everywhere, while her appearance in Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos* preserves her as a mainstay onstage. Despite her prominence in opera, however, her appearances in records and mythology kept by Greek writers like Plutarch and Ovid are relatively brief. She is a figure defined by her circumstances, while her own thoughts and desires are ignored.

I rediscovered the myth of Ariadne in graduate school when I programmed Haydn’s *Arianna a Naxos* for my final recital. The piece, performed in Haydn’s time by singers across a variety of ages and genders, is striking in its musical depiction of the island and its vocal writing which quickly shifts from sweet melancholy to furious declamation. It quickly became one of my favorite works to perform, and this production marks the second time I have programmed the work in its entirety.

When seeking a piece to program alongside Haydn’s *Arianna*, I landed on another tragic figure immortalized in classical music: Virginia Woolf, whose most recent high-profile stage depiction was in Kevin Puts’s opera *The Hours* in the Metropolitan Opera’s 2022 season. A more intimate depiction can be found in Dominick Argento’s Pulitzer Prize-winning song cycle *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, which set entries from Woolf’s diary from shortly after she began keeping one until just before her death by suicide. The work draws inspiration from Schumann’s song cycle *Frauen-Liebe und Leben*, beginning and ending with the same musical material, and is constructed using a combination of twelve-tone techniques and conventional harmony. All of these musical techniques work together to illustrate a sense of being trapped in one’s own mind and the desperation to escape—by any means necessary.

In her novel *Orlando*, Woolf imagines another means of escape: transformation. The titular character, changed from a man to a woman by the Three Graces, is continuously in a state of flux with their love of literature as the only constant. Central to Orlando’s journey across the world and over the centuries is her realization that her gender does not define her, and that her refusal to be imprisoned by it is the key to her survival. The novel remains a favorite of queer, trans, and nonbinary readers today and is one of the many ways Woolf’s legacy transcends her tragic death. In Argento’s cycle, *Orlando* plays a key role: the entry in which she first conceives of the novel is set as the third song in the work, titled “Fancy,” in which Woolf imagines a character identified as “he,” “she,” and “they” in quick succession.

To prepare for the project, Kevin and I constructed a single character from disparate texts. The screenplay for the film, assimilated from Plutarch, Ovid, and the many different versions of the myth in media and online, was written to explore Ariadne’s motivations. In Haydn’s cantata, one witnesses the trauma of abandonment, while in Argento’s cycle the audience looks into character’s psyche. Throughout all of the works, the theme of reflection emerges: observing oneself in isolation, perhaps through an echo, a diary, a mirror, or in the many ways the internet records our existence and presents it back to us.

Ariadne’s myth ends differently depending on who tells the story. In some versions, she throws herself off the cliffs of Naxos to her death. In others, Dionysus, the god of festivals, madness, and theatre, falls in love with Ariadne and marries her. When it’s time to decide how our own story will be written, will we allow ourselves to succumb to despair—or embrace our divinity?

# Bios



**JORDAN RUTTER-COVATTO** (they/them) is a singer, actor, composer, and creative producer based in New York City. Rutter-Covatto's practice combines virtuosic bel canto vocal technique with method acting processes and Baroque gesture to create performances lauded as "riveting ... frightening to behold" (*Opera News*, *The Turn of the Screw*, 1/5/20) and "[t]he best operatic moments" (WQXR, *Three Way*, 6/16/17).

Rutter-Covatto is a sought-after collaborator for contemporary operas and new music. They have worked with The American Opera Project, Beth Morrison Projects, American Lyric Theater, Fort Worth Opera, and American Modern Opera Company among others. Career highlights include the development, world premiere, and original cast recording of *Three Way* (Paterson/Cotè, Nashville Opera) and the second production of *The Scarlet Ibis* (Weisman/Cotè, Chicago Opera Theater). Upcoming engagements include covering Cesare in *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* at St. Petersburg Opera and Trinculo in the world premiere of Joseph Summers's setting of *The Tempest* with Teatro Grattacielo.

In New York City's theater scene, Rutter-Covatto has been featured both as a musician and as an actor. Rutter-Covatto's off-Broadway debut was as an onstage singer in Lot Vekemans's *POISON* (Origin Theater Company). Additional stage work includes Johnny Lloyd's play *birthday birthday birthday* (Columbia University) and Truth Future Bachman's queer superhero musical *Skyward: An Ending Elegy* (Lincoln Center).

Rutter-Covatto's creative practice also encompasses composition, arrangement, and orchestration. Their song "The Banned-Book Tango" received the third prize in New York's 2025 SongSlam competition, and their new chamber orchestration of Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* received its premiere at College Light Opera Company during its 2025 season.

*Ariadne in America* is Rutter-Covatto's first screenplay, and their professional writing debut "The Classical Fetish" can be found in the October issue of *DRUMMER* magazine.

As the founder and artistic director of counter codex, Rutter-Covatto works to reclaim queer narratives in classical music through interdisciplinary and experimental opera productions that combine the aesthetics and values of the leather and fetish communities with the arts. Previous productions include *POLYMATH: La Comédie de la Mort*, a recital of two world premiere song cycles composed by Rutter-Covatto and Joseph N. Rubinstein alongside inherited repertory settings of Théophile Gautier, a live reading of a horror story by a local writer, and a photography exhibit, and *RITUAL: Schwarze Messe Kabarett*, featuring music by Jewish composers affected by the Nazi regime arranged for chamber ensemble and interspersed with monologues adapted from oral histories of queer elders.

**KEVIN NEWBURY** (he/they) is an opera, theatre, film and television director and producer based in New York City.

Kevin has directed over 100 original projects in multiple mediums. Career highlights include three productions for PBS GREAT PERFORMANCES: the world premiere of *Bel Canto* (Lyric Opera of Chicago), the world premiere of *Doubt* (Minnesota Opera) and Bernstein's *MASS* (Ravinia Festival). Kevin's long collaboration with acclaimed composer Gregory Spears includes five world premieres: *Fellow Travelers* (Greg Pierce, librettist: Cincinnati Opera, Prototype Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Arizona Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera and Virginia Opera, New York Times: Best Classical Music, 2016, New Yorker: Best Classical Recordings 2016, Opera News: Best Classical Recordings of the Decade), *O Columbia* (Royce Vavrek, librettist: Houston Grand Opera), *Paul's Case* (Kathryn Walat, co-librettist: Urban Arias, Prototype Festival, Opera News: Best Classical Recordings of 2014) and, with librettist Tracy K. Smith, *Castor & Patience* (Cincinnati Opera, New York Times: Best Classical Music, 2022) and *The Righteous* (Santa Fe Opera, 2024). In 2026, Kevin launched the 10th Anniversary National Tour of *Fellow Travelers* at Seattle Opera. The Tour will travel to over a dozen companies around the country in 2026 and 2027.



Kevin's short films and music videos have screened at over 50 film festivals, winning several awards. Kevin also directed the opera scene and served as a consultant for Apple TV's *Dickinson* (Season 2, Episode 6: "Split the Lark").

As an event director, Kevin has directed the PARK AVENUE ARMORY's annual gala four times (2015-2017, returning again in 2019), featuring Kimbra, Patti Lupone, the Young Professionals, Raja Feather-Kelly, Sondra Radvanovsky, MIKA and hundreds of performing artists from multiple disciplines. He also directed the 2019 BAM Gala, featuring Neneh Cherry.

In the summer of 2020 at the height of the global pandemic, Kevin co-founded a new, ever-growing Artist Collective called UP UNTIL NOW, with Brandon Kazen-Maddox and Jecca Barry. UP UNTIL NOW is committed to developing and producing interdisciplinary work that helps build new structures for artistic creation across all art and media platforms. UUN creates inclusive, expansive collaborative spaces that center stories of empathy, intimacy, and connection. Among UP UNTIL NOW's recent projects include *SOUL(SIGNS): AN ASL PLAYLIST*, for Broad.stream. UUN's first ASL music video for Gladys Knight and the Pips' "Midnight Train to Georgia" was featured the Times Square Alliance's "Midnight Moment," playing on 80+ screens in Times Square every night in July. Kevin directed six music videos with UUN in 2021, including projects with Shayfer James, Morgan James and Coyle Girelli. Other recent UUN projects include *SOUL(SINGS): OPERA* for Boston Lyric Opera, Portland Opera, Opera Columbus and Opera Omaha (Reel Abilities Film Festival NYC, 2022), a video campaign for Pride 2022 for Global Citizen and the short film *UP UNTIL NOW*, which premiered at OutFEST Fushion and NEW FEST in 2022. UUN's immersive, multi-sensory haptics film installation, *UP UNTIL NOW: midair for some time*, was presented by the Center for Performance Research, JACK and HERE, in collaboration with Reel Abilities Film Festival NYC. *SOUL(SIGNS): Making Music Visible*, aired on PBS in April, 2025.

Kevin was raised in Maine. He graduated from Bowdoin College and spent a year abroad at Oxford University.





**DAVID SYTKOWSKI** (he/him) is a sought-after pianist, vocal coach, and music director in opera, art song, cabaret and musical theater. He has appeared at venues such as Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Joe's Pub and Feinstein's San Francisco, among others. He often collaborates with legendary cabaret artist Justin Vivian Bond.

As Artist in Residence at Bard College, he is Music Director for Opera Workshop, leads the Musical Theater Performance Workshop and coaches singers and pianists.

He is co-creator of *VOWEL MOVEMENTS*, a subversive classical/cabaret/drag project with Pretty Lamé, made possible by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. It premiered at Hudson Hall in June 2023 and remounted at ICA Miami in February 2024.

Other recent 2025 projects include the production premiere of Steven Schoenberg's and Richard Michelson's *Dear Edvard* at the Martha's Vineyard Playhouse; *Woo Girl Miracles!* with Justin Vivian Bond (Joe's Pub); *Giulio Cesare* with director RB Schlather (Hudson Hall); *Assassins* (Fisher Center at Bard); recitals with contralto Vira Slywotzky (NYC, Boston, Key West and New Hampshire).

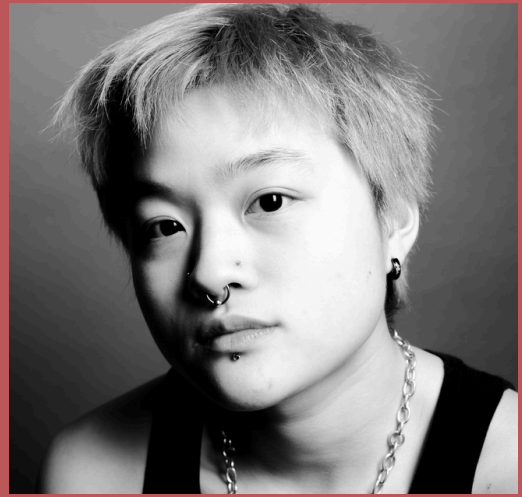
**MARTY KEISER** (he/him, Aquarius Sun, Leo Rising, and a whole lotta Virgo) recently performed as a Guest Artist in the actor/dancer ensemble of Simon McBurney's NY Times Critics Pick production of *Die Zauberflöte* at The Metropolitan Opera and also at the Dutch National Opera. He holds an MFA in Acting from Columbia University, Psychology and Drama degrees from Tufts University, is a member of Actors Equity Association, an Adjunct Associate Professor at Pace University, and a Facilitator at Othership. Current projects include: *Very Fine People* with M34, *Rubalee* with Caborca, and the feature film *Transcendent*.



**LUCAS TAHIRUZZAMAN SYED** (he/him) is a gay South-Asian American who REALLY likes to make things. Favorite media include music, film, video games, writing, and cross-media/interdisciplinary. In addition to his passion projects he cherishes his ongoing collaborations—to name a few: riotous and rising cabaret star Mz. Zilbert (aka Gilbert Diego Sanchez), filmmaker Michael Bergmann, playwright Elizabeth Hess, and many of his BMI workshop pals. When he's not occupied with creating lavish artistic oddities, he is relentlessly pursuing the rush of top-caliber aesthetic experiences. In 2024, he released a psychoanalysis-inspired video game, produced his first disco

track, and started a completely new and thriving line of video-based freelancing. New horizons abound. Let's do this!

**IAN CHEN** (he/him) is a filmmaker born and raised in Queens, NY, with a special interest in using film and media as a tool for community building, justice, action, and illumination through the arts. He started filmmaking in 2016 through a nonprofit film education organization called Reel Works. He has since entered the industry in a variety of roles, including camera operating, camera and lighting tech, and editing. He leans towards work with independent artists to create film pieces with a multidisciplinary focus, involving music, poetry, dance, performance/theater, installation, and more.



**JOSEPH VALLE HOAG** (he/him) is a musician based in New York City. His music can be found on all streaming platforms, and he performs each Sunday at The Church of The Blessed Sacrament in the Upper West Side. Joseph runs the New York chapter of The Yuletide Carolers who are currently accepting bookings for the 2025 Christmas season. Joseph can only be experienced in person because he has deleted all his social media and can be reached at [joevallehoag@gmail.com](mailto:joevallehoag@gmail.com).

**VINCENT RUTTER-COVATTO** (he/him) is an arts leader and producer based in New York City. He is the director of learning and leadership at OPERA America, where he develops leadership and professional development programming for opera company administrators, independent producers, and artists. 2025 marks his 10th year at the company, where he previously served in roles in the membership department and National Opera Center. He is an alumnus of OPERA America's 2019 Leadership Intensive. In 2022, he and his husband, Jordan, founded counter codex, an interdisciplinary performance company, where he serves as the company producer and founding trustee. Outside of his work in the arts, Vincent can be found taking classes at the Harlem YMCA, volunteering for political causes, and spending time in the West Village.



# Support

**counter codex** was founded by Jordan Rutter-Covatto to reimagine the place of queerness in classical music. **counter codex** projects combine opera, performance art, and experimental theatre to break down the barriers between the arts and the lives of its creators, performers, and audiences.

We believe in creating art that is **unfiltered** and **unafraid** and responds to the biggest questions facing our community today: who creates culture? What stories get to be told? What does the media we create say about who we are?

All counter codex projects are conceived to feature members of the local queer community of any number of performance backgrounds. Previous counter codex shows have featured photographers, writers, body painters, and a really scary guy in a rubber suit. From our signature productions to our free Happy Hours, our events are first and foremost a place for people to come together and celebrate each other. Every counter codex show is a party and you're invited.

We're challenging the old narratives of the arts by discovering the deeper truths buried within them. **Let's crack the code together.**

counter codex productions depend on the support from you, our community. Help us bring a new generation of queer art to audiences. [Make a gift today](https://countercodex.com/support) to support our work at [countercodex.com/support](https://countercodex.com/support).

counter codex is a sponsored project of [Fractured Atlas](#), a non-profit arts service organization. Contributions for the charitable purposes of counter codex must be made payable to "Fractured Atlas" only and are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.