



The Captured Goddess

Dominick DiOrio, composer
Misha Penton, soprano
Meredith Harris, viola
Kyle Evans, piano

The Captured Goddess (7'22"). Poetry of Amy Lowell (1914)
Klytemnestra, the original subversive female. scene ii, Deception-Attraction (4'55"). Misha Penton, libretto
Klytemnestra, the original subversive female, scene iii, The Weaving Aria (4'15"). Misha Penton, libretto

Produced by Misha Penton
Recorded by Todd Hulslander at The Geary Performance Studio, Houston Public Media

The Captured Goddess music video on Vimeo: [here](#)
Misha Penton, director
Raul Casares, director of photography
Cliff Davis, editor

[Digital EP on Bandcamp](#)

Misha Penton, soprano & artistic director



Dominick DiOrio is truly a kindred spirit. His dynamic and fierce setting of my libretto, *Klytemnestra*, became a turning point in my development as an artist— not only fueling my desire to pursue adventurous and challenging dramatic music projects, but founding within me a deep commitment to, and keen understanding of works best suited to my voice and artistic temperament.

After our work on *Klytemnestra*, Dominick approached me about setting a poem by American poet, Amy Lowell. Reaching forward from 1914, Lowell's *The Captured Goddess* brims with nascent power, and in Dominick's hands the work blazes with larger-than-life intensity. It is ominous and prescient with its haunting illumination of contemporary urban life, and a stark view of our ever-pressing forward, ever-changing world.

Klytemnestra and *The Captured Goddess* fully embody a unique and defiant feminine voice. They are creatures— archetypes — of the threshold: part shadow and part light, subversive in body, voice and word, breaking established order into chaos and possessing the power to restructure the masculine paradigm of society. *Klytemnestra* and *The Captured Goddess* are beings who stand not in reaction to, not as a secondary part of, nor as the other half of— but as the non-dualistic essence of wholeness.

It is a privilege and an honor to sing Dominick's music; to have his trust as I followed my artistic vision with these two major projects (including my continued love affair with directing and producing music videos); and to share a rare and delightful personal and artistic relationship.

Soprano, Misha Penton is a contemporary opera singer, theater artist, librettist and lyricist. Her work explores the intersection of new music performance; new opera theater; soundscape composition; bel canto and extended vocal techniques; and creative writing. She is the founder and artistic director of Divergence Vocal Theater, a Houston-based opera, new music and multi-performing arts ensemble. Professional affiliations include Houston Grand Opera, The Foundation for Modern Music; The University of Houston Center for Creative Work; Audio Inversions, an Austin-based new music ensemble; the Jewish Community Center Houston; and DiverseWorks Arts Space Houston.

Recent performances and projects include a reprise of the title role in Dominick DiOrio's chamber opera, *Klytemnestra* (a setting of Misha's libretto) in the galleries of The Museum of Fine Arts Houston and at the Dallas Museum of Art; a site specific world premiere collaboration with composer George Heathco in a 19th century military bunker at Fort Worden State Park in Washington State; the CD and music video release of *Selkie*, composed by Elliot Cole, performed, produced by, and with a libretto by Misha; and directing and producing a new music film of *ravens & radishes*, a setting of Misha's fairytale poetry, composed by George Heathco, as well as the world premiere performance and Digital EP release of *ravens & radishes*. Misha's latest performance works are a series of improvised and semi-improvised dramatic voice works in collaboration with pianist Hsin-Jung Tsai and bassist Thomas Helton, with text based on the work of Virginia Woolf, premiered at Austin's New Media Art & Sound Summit 2015. Misha has created experimental voice sound art works for performances at DiverseWorks Arts Space (Houston); the University of Houston Center for Choreography; New Orleans contemporary dance company, Hapenseance; ActLab Studios (Austin); and for The Olimpias, an international artists' collective and performance research series. Misha is one of Houston Press' 100 Creatives of 2011, and is named a 2012 finalist for Best Artistic Director by the Houston Press Theater Awards. She has enjoyed guest artist residencies at Sam Houston State University, Texas A&M College Station, and Lone Star College Montgomery.

Upcoming projects include the new contemporary music duo, *Mallet & Breath* with percussionist Luke Hubley; a new devised opera with pianist Hsin-Jung Tsai and bassist Thomas Helton; as well as the creation of a live and electroacoustic new voice and theater piece based on the sirens of Homer's *The Odyssey*, as artist in residence at University of Houston Honors College; and the world premiere performance of *Women of the Land*, a chamber opera monodrama composed by Carson Cooman with a libretto by Misha, based on women of Irish mythology. [mishapenton.com](#)

*I followed her for long,
With gazing eyes and stumbling feet...*

Misha Penton has long now been a muse of mine, weaving her webs of musical mayhem and artistic insight in Houston and beyond. Our first collaboration on *Klytemnestra* was eye-opening for me, as I witnessed the impressive power of Misha's vocals and the psychological cauldron of fragrances suggested by her words. Misha brought forward an image of a woman who refused to accept the shackles imposed by the men around her, a woman who would rebel against the male-ordered hierarchy with chaos, murder, and revenge. In the two scenes here, we see Klytemnestra as a fully-dimensional character wrestling with the conflict that comes from wanting to kill the father of her child.

I wrote *The Captured Goddess* for Misha soon after that project. It was designed as a cuture song for her voice, bespoke dressings for a soprano in her prime. I set the poetry of Amy Lowell to music for soprano, viola, and piano to mirror the scoring for *Klytemnestra* and to bring out the similarities of meaning between both texts. In Lowell's poem, the Goddess is color-filled and of such sparkling bedazzlement that the poet cannot help but be transfixed. Yet all of this comes to ruin as the men of the city corrupt and commoditize her, turning what was singular and beautiful into a grotesque and pitiful mockery. The speaker cannot bear to look: "*Hiding my face I fled, and the grey wind hissed behind me along the narrow streets.*"

I see such a similarity in these two stories. I secretly hope—if Lowell's poem were to continue—that the poet would transform the cruelty she has witnessed into an act of transformative social disorder, just as the bloody catharsis of our anti-heroine Klytemnestra is unleashed on the unsuspecting and privileged Agamemnon. — Dominick DiOrio

Dominick DiOrio, composer



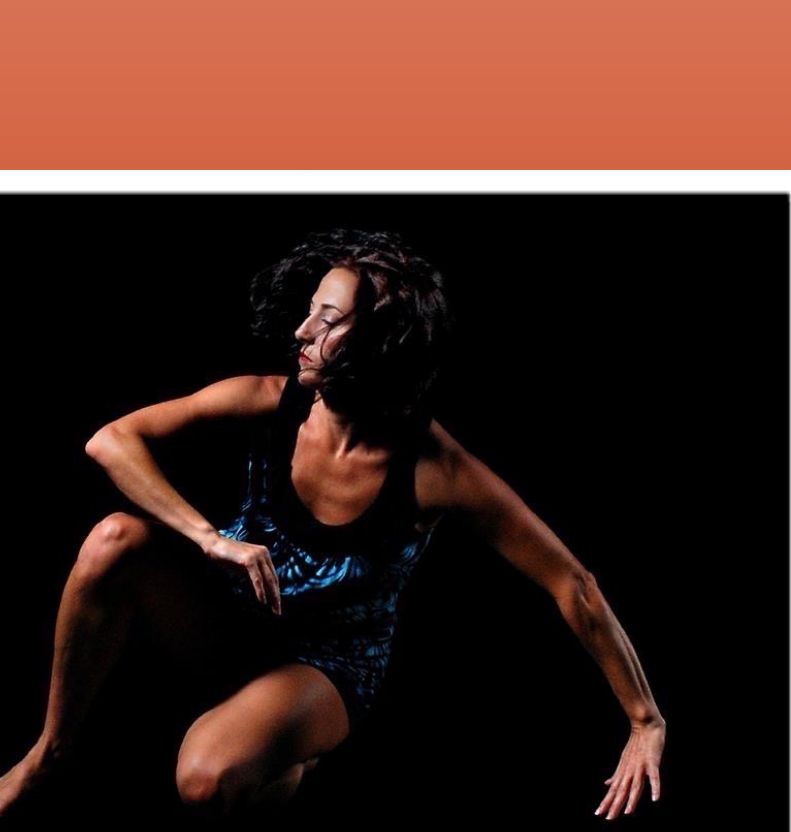
Conductor and composer Dominick DiOrio was recently named the 2014 winner of The American Prize in Composition (professional choral division) with the judges saying "his depth of vision, mastery of compositional technique, and unique style set him in a category by himself." Called "a forward-thinking young composer filled with new ideas, ready to tackle anything," DiOrio was named Best Composer 2011 by HoustonPress for *Klytemnestra*, his chamber opera with Divergence Vocal Theater and librettist Misha Penton. His second opera, *The Little Blue One* with librettist Meghan Guidry, had its premiere in April 2014 in Boston with Juventas New Music Ensemble and musical director Lidiya Yankovskaya. Of the opera, the Boston Examiner wrote, "The Little Blue One defies the widespread notion that contemporary classical music is inaccessible; DiOrio's score abounds with gorgeous lyricism, supported by compelling harmony." He has been awarded prizes in composition from ASCAP and ACDA, among many others. His work is published with Alliance, Boosey & Hawkes, Carl Fischer, Éditions à Couer-Joie, Edition Peters, G. Schirmer, Lorenz, Mark Foster, Oxford and Santa Barbara. DiOrio is assistant professor of choral conducting at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he directs NOTUS: IU Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, an auditioned chorus specializing in music of the last fifty years. He mentors graduate choral conducting majors and also teaches courses in score reading, choral literature, and undergraduate and graduate conducting. Under his leadership, NOTUS has performed at an interest session for the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Central Division Conference, as an invited ensemble on the Distinguished Concerts International New York (DCINY) Artist Series at Carnegie Hall, and as the Featured Ensemble-in-Residence for the Composers Track at the ACDA National Conference in Salt Lake City. DiOrio earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting from the Yale School of Music, studying with Marguerite Brooks, Simon Carrington and Jeffrey Duma. His DMA research on Krzysztof Penderecki's St. Luke Passion is published in *The Choral Scholar*. He also earned the MMA and MM in conducting from Yale and the BM in composition summa cum laude from Ithaca College, where he studied with Gregory Woodward, Dana Wilson and Janet Galván. He currently serves as Treasurer on the Executive Board for the National Collegiate Choral Organization (NCCO), on the Board of Directors for Chorus America, and on the advisory boards for the Choral Arts Initiative, the Princeton Pro Musica, and the Young New Yorker's Chorus (YNYC). [dominickdorio.com](#)



Violist **Meredith Harris**, a native of North Carolina, currently lives in Houston, TX where she enjoys an active performing and teaching career. She performs with the Houston Symphony, Houston Ballet, Houston Grand Opera, and the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra. Most recently, she toured with Houston Grand Opera to New York City for the premier of *The Passenger* at the Lincoln Center Opera Festival. Ms. Harris has been invited to perform at various festivals across the United States including The Grand Teton Music Festival, Kennedy Center Conservatory Project with Time for Three, Tanglewood, and Spoleto. As a founding member of the Houston-based Quartus Chamber Players, she had the opportunity to collaborate with Aperio, Music of the Americas, Houston Chamber Choir, Windsync, and Divergence Vocal Theater. Quartus frequently performed on Houston Public Radio's The Front Row, partnered with Classical Revolution Houston, and reached over one-thousand students in the greater Houston area with their unique Quartus in the Classroom programs. In addition to performing, she maintains a full private violin and viola studio and enjoys teaching at various workshops and Institutes including Viola Day at Illinois State University, Parker Suzuki Magnet School Workshop, Greenville NC Suzuki Workshop, PA Suzuki Institute, and the NC Suzuki Institute. She is a former board member and a current active member of the Houston Area Suzuki Strings Association and coordinates the HASSA Fabulous Fridays Group Class events in Houston and League City. Ms. Harris holds a Bachelors degree from East Carolina University and a Masters Degree from Rice University where she studied with Ara Gregorian and James Dunham, respectively.



Pianist **Kyle Evans**, has performed on KUHA's The Front Row, and at venues such as The Rothko Chapel, The Miller Outdoor, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Dallas Museum of Art and The Sage Theatre in NYC. He has appeared with HGOCO *Opera to Go!* and in numerous school productions and churches as guest artist. Frequently premiering new music, in a recent performance of Dominick DiOrio's *Klytemnestra* with Divergence Vocal Theater, The Houston Press said he played "with rich insight and emotional wallop." He is also featured on the recent Divergence Vocal Theatre CD release of *Selkie*, by Elliot Cole. Kyle received degrees from Oklahoma City University where he was winner of the concerto competition and from Rice University where he studied with Brian Connelly.



Dancer and choreographer, **Toni Leago Valle**, featured in *The Captured Goddess* music video, is Artistic Director of 6'. Valle received a B.A. in Theatre, specializing in dance, from University of Houston in 2000. Valle has produced *It's All Relative* in 2002, *CRACKED* in 2006, *tetris* in 2009, and *Baptism* in 2010, and co-produced *Regifting Lions* with Catalina Alexandra and Lynn Lane in 2012. Her choreography has been seen at DiverseWorks, Jewish Community Center Houston, University of Houston, San Jacinto College, HSPVA/Houston, Freneticore Theatre and various art openings and outdoor events. Valle is a current member and Company Manager of Karen Stokes Dance, Becky Valls' *Memoirs of the Sistahood* Series, and Becky Valls & Company for Young Audiences. Since 2000, Valle has performed with Karen Stokes Dance, Dancepatheatre, Psophonía Dance Company, Divergence Vocal Theater, Chapman Dance and Suchu Dance. Valle has been featured in numerous concerts, including *Natural Acts in Artificial Water* and *Open Book, Open House* by internationally known choreographer Stephan Koplowitz, A Weekend of Texas Contemporary Dance, and Marta Lichlyter's *A Thin Line* as part of the University of Houston's Choreography in Action series on PBS. Valle is also an adjunct faculty at University of Houston School of Theatre & Dance. [6degreesdance.org](#)

Words & Lyrics

The Captured Goddess
— by Amy Lowell (1914)

Over the housetops,
Above the narrow chimney-pots,
I have seen a shiver of amethyst,
And blue and cinnamon have flickered
A moment,
At the far end of a dusty street.

Through sheeted rain
Has come a luster of crimson,
And I have watched moonbeams
Hushed by a film of palest green.

It was her wings,
Goddess!
Who stepped over the clouds,
And laid her rainbow feathers
Aslant on the currents of the air.

I followed her for long,
With gazing eyes and stumbling feet.
I cared not where she led me,
My eyes were full of colors:

Saffrons, rubies, the yellows of beryls,
And the indigo-blue of quartz;HydrangeaForeverPink2.jpg
Flights of rose, layers of chrysopease,
Points of orange, spirals of vermilion,
The spotted gold of tiger-lily petals,
The dull pink of bursting hydrangeas.
I followed.
And watched for the flashing of her wings.

In the city I found her,
The narrow-streeted city.
In the market-place I came upon her,
Bound and trembling.
Her fluted wings were fastened to her sides with cords,
She was naked and cold,
For that day the wind blew
Without sunshine.

Men chattered for her,
They bargained in silver and gold,
In copper, in their bids,
And called their bids across the market-place.

The Goddess wept.

Hiding my face I fled,
And the grey wind hissed behind me,
Along the narrow streets.

**Klytemnestra, the original subversive female
scene ii, Deception-Attraction**

— Misha Penton, libretto

As signal fires light the hills, heralding the Greek victory over the Trojans, Klytemnestra awaits her husband's return:

Skyfire sear across forest, breathe and simmer over lake and swirl of
stream:
Bring me Troy!
I carry spices and blossoms through our streets
Offering water and wines
Blessings of aconite and windflower clutched close in chants
and shrouts strewn bell-high
Sacred fire releases perfume of cinnamon, laurel, sage and clove
Tended by women's hands
And for you, my love

I plan
I...
In your absence, my bath: herb steeped with flower oil
Dreamlight on travertine knobs only the pleasure of women - their soft
milk a tang of lavender and summer over hips
belly inside ache chamber threshold
Invitation
I am unknown to any other man

**Klytemnestra, the original subversive female
scene iii, The Weaving Aria**

— Misha Penton, libretto

*Agamemnon returns a hero and Klytemnestra lays the sacred
tapestries of the House of Atreus at his feet— inviting him to meet his
fate:*

I weave my the sting and pulse of Night
And my loom
Strand to strand, ties and knots, lash and strap, warp and weft, dyes
and breaths
Patterns, figures revealed
Open!

My oracle: the distaff yielding to its sister spinny
What once was perfect, still, placid, pure
I make balanced complete essential primitive whole:
Mine
Myself the design: in each thread, twist and braid
Every fiber river soaked, blood inspired: washed in the surge the
waning moon draws from me, a supplication collected
in tender swells along my thighs
How flawless and bare I am, wrapped in my creation
And my love? He will softly step upon these: my finest silks, a flood
over our threshold.

He returns
I await