



Cast
Misha Penton: Unsuspecting Wayfarer in the Night
Jon Harvey: Librarian
Meg Brooker: Autumn Elemental Spirit
Alison Greene: The Ghost of Anne Boleyn
Kelly Switzer: Puppeteer & Puppet Creator
George Heathco: Composer & Electric Guitar
Jeremy Wood: Piano
Mini Timmaraju: Tabla

Creative Team
Misha Penton: Artistic Direction, Production Design Concept, Curation
 Haunted soiree concept inspired by **Alison Greene**
 Staging: **Misha Penton & Cast**
 Story & Poem Selection: **Misha Penton, Alison Greene, Jon Harvey**
Meg Brooker: Choreography
Frank Vela: Lighting
Serret Jensen: Wigs & Stylist
 Costumes: **Kambriel, Kim Brown-Dye & Alexandra Sojfer**
 French translations by **Misha Penton**
Jenna Wallis, Supertitles & Italian translations

A note from Misha...

Welcome to our Autumn Soirée! Allow me to tell you little about the genesis of this work and how beautifully it reflects my ideas surrounding performance and music making. Alison Greene came to me with an idea for a scene based on Donizetti's Anna Bolena --- in particular Anne's madness in her tower cell before her execution. Hm...well, I began to choose music for myself, quite unrelated to the Donizetti, and I started hunting around for other artists interested in working on an evening of haunted vignettes. Happily unaware of the final results and relying on the artistry of my collaborators, I asked Kelly Switzer to create a puppet, Jon Harvey to join as our evening's guide, and George Heathco to compose music to weave the evening of disparate elements together. One might not expect eerie electric guitar infused with tabla and piano to seamlessly tie together the music of Henri Duparc, Gabriel Fauré, Gaetano Donizetti and Edvard Grieg, but it indeed, it does just that. This eve's music spans the late 1800's to tonight's two world premieres: George's fantastic instrumental music and *Isabella*, a setting of my text by composer James D. Norman.

Yes, the elements are multifarious. Trust me. Go with it. It'll be fun. George Heathco's intense music, Meg Brooker's dance, and the symbolist, Fellini-esque staging evoke a dream realm... We'll take you on a little journey, sometimes dramatic, sometimes forlorn, and perhaps even a bit humorous... The performance is almost exactly one hour and there is no intermission. See you on the other side!

A heartfelt thanks to my wonderful cast and crew and to Raul Cesares, Lynn Birdwell, Lois Alba, and the love of my life and my muse, Dave Nickerson. This performance is dedicated to the memory of my über cool theatrical mother Marie Clare Bertheaud Penton and my Martino musician ancestors... ~ M

Can Anybody Say, "Soirée"?

(* indicates world premiere)

Autumn Vignettes George Heathco, Electric Guitar. Jeremy Wood, Piano. Mini Timmaraju: Tabla	George Heathco*
The Tomb of Edgar Allen Poe Jon Harvey	Stéphane Mallarmé (trans. Henry Weinfield)
Chanson triste (Henri Cazalis, poet) Misha Penton, Soprano. Jeremy Wood, Piano	Henri Duparc
For Annie Jon Harvey	Edgar Allan Poe
Extase (Henri Cazalis, poet) Misha Penton, Soprano. Jeremy Wood, Piano	Henri Duparc
Billow George Heathco, Electric Guitar. Jeremy Wood, Piano. Mini Timmaraju: Tabla	George Heathco*
Élégie (French trans of a Thomas Moore poem) Misha Penton, Soprano. Jeremy Wood, Piano	Henri Duparc
Bluebeard Jon Harvey	Gwen Strauss
Greensleeves George Heathco, Electric Guitar. Jeremy Wood, Piano. Mini Timmaraju: Tabla	George Heathco* (arr.)
The Ghost of Anne Boleyn Anne's mad scene before her execution, told in song & tales Anna Bolena Alison Greene, Soprano. Jeremy Wood, Piano Meg Brooker, Anne's Psyche Jon Harvey, Narrator	Gaetano Donizetti
With Her Head Tucked Underneath Her Arm Alison Greene, Soprano. Jeremy Wood, Piano	Harris Weston
Apparition Whispers George Heathco, Electric Guitar. Jeremy Wood, Piano. Mini Timmaraju: Tabla	George Heathco*
Isabella & the Pot of Basil Story and song based on Giovanni Boccaccio's 14th C. text <i>The Decameron</i> Misha Penton, Soprano. Jeremy Wood, Piano Jon Harvey, Narrator	James D. Norman (song text: Misha Penton)*
The Poet's Heart. Op. 52 Jeremy Wood, Piano. Meg Brooker, Dancer	Edvard Grieg
A Dream Within A Dream Jon Harvey	Edgar Allan Poe
Après un rêve (Romain Bussine, poet) Misha Penton, Soprano. Jeremy Wood, Piano	Gabriel Fauré

**Misha Penton, Soprano. Artistic Director**

Misha Penton's diverse performing career includes opera, concert and multidisciplinary performance projects. A new music specialist, she sang the principal roles in Divergence Vocal Theater's world premieres of the operas, *Selkie*, a sea tale, composed by Elliot Cole; and *Klytemnestra*, composed by Dominick DiOrio, both settings of Misha's libretti. She also sang the role of Leah in Ofer Ben-Amots' contemporary multimedia chamber opera, *The Dybbuk*, presented by the Jewish Community Center Houston's Maurice Adamo Music Foundation Residency. She created the roles of Isabelle and Brooklyn in the world premieres of *The Masque* by Roger Keele for Lone Star Lyric Theater Festival and James Norman's opera *Wake*, with Opera Vista, respectively; and Marguerite in Norman's *Incline, O Maiden*, a monodrama for soprano and chamber ensemble, with Audio Inversions, a new music ensemble in Austin, Texas. Additional recent performances include *Voix et Harpe*, her performance concept of French art song, poetry and dance, in the Impressionist Galleries of the Museum of Fine Arts Houston; and the world premier of Dominick DiOrio's *The Captured Goddess*, a setting of the work of turn of the century American poet, Amy Lowell, at The Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas. Misha is the founder, artistic director, and ensemble lead artist of Divergence Vocal Theater, a Houston-based opera, new music and multi-performing arts ensemble. Misha has created experimental vocal soundscapes for contemporary performances at DiverseWorks Arts Space (Houston); the University of Houston Center for Choreography; New Orleans contemporary dance company, Happendance; ActLab Studios (Austin); and for The Olimpias, an international artists' collective and performance research series. Additional professional affiliations include Houston Grand Opera, Mercury Baroque, St. Cecilia Chamber Opera, and The University of Houston Center for Creative Work. Misha is also the founder, artistic director and curator of Divergence Music & Arts (DMA), a

chamber arts space located in Houston's arts warehouse mecca, the Washington St Cultural Arts District. Misha's upcoming projects include an appearance as a featured soloist with Houston's Foundation for Modern Music at The Rothko Chapel Houston; and a reprise of the role of *Klytemnestra* in a new staging of DiOrio's opera, *Klytemnestra*, in the galleries of The Museum of Fine Arts Houston. www.mishapenton.com

Alison Greene, Soprano

Alison is active in the classical and contemporary music community in Houston, Texas and has performed extensively in venues from California to Boston. She is sought after for opera, chamber music, and recital work, and is respected for a professional, highly musical approach, engaging performance style, and pleasing light lyric soprano instrument. In recent seasons, Alison has been a featured artist with Opera in the Heights, St. Cecilia Chamber Music Society, Foundation for Modern Music, Divergence Vocal Theater, Opera Vista, and the Houston Gilbert and Sullivan Society. Other professional affiliations include Houston Grand Opera, Houston Chamber Choir, West Bay Opera (Palo Alto, CA), Mendocino Music Festival, Amarillo Opera, and the Bethany College Messiah Festival. Alison embraces opportunities to perform new music and participate in non-traditional projects, and has premiered works by Houston composers Michael Remson and Mary Carol Warwick. www.alisongreene.com

**Meg Brooker, Dancer & Choreography**

Meg Brooker is a multidisciplinary performing artist and choreographer whose background ranges from Isadora Duncan dance (Lori Belilove & Company) to avant-garde theatre (Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theatre). Credits include numerous New York City venues as well as international festivals in Moscow, Amsterdam, Vienna, and Ukraine. Located in Austin, Texas, Meg is a sought-after guest artist, specializing in early modern dance history and techniques (www.mb-arts.com). Meg has presented scholarship on early modern dance for the Congress on Research in Dance, the Society of Dance History Scholars, and Moscow State University. Meg also collaborates with musicians, visual artists, and other contemporary choreographers and was nominated for a 2008 Austin Critics Table Award for her performance of "Isabella." Meg is currently working with painter Linda DeHart on a dance video project designed for large-scale projection in public architectural spaces (www.colorsinmotion.com). She is on faculty of Tapestry Dance Academy and Sundara Yoga Therapy in Austin, and she has taught on the faculties of the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation and the School at Steps on Broadway in New York. She holds an MFA in Performance as Public Practice from UT Austin and a BA in Theatre Studies from Yale. www.mb-arts.com

George Heathco, Composer, Electric Guitar

George Heathco composes music for a variety of ensembles in a wide range of styles. His music blends elements of contemporary concert music with rock, jazz, and various other pop genres. Ensembles and organizations George has written for include the Moores School Jazz Orchestra, Da Camera of Houston, and Duo Scordatura, while currently he is writing for Scordatura Music Society, Divergence Vocal Theater, and the University of Houston's contemporary music ensemble AURA. Recently, he was a member of the 2010-2011 Da Camera of Houston Young Artist Program, and in 2011 was the graduate division winner of the Sarofim Composition Contest at the University of Houston. He has taught guitar and music theory privately in the Houston area, music theory at American Festival for the Arts, and has taught music fundamentals at the University of Houston. Mr. Heathco has performed all over Texas with various musicians, ensembles, and bands; playing classical, jazz, rock, hip-hop, blues, funk, and free-improvisation, and performed as the guitarist for progressive/math metal band, The Pant Factory. He received a B.M. in music business and an M.M. in composition from the University of Houston. Some of the musicians he has studied with include: Robert Smith, Robert Nelson, and Mike Wheeler. www.georgeheathcomusic.com

**Jon Harvey, Narrator**

Jonathan Harvey, Artistic Director of the Fan Factory, directed the FF production of *An Adult Evening Of Shel Silverstein*, Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* and started the August In August Strindberg Festival. Prior to founding The Fan Factory Theatre Company, Jon worked professionally with sound for several performing arts organizations in Houston, including dos chicas productions, Da Camera, Glenn Ray Little's Storytime Theatre, Ensemble Theatre, and the Alley Theatre. In 1996, Mr. Harvey was a member of the Alley Theatre's staff when the theatre received the Special Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater. Alley Theatre's staff when the theatre received the Special Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater.

**Kelly Switzer, Puppeteer & Puppet Creation**

Kelly Switzer is a Houston-based costume and scenic designer. Recent local productions include: *Crave* (costume design, Catastrophic Theatre), *Bedtime Stories* (puppet and film design, Omery Theatre, as part of the Houston Fringe Festival, Producer's Pick Winner), *Bluefinger* (co-costume design, Catastrophic Theatre), *August in August* (portraiture, The Fan Factory), *The Designated Mourner* (costume design, Catastrophic Theatre), *The Amazing Living Theatre Project* (costumes), *Ant Sandwich* (puppeteer and construction, Bobbindoctrin Puppet Theatre), *Our Late Night* (costume design, Catastrophic Theatre). Kelly is an Assistant Professor of Theatre at UHD and a proud new mother to bouncing baby Thomas.

Jeremy Wood, Piano

Jeremy is the Associate Director of Music at St. Agnes Academy Houston and the Director of Music at First Christian Church of Houston. Jeremy enjoys a successful freelance career as well as being a music educator having served on the music faculties of Houston Community College, McLennan Community College and Southwest Baptist University. He has served as music director for Lone Star Lyric Theater Festival and for previous Divergence Vocal Theater productions. Jeremy holds music and collaborative piano degrees from Southwest Baptist University and Baylor University. His favorite music directing/accompanying credits include: *La Traviata*, *Falstaff*, *Marriage of Figaro*, *Roman Fever*, *A Little Night Music*, *Into the Woods* and *Les Miserable*.

Mini Timmaraju, Tabla

Mini Timmaraju has studied tabla and Hindustani music, the classical tradition of Northern India, since the age of 10. Originally a student of David Courtney in Houston, Texas, her advanced studies include a summer course in Mumbai, India with tabla legend Ustad Alla Rakha and workshops and classes with his son, one of the world's most famous tabla innovators, Zakir Hussain in Northern California. She currently works with Houston based tabla maestro Subhendu Chakraborty. This is her first foray into work with opera and western classical music. A political professional in her daily life, she's inspired and challenged by the opportunity to work with the Divergence Vocal Theater family.

James D. Norman, Isabella composer

Composer James D. Norman's music, which includes orchestral and chamber music, music for winds and percussion, as well as a chamber opera and music for film, has been performed throughout the United States. A Lecturer in Music at Texas A and M University from 2005 to 2007, and the Composer-in-Residence with Austin-based new music concert series, Audio Inversions, Mr. Norman has received numerous awards and accreditations citing his achievements in music composition and academia. In 2007, Norman's opera *Wake...* was premiered by Opera Vista in Houston under the direction of Viswa Subbaraman. Amongst his other honors, Norman participated at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in 2004 as part of the composer / conducting seminar, and saw the premiere of his orchestral work, *Regatta*. He is also the winner of both the University of Southern California and University of Texas Symphony Orchestra Composition Competitions, a Fellow at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and winner of a BMI Student Composer Award in 2003. www.jamesdnorman.com

Frank Vela, Lighting Design

Frank Vela, received his BFA in Theatre Design from The University of Texas—Pan American and his MFA in Theatrical Design from The University of Texas at Austin. Frank is an active member throughout the Houston Theatre scene. Some of his work includes Lighting and Scenic Designer for The Landing Theatre Company's first production, "The Glass Menagerie." He has also designed for various other companies such as (Stages Repertory Theatre) *History of America (Abridged)*, *Rabbit Hole*; (UT Austin) *Summer People*; Dance Repertory Theatre; (UT Pan American) *Once Upon a Mattress*; (The Barn Theatre) *Fiddler on the Roof*; *Gypsy*; *Lend Me a Tenor*; *The Rocky Horror Show*; (Main Street Theatre) *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. Other work includes *As You Like It* (Scenic Designer), *Mouse Trap* and *Our Town* (Lighting Designer) at University of Houston- Downtown. Frank is also Owner/CEO of Houston-based lighting/audio/video company Rocksteady Productions.

Serret Jensen, Wigs & Stylist

WigWitch extraordinaire. She's also one of those "I don't do bios" artists, mysterious diva that she is. She has done fantastic work with Houston grand Opera, Alley Theatre, Houston Ballet, and Lion King on

www.divergencevocaltheater.org

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