

BLACK SWANS

an opera poem



conceived and directed by
L. MARTINA YOUNG





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an opera poem

==== 2018 ====

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18TH

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19TH

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RIVERSIDE ARTIST LOFTS
THE LIGHTHOUSE/STUDIO 502

.....

ALL PERFORMANCES 7:30 pm

*We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land
of the Washoe and Pauite People.*



Portrait photography
courtesy of Digiman Studio

Program Cover Photo
Eva Fernández

A RARE BIRD IN THE LANDS
2018, Giclée print Hahnemühle
Fine Art Paper
80cmH x 80cmW
evafernandez.com.au

SCOPE OF PROJECT

Black Swans, an opera poem® is envisioned as a collaborative international community project. Multidimensional and interdisciplinary in scope, this work weaves personal and cultural heritage stories inspired by the beauty, power, and significance of the black swan in the human imagination. Aesthetically, *Black Swans* integrates the visual expansiveness of an opera with the depth and intimacy found in the poem form.

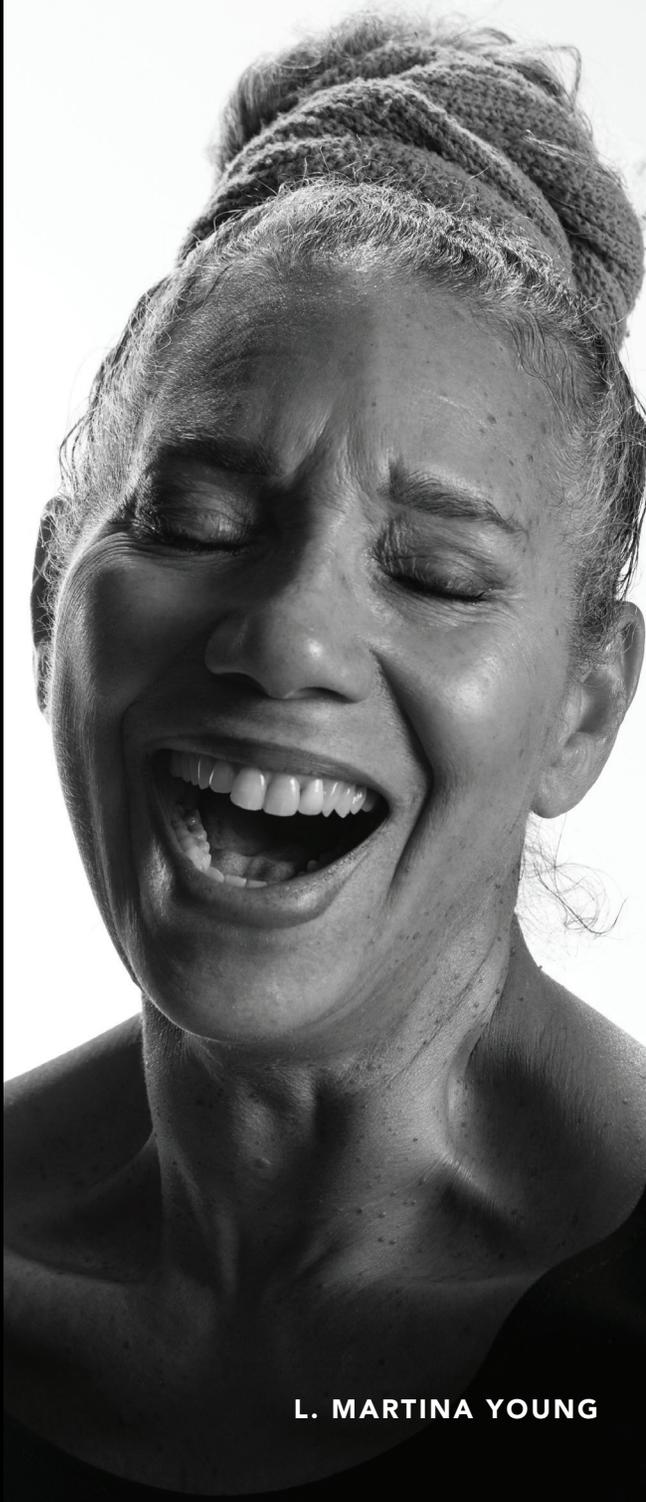
"*Rara avis in terris nigroque simillima cygno*" ('a rare bird in the lands and very much like a black swan'), wrote the Roman poet Juvenal in the 2nd century CE. Addressing its myriad meanings, artist-scholar L. Martina Young imagines the black swan as a bridging and unifying symbol. She explores how cultural and diverse human narratives relate to the black swan and how those narratives inform and interact with one another — socially, culturally, ecologically, and aesthetically. Ms. Young identifies both real and imagined qualities of the image and blurs the lines between circumstances that endanger both the species and a renewed sense of humanitas. Her approach constitutes a creative process and artistic product that supposes ways and means for critical conversation, personal and communal healing, and focuses on possibility for reconciliation among peoples and cultures in our modern times.

Most importantly, the performance content of *Black Swans* changes as it reflects the living stories, poetries, dance, and musics of the people performing the work: indigenous and non-indigenous, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. When we can locate and retrieve something of ourselves in one another's stories, we discover new territory in which to restore our bonds.

A site of inquiry, *Black Swans, an opera poem* also serves as a gathering point, and is charged with a capacity to bring people and ideas together. As a universal symbol, it beckons consideration, response, and active engagement. Fulfilling the first phase of her vision with the Reno/USA performances, Ms. Young gratefully acknowledges the generous participation of all involved. She also extends an invitation to you to join the conversation.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

L. MARTINA YOUNG, Ph.D. (Creator-Director), is a dance-maker, Somatics and Pilates Educator, and a scholar of myth and poetic perception. Growing up in Los Angeles where her aesthetic roots took shape, Martina studied classical ballet and American modern dance. She is the solo dancer in Stevie Wonder's music video Ribbon in the Sky and in Julie Dash's award-winning film Four Women, and has performed the works of Lester Horton, Pearl Primus, Sophie Maslow, Talley Beatty, and the late choreographer Donald McKayle. Martina has served on the faculties of the College of William and Mary, California Institute of the Arts, and was Director of Dance at the University of Nevada, Reno from 1987-1994. A three-year Fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts, she is the recipient of Nevada's highest arts honor,—the Governor's Arts Award for Excellence in the Arts. *Black Swans*, an opera poem is a project of SWAN: a poetical inquiry in dance, text & memoir and marks Martina's 30th year in Nevada.



L. MARTINA YOUNG

"HOW THE SWAN GOT HIS COLORS"

as told by Dr. Noel Nannup, Nyoongar Elder

"This is an important story. The black swan is found [in] the Nyoongar lands. Nowhere else in the world, nowhere else in Australia. [When] the white man came, he saw the black swan on the Black Swan River, hence the name. There's a Dreamtime story of how the swans became black."

Once upon a time, little swans were white. And every day the swans would look into their reflection of themselves, in the water, and say, "Aren't we beautiful? Look at us: no one is as beautiful as we are." And every morning this'd get repeated; it was like the good looking girls who'd look in the mirror and they'd see their reflection.

And the warlitj, the golden eagle, who was sitting in the tree looking down and everyday he was subject to bragging of the white swan. One day, the white swan walked up onto the land, and quick as a flash, down flew the warlitj, and he started to beat the white swan with his wings and beat the feathers all out of it and there was white feathers going everywhere. And when the swan became bare, he flew back into his tree and said, "Brag now marlee, brag now."

And the swan began to get cold because it was wintertime [and] began to shivering and cry for warmth. The wardang, the black crow, flew down and said, "What's happening brother swan?" And the swan began to cry and said, "Look at what warlitj done, he's taken all my feathers." [That] the crow raced around, pulled feathers from his back and stuck them onto the back of the swan. And the crow's feathers that had been placed onto the swan began to cry. And the swan began to cry. And when marlee [swan] went to wipe his nose, the tears from his nose, and he didn't realize it the wingtip was bleeding.

And when he walked away, the tears, the blood run down his beak, and when you look at him close now he has a red beak. If you look closely at the swan, you'll always see that the black feathers are very ruffled on the back where the swan obtained the feathers from the wardang. You look at him and you'll see that he's got the red beak; and when he flies you'll see he's got the white feathers under his wings to remind him he was once a white swan.

Dr. Noel Nannup, Nyoongar Elder <http://whadjukwalkingtrails.org.au/media/black-swan/Elder-in-Residence-and-Cultural-Ambassador>: <https://www.ecu.edu.au/centres/kurongkurl-katitjin/staff/profiles/cultural-ambassador/dr-noel-nannup>

OLIVER X

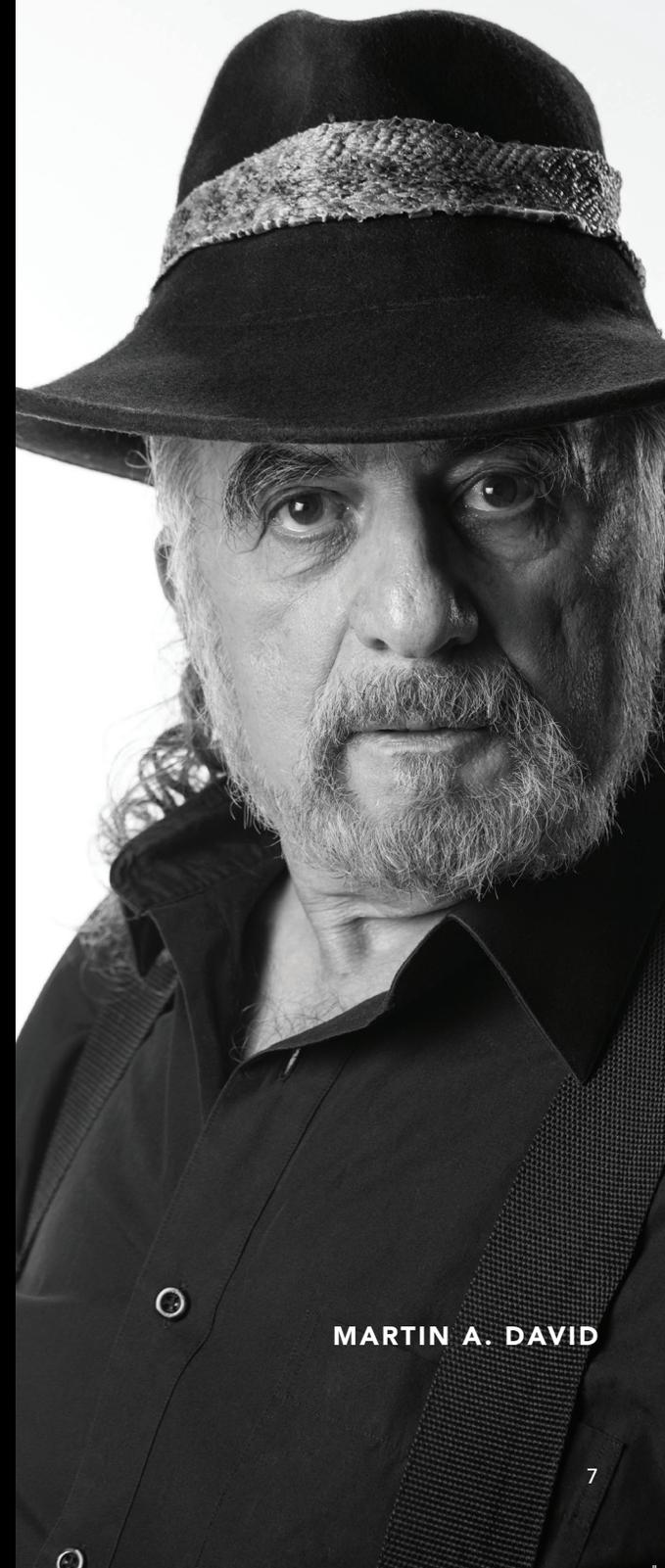
(Spoken Word Artist), is the Founder-Editor-Publisher of Reno Tahoe Tonight. The award-winning publication is the leading voice of independent print journalism in northern Nevada, and recently won "Best Page 1 Design" at the 2018 Nevada Press Awards. A Cal Berkeley alum and student activist, X taught English in Brussels, Belgium. As a member of the slam poetry group the War Poets, X performed with The Untouchables and Digital Underground and performed for Michael Franti and Les Claypool. X currently is the head of StreetSeen, LLC., a 3D marketing distribution company serving the arts and entertainment industry.



OLIVER X

MARTIN A. DAVID

(Spoken Word Artist), has spent his life as an artist in a broad spectrum of professional arts activities. He is a widely published author and writer, an actor and acting teacher, a modern dancer and choreographer, and an arts activist. His paintings, drawings, and illustrations have been published and sold in both Europe and America. His Mardav Design enterprise features his handmade jewelry and other wearable art. Martin's friendship with, and artistic admiration of L. Martina Young spans more than three decades.



MARTIN A. DAVID

DIANE RUGG

(Spoken Word Artist), was born in Santa Barbara, California with an imaginative soul and deep somatic knowing. She grew up in the idyllic, richly multicultural community of Riverside, Ca with politically active, musically enlightened parents, and a grandmother who was a Ziegfeld Follies hoofer. The confluence of these early guiding factors together with her coming of age in the tumultuous late 60's, allowed her to develop a keen sense of the relationship between American popular culture as reflected in music, dance, fiction, and film, and the socio-political undercurrents shaping the myth of The American Dream. This perspective, along with her profound love of the natural world, has been the driving force influencing her choreographic work and allows her to negotiate the hard concrete and endless chaotic buzzing of 21st Century life.



DIANE RUGG

JAMMAL TARKINGTON

(Saxophonist), is a multi instrumentalist, producer, turntablelist and vocalist that was born and raised in Stockton California. He moved to Reno Nevada in the early 1990s with a secured scholarship from the University of Nevada Reno studying music education and jazz performance. While living in Nevada he became part of several performing groups such as Verbal Kint, Keyser Soze, and Who Cares. He has released several albums on European labels as well as touring Europe and Asia regularly. He now spends his time teaching, recording and performing based out of the West Coast of the United States.



JAMMAL TARKINGTON

The performances of ALBERT RUDOLPH LEE (Tenor Vocalist), have been described as "vocally sumptuous," "musically distinctive," and "acrobatically agile." Locally, he has been seen with the Reno Philharmonic, the Reno Chamber Orchestra, and in community recitals for the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Having completed the Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Connecticut, the Master of Music at The Juilliard School, and the Doctor of Music Degree at Florida State University with a doctoral treatise titled, "The Poetic Voice of Langston Hughes in American Art Song," he serves as Associate Professor of Voice and Opera and Director of Vocal Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno.



ALBERT RUDOLPH LEE

ABBIEY SHOCK (Youth/Keeper of the Dreams), is a college sophomore at the University of Nevada, Reno. She graduated from Damonte High School's Performing Arts Program where she worked with Martina in *Hiroshima: crucible of light*. She now pursues her studies in Business Marketing and Theater Performance. Abbiey has performed in many shows with strong influences in movement and body work, and continues to study movement at the university. She is super excited to be with Martina again and participate in her great work of art.



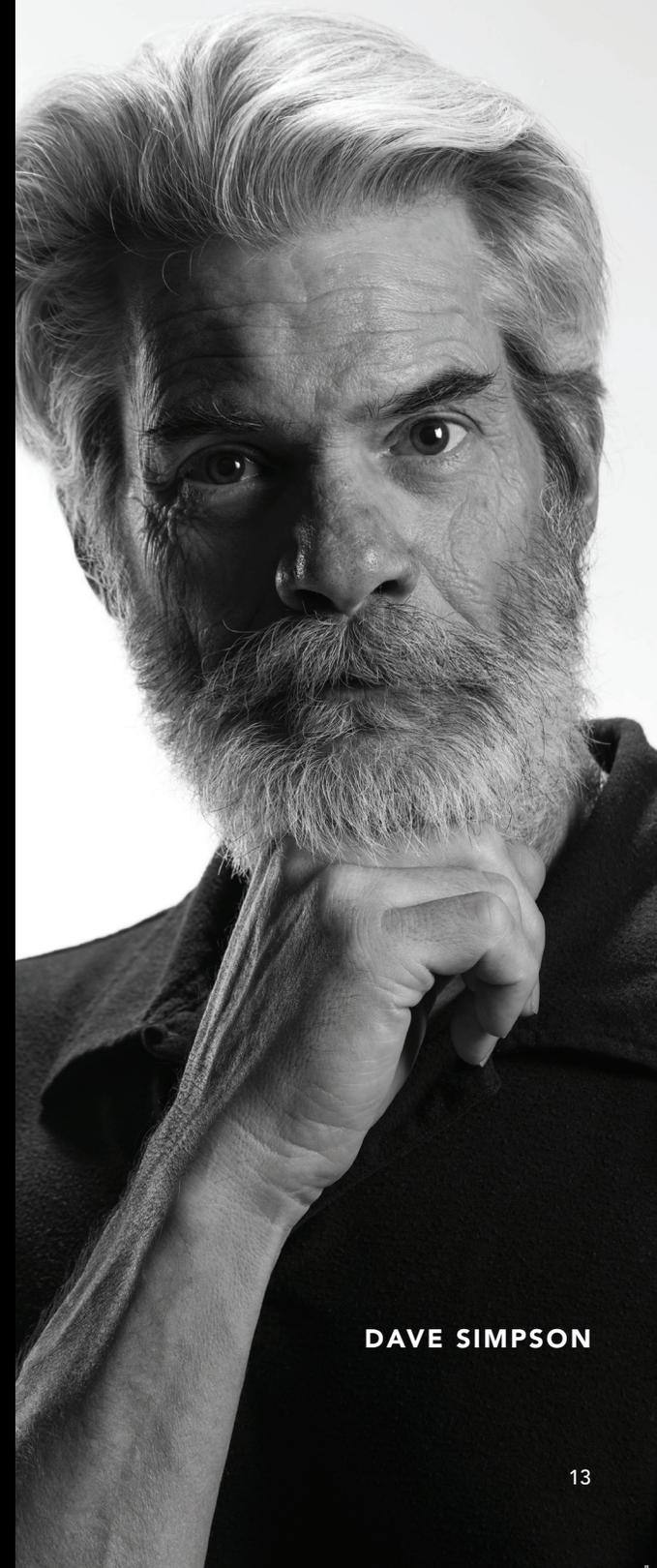
ABBIEY SHOCK

NICK RAMIREZ (Installation Artist), is a Reno-based artist. A musician and an actor, his art practices also include photography and sculpture. He currently plays drums for the bands Roxxy Collie and One Ton Dually, and plays bass for the Adorables and The Lazy Universe. Acting credits include Eric Bogosian's Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll, Richard O'Brien's The Rocky Horror Show, and Sam Shepherd's Tooth of Crime. Nick was Music Director and co-producer of the award winning feature film, Nowhere Nevada. He is currently working on a documentary about Southern California punk rock pioneers Eddie and the Subtitles. Nick also hosts Marianarchy, a two day biannual charity music festival in Reno, Nevada.



NICK RAMIREZ

DAVE SIMPSON (Technical Advisor), can usually be found at Brūka Theatre in Reno, NV where he's been the Technical Director over the past decade: designing lights, sound, sometimes building props, and whatever else it takes to help create the virtual world for the actor to play. Dave is excited to be part of Black Swans, an opera poem and thrilled to collaborate with Nick Ramirez lighting his beautiful swan.



DAVE SIMPSON

ELIJAH FREDERICK

(Light Operator), has grown up in theatre. He is 16, and is a junior attending Reed High School. He has been in Brūka Theater productions *The Full Monty*, TMCC's production of *The Who's Tommy*, and Reno Little Theater's production of *Mother Hicks*. His most recent production of Sierra School of Performing Arts' *Legally Blonde*. Elijah is very excited for the opportunity to be a part of *Black Swans*, an opera poem.



ELIJAH FREDERICK

JOHN FREDERICK

(Videographer), has been seen in local theater productions such as *The Wild Party* or *The Full Monty* at Brūka; in *Mother Hicks* or *The Heiress* at Reno Little Theater; or bringing new works to life such as *The Fifth Wind* or *Audition* at Good Luck McBeth. John has also directed plays including *Next to Normal* or *Evil Dead*, stands behind lighting and sound boards, designs and builds sets. John has a passion for art that shines through his work. Though starting out building sets for a small theater company in Tahoe 20 years ago, he quickly became obsessed, leading him to pursue degrees in Theatre and Musical Theatre while also working in multimedia. This passion has also led him to film and music production. John will soon be releasing a new album.



JOHN FREDERICK

WE ARE ALL
== BLACK SWANS ==

I saw the blood that spilled upon the ground.
I felt the fear, my own and yours combined.
Together we knew a new way could be found
And darkness broken with power of heart and mind.
We are all black swans when darkness howls and grows.

It tries to drown us in its swirling tide.

With art and voices we oppose
Until the monster's thrust is turned aside.
We are all black swans when darkness howls
We are all black swans when darkness howls
We are all black swans when darkness howls

The walls come down but other walls arise.
Ancestral spirits join the living in their fight.
Freedom and justice are the sought for prize.

The darkness is challenged by our light.
Our future is threatened by hate and greed
But eternal swans, both black and white will thrive
Shadows that would swallow us will not succeed
Our art, our voices, our history will survive.

Our future is threatened by hate
Our future is threatened by hate
Our future is threatened by hate

Dark clouds roll in and try to hide the sun.
We share our strength to help us all to win.
Our power grows with thoughts of battles won.
We face oppression bravely; struggle is our kin.
Resist hatred since compassion was our birth.

Swans united by empathy and care
Symbols of life and grace across the earth
Destroyers of our world will know despair.
Resist hatred; compassion was our birth
Resist hatred; compassion was our birth
Resist hatred; compassion was our birth

MARTIN A. DAVID