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Contact: Joshua Gailey, 206-676-5559, joshua.gailey@seattleopera.org

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Seattle Opera presents West Coast premiere of *Lucidity*, a new opera about music, memory loss, and human connection

**November 21–24, 2024
Tagney Jones Hall, the Opera Center**

SEATTLE—Fresh off October's premiere of *Jubilee*, Seattle Opera presents the West Coast premiere of ***Lucidity***, a new chamber opera from composer **Laura Kaminsky** and librettist **David Cote**. Co-produced by **On Site Opera**, this intimate production runs November 21–24 in Tagney Jones Hall one week after its world premiere in New York City.

Lucidity explores the intricate relationships and emotional landscapes of four individuals brought together by a music therapy trial designed to treat dementia. The opera follows Lili, a retired singer facing cognitive decline; her son Dante, who has put his own music career on hold to care for her; Sunny, a young clarinetist finding her path in music school; and Dr. Claire Klugman, a former singer now working as a neuroscientist. Their interconnected stories reveal moments of joy and sacrifice as they quest for clarity amid their challenges.

Deeply rooted in the personal experiences of its creators, the opera reflects Kaminsky's and Cote's respective experiences managing a loved one's cognitive decline and caregiving for a spouse in their final days, bringing authenticity and emotional depth to this story.

"*Lucidity* is a deeply personal exploration of how music can bridge the gaps created by cognitive decline," reflected Cote, whose multifaceted career as a playwright and arts critic spans three decades. "Working on this piece has been both a creative and cathartic process, and I hope it resonates with audiences on a profound level."

"It represents both the struggle for clarity and the illumination that music can provide," added Kaminsky, whose opera *As One* played at Seattle Opera in 2016 and has since become the most-produced new opera in North America, according to *Opera America* magazine.

Lucidity addresses the widespread issue of cognitive decline, a challenge affecting the nearly 7 million Americans currently living with Alzheimer's—a number projected to rise to nearly 13 million by 2050. Beyond the statistics, *Lucidity* offers a message of hope. It emphasizes that, amidst the darkness of

dementia, there is light in the form of family, love, and rediscovery through music. Its creators hope it will serve as a beacon of optimism, illuminating the path forward and fostering connections that transcend the isolating effects of memory loss.

"Our opera is a testament to the power of music to restore connections and offer hope even in the darkest times," says **Sarah Meyers**, stage director and Artistic Director of On Site Opera. "This opera is not just about the challenges of memory loss but also about the enduring strength of human connection. It is about hope, resilience, and our immense capacity for creativity and discovery, at any stage in life."

"When words and speech are no longer accessible, music has a unique ability to reach parts of the brain that remain resilient, offering a means of communication and expression," said Seattle Opera's General and Artistic Director, **James Robinson**. "Like many in our community, I've witnessed firsthand the way music can provide comfort to a loved one as they struggle with dementia. The last thing my father heard before he died was the sound of music, and I know it provided him with peace."

The production features a remarkable cast of Seattle Opera debuts, led by the esteemed 80-year-old soprano **Lucy Shelton**, who brings depth and a wealth of experience to the role of Lili. Shelton, an award-winning artist and a luminary in the world of contemporary music, is internationally recognized for her dedication to contemporary repertoire, having premiered over 100 works by some of today's preeminent composers. Most recently, Shelton performed in the world and West Coast premieres of Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence*. Laura Kaminsky conceived *Lucidity* specifically for Shelton, envisioning her in the starring role from the very beginning.

Also featured are **Blythe Gaissert** as Dr. Claire Klugman, **Cristina María Castro** as Sunny, and **Eric McKeever** as Dante, each bringing their unique talents to this compelling narrative, further enriching the opera's exploration of memory, connection, and resilience. Clarinetist **Yasmina Spiegelberg** and pianist **Kyle P. Walker** make up the instrumental ensemble, led by conductor **Geoffrey McDonald**.

The creative team features six Seattle Opera debuts, including stage director **Sarah Meyers**, assistant director **Sable Strout**, scenic consultant **Cameron Anderson**, props designer **Rachel Kenner**, costume designer **Beth Goldenberg**, and lighting designer **Tlálóc López-Watermann**, in addition to returning wigs, hair, and makeup designer Ashlee Naegle (*Jubilee*, '24).

Events for *Lucidity*

In conjunction with *Lucidity*, Seattle Opera presents a pair of talks exploring the genesis and broader impact of this new work. In the first, a community conversation titled "**Music, Memory, and the Brain**," a panel of local neuroscientists and music therapists will discuss how music figures into research on and treatment for memory loss. Panelists include **Dr. Carlene Brown**, director of the Music Therapy Program at Seattle Pacific University, **Sarah McKiddy** of the University of Washington Memory Hub, and a neuroscientist from the **Allen Institute**. The second, an opera talk on "**The Making of *Lucidity***," features Laura Kaminsky and David Cote in conversation about the process of creating this deeply personal story.

- **Community Conversation: Music, Memory, and the Brain**
Thursday, November 14, at 7:00 PM, Opera Center
Info and RSVP at seattleopera.org/music-memory.
- **Opera Talk: The Making of *Lucidity***
Wednesday, November 20, at 7:00 PM, Opera Center
Info and RSVP at seattleopera.org/makinglucidity.

Performance Information

- Music by Laura Kaminsky, libretto by David Cote

- Sung in English
- Run time: 90 minutes with no intermission
- Tickets: \$69, \$65 for subscribers

Tagney Jones Hall (363 Mercer Street, Seattle, WA 98109)

Thursday, November 21, at 7:30 PM

Friday, November 22, at 7:30 PM

Saturday, November 23, at 2:00 PM and 7:30 PM

Sunday, November 24, at 2:00 PM

Composer:	Laura Kaminsky
Librettist:	David Cote†
Conductor:	Geoffrey McDonald†
Director:	Sarah Meyers†
Assistant Director:	Sable Strout†
Scenic Consultant:	Cameron Anderson†
Props Designer:	Rachel Kennert†
Costume Designer:	Beth Goldenberg†
Lighting Designer:	Tlálóc López-Watermann†
Wigs, Hair, & Makeup Designer:	Ashlee Naegle

Lili:	Lucy Shelton†
Dr. Claire Klugman:	Blythe Gaisert†
Sunny:	Cristina María Castro†
Dante:	Eric McKeever†

Clarinet:	Yasmina Spiegelberg†
Piano:	Kyle P. Walkert†

†=Seattle Opera debut

Tickets and information at seattleopera.org/lucidity.

About Seattle Opera

Established in 1963, Seattle Opera is committed to serving the people of the Pacific Northwest through music, storytelling, and programs for people of all ages. Each year, more than 50,000 people attend the company's performances, and more than 100,000 people are served through school performances, radio broadcasts, and more. The organization brings opera to life in a number of different ways, offering artistic excellence through national and international collaborations. Seattle Opera strives to create an environment where artists, staff, behind-the-scenes workers, and members of the community feel a strong connection to the company, and to the art of opera. Follow Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and on Classical KING.

About On Site Opera

Established in 2012 and based in the heart of New York City, On Site Opera has solidified its reputation as an innovator in the world of opera by focusing on site-specific and immersive productions. Rooted in a deep commitment to collaboration and storytelling, On Site Opera thrives on fostering an intimate connection between artists and audiences, curating unforgettable experiences guided by visionary opera talents and daring creative teams. With its specialization in site-specific work, On Site Opera has redefined the boundaries of traditional opera, establishing itself as a trailblazer in the field.

Each On Site Opera production invites New Yorkers to discover their city in novel and unconventional ways, attracting a diverse audience, from seasoned opera enthusiasts to those newly discovering its magic. With a remarkable track record, On Site Opera has brought to life nearly 30 site-specific opera productions in a wide range of unique settings, from the Bronx Zoo and Harlem's iconic Cotton Club to Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, the Atlanta Botanical Garden, the American Museum of Natural History, Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, featuring a repertoire that spans from Mozart, Puccini, and Britten to world premieres by today's opera composers.

Since its inception, On Site Opera has been at the forefront of reimagining opera, ingeniously reaching audiences worldwide through innovative productions delivered via telephone, mail, and online platforms. Continuously exploring new technologies to make opera more accessible, On Site Opera is dedicated to shaping the future of this timeless art form.

For more information, visit osopera.org.

Follow On Site Opera on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok at @onsiteopera.

In addition to On Site Opera, Lucidity is made possible by additional co-commission partners: Opera in the Heights, Opera Ithaca, and Tri-Cities Opera. The commissioning of Laura Kaminsky for Lucidity received funding from OPERA America's Opera Grants for Women Composers program supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation. Additional support provided by the Howard Gilman Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

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