SEMMELWEIS
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2023
6:30PM–9:00PM

NYAM
The American Opera Project

Founded in 1988, The American Opera Project (AOP) has been at the forefront of contemporary opera for over 30 years. The Brooklyn-based producing organization commissions, develops and produces lyric theater projects, trains emerging composers and librettists, and creates personal connections within its community. Its works have received critical acclaim at opera companies and venues around the world, establishing a new musical canon that recognizes the operatic story in every life. AOP further expands the operatic field through its training programs The NYU Opera Lab, in partnership with NYU and for students and alumni in The NYU/Tisch Opera Lab; and Composers & the Voice, AOP’s in-house, two-year fellowship program for emerging composers and librettists. Ray Lustig is an alum of the Composers & the Voice program.

The New York Academy of Medicine

The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) is a leading voice for innovation in public health. Throughout its 176-year history, NYAM has uniquely championed bold changes to the systems that perpetuate health inequities and keep all communities from achieving good health. Today, this work includes innovative research, programs, and policy initiatives that distinctively value community input for maximum impact. Combined with NYAM’s trusted programming and historic Library, and with the support of nearly 2,000 esteemed Fellows and Members, NYAM’s impact as a health leader continues.
Synopsis:

SEMMELWEIS is an acclaimed music-theater work inspired by the tragic story of nineteenth-century Hungarian obstetrician Ignác Semmelweis (1818-1865), who discovered the cure for a devastating epidemic but could not convince the world of the simple solution, and died alone in an asylum. Dr. Semmelweis had been the first to see an unthinkable truth: that the deadly disease was passing from the bodies of the dead to healthy mothers on the unwashed hands of the doctors themselves.

SEMMELWEIS explores the theme that everything we think we know can be overturned violently, and asks what is it like to be the first to see into a terrible blind spot and perceive a truth too awful to believe? To be an “outsider”—a “foreign” doctor, Hungarian, but living and working in Vienna’s top hospital in a xenophobic era—and to fear that no one heard you, that the answer may die with you? To hold an earth-shattering insight, and yet be haunted by all the mothers that would not be saved.

CREATIVE TEAM
Ray Lustig
Composer
Matthew Doherty
Librettist
Mila Henry
Music Director
Matt Gray
Stage Director

PERFORMERS
Matthew Bryan Feld*
Sophie Delphis
Samantha Martin
Charlotte Mundy*
Guadalupe Peraza
Marcy Richardson
Megan Schubert
Joy Tamayo*
Amelia Watkins*

INSTRUMENTALISTS
Nissa Kahle
Assistant Music Director
Piano
Peter Flint
Accordion
Keyboard
Leah Asher
Violin

Libretto:
Scan The QR Code to Read
Photo from the 2018 world-premiere production by Budapest Operetta Theater and Bartók Plusz Opera Festival, directed by Martin Boross
Welcome Remarks

Elana Kieffer, Director, Center for Healthy Aging, NYAM
Ann Kurth, President, NYAM
Adam Falk, President, The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

Featured Speakers

Elaine Larson, Senior Scholar-in-Residence, NYAM

“Passion and Pain: The Story of Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis”
Ray Lustig, Composer, and Matthew Doherty, Librettist, The American Opera Project

Featured Performance: “Semmelweis”

What is the day ...........................................Chorus
Market squares .............................................Woman
Never a choice ...........................................Woman
Archaeology .............................................Semmelweis
Our skin so fair .........................................Chorus
My dark disgrace .......................................Semmelweis
Death of Kolletschka .................................Semmelweis
I am the experiment .................................Maria
Once a candle lights a candle ......................Chorus
The only one .........................................Semmelweis
Madness #2 ..............................................Chorus
The last movement .................................Chorus
Finale ................................................Chorus

Reception
**SENIOR SCHOLAR–IN–RESIDENCE, NYAM**

Elaine Larson, RN, PhD, FAAN, CIC

Elaine Larson, NYAM's Senior Scholar–in–Residence is Anna C. Maxwell Professor Emerita and Special Lecturer, Columbia University School of Nursing and Mailman School of Public Health. She is a former Dean, Georgetown University School of Nursing. She is a Fellow in the National Academy of Medicine, Society for Healthcare Epidemiologists of America, Association of Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, American Academy of Nursing, and the Infectious Diseases Society of America.

**COMPOSER, THE AMERICAN OPERA PROJECT**

Ray Lustig, DMA

Ray Lustig is a genre-fluid composer-performer creating for concert and opera-theater stages, live internet performance, film, and more. His music has been presented in everything from New York City clubs and galleries to major concert halls, opera stages, and festivals around the world. His musical voice is one of craftsmanship and emotive resonance, melding his deep roots in the classical tradition, his theater background, and contemporary explorations.

Ray has served on the faculty of The Juilliard School, given master classes, and hosts regular artist salons in his northern Manhattan studio. He is currently at work recording an album version of the music of SEMMELWEIS. Stay tuned for a sneak-peek EP release soon.

**LIBRETTIST, THE AMERICAN OPERA PROJECT**

Matthew Doherty, MFA

Massachusetts-born writer Matthew Doherty has published poetry and prose in The Atlantic Monthly, The New York Times, Poetry, and Glimmer Train (a literary quarterly). He was a Steger Fellow in poetry at Stanford University and has an M.F.A. in creative writing from the University of Alabama. He has lived and taught abroad in China, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere, has worked as a long-haul truck driver in the U.S. and Iraq, and is currently completing a law degree at Boston College Law School.
MILA HENRY is a conductor, pianist and music director who maintains a versatile career, spanning folk operas to rock musicals to reimagined classics. Hailed “a stalwart contributor to the contemporary opera scene” [Opera Ithaca], she has collaborated with AOP (Artistic Director, 2019-2023), Beth Morrison Projects, Experiments in Opera, HERE, OPERA America, Opera Philadelphia, Opera on Tap, PROTOTYPE and VisionIntoArt. She has performed at venues such as The Apollo, BAM, Circle in the Square, Dutch National Opera, LA Opera, Library of Congress, Lincoln Center, McCarter Theatre Center and Pittsburgh CLO, with recital work taking her to Brooklyn Art Song Society [New Music Advisory Board, 2021-present], Kaufman Music Center, Library of Congress, New York Festival of Song, Feinstein's/54 Below and Café Sabarsky. Mila holds degrees from the Manhattan School of Music and Elizabethtown College, and was nicknamed a “Jill of all trades” [Sullivan County Democrat] for her multi-instrumentalist work with The Opera Cowgirls. milahenry.com.

MATT GRAY

STAGE DIRECTOR

Matt Gray is a director, writer, producer, and dramaturg based in New York City. In addition to his artistic endeavors, he currently serves as the event manager for Cisco Systems' NY headquarters. He served as General Director of The American Opera Project from 2019-2022 following 15-years producing and directing with the organization, including directing the popular As One [AOP/New York City Opera, 2019; Columbus Opera, 2019; Chautauqua Opera, 2018; International Opera Projects in Berlin, 2016] and several early workshops of Semmelweis. BFA, film directing, UNCSA.
Leah Asher

Leah Asher is an avid performer of contemporary music and creator of new artistic works. Leah is the executive director and violinist of The Rhythm Method string quartet and co-creator of MEANINGLESS WORK with Nicolee Kuester. Leah regularly performs with New York-based ensembles such as International Contemporary Ensemble, Talea Ensemble, and S.E.M. Ensemble. She formerly served as solo violist of NOSO Sinfoniettaen and co–principal viola of the Arctic Philharmonic. As a composer, Leah has been commissioned by ensembles including andPlay, Chartreuse, Periapsis, NorthArc Percussion Group, The Great Learning Orchestra, Du.O, and solo artists such as Meaghan Burke, Tristan McKay, and Jennifer Torrence. Recent releases include Leah’s solo album ‘Retreat into Afters’ on SCRIPTS records and The Rhythm Method’s self-titled debut album on Gold Bolus Recordings. Leah joined the faculty of Manhattan School of Music as of 2022. www.leahasher.com

Peter Flint

Peter Flint, accordionist/composer, lives in NYC where he is active writing and performing with groups including the Bachtopus Accordion Quartet and the Brooklyn Clube de Choro. He has degrees in composition from Oberlin Conservatory and New England Conservatory. Originally a pianist, he took up accordion in 2010, studying classical and Brazilian styles with Walter Kühr, William Schimmel, Rob Curto, and Vitor Gonçalves. Peter’s music has been performed in the US, Cuba, India, and South Korea by groups including the Camarata Romeu in Havana, American Opera Projects (AOP composer fellow 2003–4), the Orchestra of the SEM Ensemble, and Dinosaur Annex. From 2002–2012, he was director of the new music ensemble, Avian Orchestra. His recordings are available on the Bandcamp website. He also serves on the board of directors at Third Street Music School Settlement, the oldest community music school in the country. More info at http://www.peterflintmusic.com.
ASSISTANT MUSIC
Nissa Kahle

Nissa Kahle is a theater and opera pianist based in NYC. She completed her MM in Piano Performance at Texas State University, where she earned a fellowship as an opera accompanist that allowed her to train with professionals in the field on opera accompanying, coaching, and other collaborative skills. Nissa loves working with composers and creators to realize their visions into performance, and can be seen as a substitute keyboardist at Chicago the Musical and Radio City, among others, as well as working on new theater and opera pieces in development. She’s happy to be joining this project!

PERFORMER
Matthew Bryan Feld

Matthew Bryan Feld began studying acting with The Barrow Group Theatre Company immediately after receiving his Master’s in jazz performance at the Manhattan School of Music. He most recently played Max Detweiler in The Sound of Music and Andre in Dirty Rotten Scoundrels at The John W. Engeman Theater. He worked on the Netflix Series Manifest and won a Henry Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role in the original musical Rattlesnake Kate at Denver Center For The Performing Arts. Other theatre: Voca People Int’l cast, Vocalosity. Other TV/Film-Power, Fashionista. He is excited to be a part of this beautiful project. Nothing is possible without my beautiful Amanda and magical Hayes. @matthewbryanfeld
PERFORMER
Sophie Delphs

Franco-American mezzo-soprano Sophie Delphs’ recent operatic roles include: Félicie/Adélaïde (La Belle et la Bête, Glass), Cenerentola (La Cenerentola) and Elle (La voix humaine). Recent and upcoming recital and chamber works include: Saariaho’s From the Grammar of Dreams, Schoenberg’s Pierrot Lunaire and Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten, León’s Atwood Songs, Reich’s Music for 18 Musicians, Ravel’s Chansons madécasses and Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé, and Messiaen’s Harawi. She regularly collaborates with composers, improvisers and theater artists on new works with Beth Morrison Projects, American Opera Projects, BargeMusic, InfraSound Ensemble, Why Collective, and others. She is a dancer and singer with Brooklyn Motion Capture Dance Ensemble, which combines technology, movement and composition. Passionate about language and poetics, she is a translator, French teacher and writer, currently pursuing a doctoral degree in performance at the Graduate Center City University of New York.

PERFORMER
Kelly Guerra

Lauded as “exquisite” in the SF Chronicle for her summer 2023 performance as Renata in Cruzar la Cara de la Luna with West Edge Opera, Kelly Guerra continues to light up stages as a versatile and passionate performer. Recent work includes Rosina in Il Barbiere di Siviglia with the Princeton Festival, the title role in Astor Piazzolla’s María de Buenos Aires with Kentucky Opera, Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Scalia/Ginsburg with Chautauqua Opera Company and the title role in Luisa Fernanda with Opera Williamsburg. Other notable past engagements include work with Opera Omaha, Los Angeles Philharmonic, California Symphony, Lucerne Festival, and a national tour with Esperanza Spalding in Wayne Shorter’s ... (Iphigenia).

Upcoming engagements include Carlotta in Zorro with Opera Santa Barbara and the alto soloist in Handel’s Messiah with the National Chorale at Lincoln Center.
**PERFORMER**

**Samantha Martin**

Korean-American soprano Samantha Martin is a lover of storytelling in music. An avid supporter of new works, Samantha has premiered and performed pieces by numerous contemporary composers, including Clarice Assad, Michael Csányi-Wills, Daron Hagen, Julianna Hall, John Musto, Györgi Kurtág, Libby Larsen, James Mobberly, as well as workshop and performing the world premiere of Tom Cipullo’s opera, Mayo, as Miss Goodrich and Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. Additional opera credits include Lauretta in Puccini’s Gianni Schicchi, Buoso’s Ghost by Michael Ching and Laurie in Copland’s The Tender Land. Named the winner of Bard Conservatory’s 2020 Concerto Competition, she appeared with The Orchestra Now in September 2022 performing George Walker’s Lilacs. During her time at Bard, she also appeared in the Bard Vocal Arts Program’s production of Gian Carlo Menotti’s The Medium as Monica. Samantha received her Masters from Bard College Conservatory’s Graduate Vocal Arts Program, and her Bachelor of Music majoring in Voice Performance and Music Business from the State University of New York at Potsdam.

**PERFORMER**

**Charlotte Mundy**

Canadian soprano Charlotte Mundy has been dubbed a “daredevil with an unbreakable spine” ([SF Classical Voice](https://www.sfforclassicalvoice.com/)), “mesmerizing” ([New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/)), and is the only awardee of the Jan Degaetani prize for Contemporary Song from the Joy in Singing Competition. She is the vocal soloist on the studio recording of Bekah Simms’ 2022 Juno award winning composition Bestiary I & II.

Mundy’s 23/24 season includes the world premiere of site-specific opera Newtown Odyssey by Kurt Rohde and Marie Lorenz; premieres of concert works by Francisco del Pino, Alyssa Regent, Lainie Fefferman and Aida Shirazi, a solo recital at The Americas Society, and the debut of a new collaborative multimedia project with Christian Quiñones.

Mundy is a founding member of TAK ensemble, “one of the most prominent ensembles in the United States practicing truly experimental music” ([I Care If You Listen](https://www.icareifyoulisten.com/)), and a core member of the EvS Prize winning vocal ensemble, Ekmeles.
PERFORMER

Guadalupe Peraza

Mexican mezzo-soprano Guadalupe Peraza has performed internationally on both concert and opera stages. She had her live solo debut with The American Classical Orchestra in NYC in 2022, after their previous recording of the Chaconne Project in 2020. The 2022 – 23 season included engagements with the New York Philharmonic and Mostly Mozart at Lincoln Center, The American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and Bard Music Festival. In 2021 she was a featured soloist with the Gotham Early Music Scene's Open Gates Project The Divine Feminine. In the 2018-2020 season, Peraza performed as alto soloist in Mendelssohn's Elijah with the Fairfield County Orchestra, was a featured soloist at sold-out Symphony Space in New York City and the majestic Teatro de la Ciudad Esperanza Iris in Mexico City. She is now renowned for her creation, Mexamorphosis, a cross-cultural artistic project, and her contributions to global communities. IG: @perazamezzo

PERFORMER

Megan Schubert

Megan Schubert has sung music by Stockhausen for an audience under umbrellas in a torrential downpour for Make Music New York; world premieres at Carnegie Hall; with robots while locked inside a Van de Graaff Generator at Boston’s Museum of Science; on a bike flying by the audience in an installation piece at McCarren Park Pool, Brooklyn; in a giant potato sack while video was projected onto her frontside at Webster Hall; for inmates at a maximum security prison in Ossining, NY; with puppets at E 4th Street Fab! Fest; for Elliot Carter at a celebration of his 100th birthday; in extended reality oratorio in Seoul; in Matthew Barney/Jonathan Bepler film soundtracks off and onscreen; and shared with many ensembles championing art music and experimental jazz of today. She was a long-time assistant to the late Moog synthesizer pioneer and composer, Gershon Kingsley. www.meganschubert.com
Joy Tamayo is a vocalist, composer, and multimedia artist. Performance highlights include Freya Powell’s I cannot not grieve: CRY SCREAM SHOUT SING by More Art; Sanctum by Miro Magloire’s New Chamber Ballet; Manita en el suelo, puppet opera by Caturla/Carpentier with Americas Society; Chaitanya Sangco’s Subway Atmos for soprano/ electronics/chorus/cello/piano.

Through her duo an_outskirt, Joy is composer/performer for Saklob at JACK for Exponential Festival. She is composer/vocalist for Tanika I. Williams’ film Sanctuary, featured at BAM CinemaFest Shorts Program. Joy Tamayo is EMMY-nominated as composer for Jonathan McCrory’s sonic opera The Roll Call: The Roots to Strange Fruit with the National Black Theatre.

Joy Tamayo was born and raised in the Philippines. She has a bachelor’s degree in music from the University of the Philippines and a master’s degree in vocal performance from Crane School of Music. She currently lives in Brooklyn.

Dubbed “The divine Ms. Watkins” by the New York Times, soprano Amelia Watkins (she/her) has performed with leading orchestras and opera companies in the United States, Canada, Asia and Europe. Since her European debut at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, she has appeared with such organizations as the Los Angeles Opera, New York City Opera, the Estates Theatre/National Theatre Prague, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Carnegie Hall, Weill Hall, Lincoln Centre, the Tanglewood Music Festival, the Verbier Festival, The National Arts Centre, the Prototype Festival and with Musica Viva in Hong Kong. Embracing musical styles from Bach to Berio and beyond, Amelia specializes in the works of living and experimental composers. Amelia has been featured in recording on the Grammy-nominated album Vocabularies with Bobby McFerrin, Missy Mazzoli and Royce Yavrek’s Song From The Uproar, Albany Record’s New Growth, and Cantaloupe Record’s Acquanetta, and various commercial and indie film scores. ameliawatkins.com
Semmelweis received development support in AOP’s First Chance and Composers & the Voice programs. Additional support from The Sloan Foundation Science and Technology Project, Ensemble Studio Theater, Andrew Mellon Foundation, Warren Widmann and Ana Berlin, and the National Arts Club. Tonight’s event is made possible by generous support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Saraya Co. LTD., and Best Sanitizers, Inc.
As the original bold thinkers and innovators for health in New York City, NYAM has been a leading voice for public health since 1847. Throughout its history, NYAM has uniquely championed innovative changes to the systems that perpetuate health inequities and keep all communities from achieving good health.

Today, this work includes original research, programs, and policy initiatives that distinctively value community input for maximum impact. Combined with NYAM’s trusted programming and historic Library, and with the support of its 2,000 esteemed Fellows and members, NYAM’s impact as a public health leader continues.

In 2023, NYAM welcomed new President Ann Kurth, PhD, CNM, MPH, and under her leadership we have renewed our commitment to addressing the root causes of health inequities and working to influence systemic change for everyone to lead a healthy life.

**A BOLD NEW FUTURE**

NYAM is at the forefront of addressing the critical issues of the day—expanding our work across the lifespan to now address the impact of climate change on our healthcare, public health systems, and communities.

**ADVANCING HEALTH THROUGH RESEARCH**

NYAM’s innovative, data-driven solutions focus on social, environmental, and institutional factors that influence health—from safe births through aging well.

**PUTTING COMMUNITY VOICES FIRST**

NYAM’s work prioritizes community collaboration and integration of those with lived experience.

**A TRUSTED SOURCE**

NYAM’s educational events and historic Library are trusted sources for information and actionable recommendations.

**AN UNMATCHED PROFESSIONAL NETWORK**

NYAM’s Fellows, Members, and partners are an accomplished, dedicated, and talented group of health and public health professionals and advocates, including top practitioners, academics, researchers, and policymakers.