



University Musical Society Presents World Première of Immersive Theater Work on Robert Mapplethorpe

Music & Original Concept by Bryce Dessner

***Triptych (Eyes of One on Another)* Premieres March 15-16 at
Power Center in Ann Arbor, MI**

**Composed by Bryce Dessner
Libretto by Korde Arrington Tuttle
Featuring Poems by Essex Hemphill and Patti Smith
Directed by Kaneza Schaal
Featuring Roomful of Teeth
with Alicia Hall Moran and Isaiah Robinson
Music Direction & Conducting by Brad Wells
Produced by ArKtype / Thomas O. Kriegsmann
in Cooperation with The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation**

The **University Musical Society** of the University of Michigan presents the world première of a new theater piece on the work of controversial photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, **Friday-Saturday, March 15-16 at the Power Center for the Performing Arts in Ann Arbor, MI**. Composed by **Bryce Dessner**, with a libretto by Korde Arrington Tuttle that includes poetry by Essex Hemphill and Patti Smith, Mapplethorpe's longtime creative muse, ***Triptych (Eyes of One on Another)*** premieres 30 years after Mapplethorpe's untimely death from AIDS at the age of 42.

The performances come at the end of a week that also features two different performances by the Philharmonia Orchestra with conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen, as well as a workshop of Jimmy López's *Dreamers* in advance of its world première in California on Sunday, March 17. That week UMS also presents a concert by two leading African-American opera singers, Eric Owens and Lawrence Brownlee, in a concert that will be livestreamed and taped for delayed radio broadcast.

Fueled by a lifelong fascination with the artist's transgressive, sacred-profane vision, Dessner, Tuttle, and director Kaneza Schaal invite us to experience these arresting images anew. Featuring photographic projections and a new score by Dessner, along with the eight-person vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth and an 8-piece chamber orchestra, the multimedia work examines how we look and are looked at, bringing us face to face with our innermost desires, fears, and humanity. Situated somewhere between

erotic heat and cool classicism, Mapplethorpe's work obliterates the high-low divide, exploding classical conceptions of beauty.

Born and raised in Cincinnati, composer Bryce Dessner was impacted by the protests of the city's obscenity trial for Mapplethorpe's posthumous exhibition, *The Perfect Moment*, at the Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center, the first time a museum was taken to court on criminal charges related to art. The Hamilton County prosecutor and Cincinnati police shut down the exhibition and jailed the museum's curator, Dennis Barrie. The subsequent trial, which was decided in favor of Barrie and the museum, was a national spectacle and key event in the "culture wars" of the 1990s, which to this day remains a blight on the cultural tradition and history of Cincinnati.

"As a teenager, I was told by the authorities that I was not allowed to look at Mapplethorpe's photographs and that these tremendous works of art were not art at all, but pornography," says Dessner. "This censorship made a significant impact on my life at the time and on my decision to pursue art and music as a career. Thirty years later, I have decided to respond in my own way and to *look* at these pictures again myself, and through the eyes of my wonderful collaborator, the librettist Korde Arrington Tuttle. This project has challenged me more than any work to date and I am honored to share this journey with this ensemble."

"In the work of Mapplethorpe and Hemphill, I find kinship, pierced by its beauty and rage," adds Korde Arrington Tuttle. "I am thrilled to birth this dream project into the world, along with Bryce Dessner, a personal inspiration. In the spirit of looking — across time and cultural divides — it is an honor to place my voice alongside those of Hemphill and literary hero, Patti Smith."

Produced by Arktype / Thomas O. Kriegsmann, the world premiere will be March 15-16, 2019 after a two-week creative residency in Ann Arbor with the University Musical Society at the University of Michigan.

In addition to the performances, UMS will present several contextual activities:

Penny W. Stamps Distinguished Speaker Series:

Mapplethorpe in Performance

Featuring Bryce Dessner, Kaneza Schaal and Korde Arrington Tuttle in conversation with Neda Ulaby (NPR)

Thursday, March 14 // 5:10 pm // Michigan Theater

Composer Bryce Dessner, director Kaneza Schaal, and librettist Korde Arrington Tuttle discuss the range of artistic influences that informed Mapplethorpe's work — and how the production translates the visual medium into an interdisciplinary experience. Thirty years after the death of Mapplethorpe, we still cannot turn away from what his photos reveal; his pictures seduce, shock, offend, excite, intrigue, and scare us all at once. *Triptych* moves us away from confronting this work privately, paging through coffee table books or seeing it in a museum gallery, and asks an audience to experience their reactions collectively. NPR arts and culture correspondent Neda Ulaby moderates the discussion.

Pre-Performance Talk: Richard Meyer on the Legacy of Robert Mapplethorpe

Friday, March 15 // 6 pm // U-M Institute for the Humanities (202 South Thayer St.)

How has Robert Mapplethorpe's legacy evolved in the 30 years since his death from AIDS in 1989? How did the NEA funding controversy and charges of indecency surrounding his posthumous exhibition "The Perfect Moment" shape the way his work has been remembered? How have contemporary artists been influenced by, and commented on, his large and varied body of work? In conjunction with UMS's world première of *Triptych (Eyes of One on Another)*, noted art historian Richard Meyer, Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor in Art History at Stanford University, will unpack Mapplethorpe's complicated afterlife in the public imagination.

Post-Performance Artist Q&A (both performances)

*The UMS performances of TRIPTYCH (Eyes of One on Another) are funded in part by **The Wallace Foundation** and **Level X Talent**. TRIPTYCH is part of UMS Renegade.*

Bryce Dessner

A vital force in the flourishing realm of new creative music, Dessner is one of the most sought-after composers of his generation. A collaborative partner with the San Francisco Symphony under the direction of Esa-Pekka Salonen, his orchestral, chamber, and vocal compositions have been commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Carnegie Hall, BAM Next Wave Festival, Barbican Centre, Edinburgh International Festival, Sydney Festival, New York City Ballet, a future commission for the Czech Philharmonic, and many others. Dessner is active as a curator and founder of the long-running, Cincinnati-based MusicNOW festival, which aims to present the best in contemporary music, and is known to many as a founding member of The National.

University Musical Society

A recipient of the 2014 National Medal of Arts from President Obama, UMS (also known as the University Musical Society) contributes to a vibrant cultural community by connecting audiences with performing artists from around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Michigan, presenting over 70 music, theater, and dance performances by professional touring artists each season in 5-8 different venues, along with over 100 free educational activities. UMS is committed to bold artistic leadership, engaged learning through the arts, and access and inclusiveness. Since 1990, the organization has co-commissioned and supported the production of nearly 80 new or reimagined works. Matthew VanBesien became the organization's seventh president in July 2017.

Triptych (Eyes of One on Another) is produced by Arktype / Thomas O. Kriegsmann.

Produced in Residency with and Commissioned by University Musical Society, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Co-produced by Los Angeles Philharmonic, Gustavo Dudamel Music and Artistic Director.

TRIPTYCH (EYES OF ONE ON ANOTHER) was co-commissioned by BAM; Luminato, Toronto, Canada; Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, Athens, Greece; Cincinnati Opera, Cincinnati, OH; Cal

Performances, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA; Stanford Live, Stanford University, Stanford, CA; Adelaide Festival, Australia; John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for performance as part of Direct Current 2019; ArtsEmerson: World on Stage, Emerson College, Boston, MA; Texas Performing Arts, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX; Holland Festival, Amsterdam; Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH; the Momentary, Bentonville, AR and Celebrity Series, Boston, MA.

This project received residency development through MassMOCA, North Adams, MA.

Additional Credits:

Set and Costume Design by Carlos Soto
Lighting Design by Yuki Nakase
Video by Simon Harding
Dramaturgy by Talvin Wilks and Christopher Myers
Associate Director Lilleth Glimcher
Associate Music Director William Brittelle

Triptych (Eyes of One on Another) – 2019 Performances (Partial Listing)

March 5: Los Angeles Philharmonic (World Première, Concert Version)
March 15-16: Ann Arbor, MI University Musical Society (World Première)
March 22: Big Ears Festival, Knoxville, TN
April 6: John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC
June 6-8: Brooklyn Academy of Music
June 17: Holland Festival in Amsterdam
June 22: Luminato Festival, Toronto (Canadian Première)
June 25: Stavros Festival in Athens, Greece

Additional worldwide dates to be announced.

www.mapplethorpe.org

www.brycedessner.com

www.arktype.org

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