

Lincoln Center presents

# white light festival

October 20–November 19, 2011

*Wednesday and Thursday Evenings, November 2–3, 2011, at 7:30*

*Post-performance discussion on Thursday, November 3 with Toni Morrison, Peter Sellars, and Rokia Traoré*

## **Desdemona** (New York premiere)

**Toni Morrison**, *Text*

**Peter Sellars**, *Director*

**Rokia Traoré**, *Music and Vocals*

**Tina Benko**, *Actor*

**Fatim Kouyaté**, *Vocals*

**Kadiatou Sangaré**, *Vocals*

**Bintou Soumbounou**, *Vocals*

**Mamah Diabaté**, *Ngoni*

**Mamadyba Camara**, *Kora*

**James F. Ingalls**, *Lighting Design*

**Alexis Giraud**, *Sound Design*

*This program is approximately two hours long and will be performed without intermission.*

*Please join the artists at at65, in the Alice Tully Hall lobby (Broadway at 65th Street), immediately following the performance for a White Light Lounge.*

*Desdemona is co-produced by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Wiener Festwochen, Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers, Cal Performances, spielzeit'europa of the Berliner Festspiele, Barbican, Arts Council London, and London 2012 Festival.*

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*Desdemona is made possible in part by endowment support from the American Express Cultural Preservation Fund.*

*Generous support is provided by The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc.*

***This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.***

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Rose Theater  
Frederick P. Rose Hall  
Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center

*Please make certain your cellular phone, pager, or watch alarm is switched off.*

The White Light Festival is sponsored by Time Warner Inc.

Additional support for the White Light Festival is provided by The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc. and Logicworks.

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### **Upcoming White Light Festival Events:**

*Thursday Evening, November 3, at 7:30, in Alice Tully Hall*

#### **Schola Cantorum de Venezuela**

**María Guinand**, Director

Choral works by GUERRERO, VICTORIA, PADILLA, ALFONSO EL SABIO, FERNÁNDEZ, ARAUJO, GARCÍA DE ZÉSPEDES, FLECHA, MORUJA, ASTOR, CAAMAÑO, AGUIAR, GRAU, NOBRE, and LACERDA

*Thursday–Saturday Evenings, November 3–5, at 8:00, at Baryshnikov Arts Center*

#### **Spectral Scriabin**

**Eteri Andjaparidze**, Piano

**Jennifer Tipton**, Lighting

ALL-SCRIABIN PROGRAM

*White Light Lounges at Baryshnikov Arts Center*  
Co-presented by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and Baryshnikov Arts Center

*Tuesday–Friday Evenings, November 8\*–11, at 7:30, in the Clark Studio Theater*

*Saturday Afternoon and Evening, November 12, at 3:00 and 7:30*

#### **Four Quartets**

**Stephen Dillane**, Actor

**Miró Quartet**

**Katie Mitchell**, Director

**Vicki Mortimer**, Design

**T.S. Eliot**, Author

BEETHOVEN: String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132  
*White Light Lounges (except matinee) in the Samuels Studio*

\*Preview

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit [WhiteLightFestival.org](http://WhiteLightFestival.org). Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or request a White Light Festival brochure.

Visit [WhiteLightFestival.org](http://WhiteLightFestival.org) for more information relating to the Festival's programs.

*We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.*

*In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces, not during the performance. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.*

# A Note from the Director

by Peter Sellars

This evening is a literary and musical collaboration between Toni Morrison and Rokia Traoré, moving across continents, shared histories, imagined “other worlds,” and the permanently open-ended poetry of William Shakespeare’s *Othello*.

In Act I Shakespeare has Othello tell the Venetian Senate that he and Desdemona fell in love as he told her stories—stories of his youth as a child soldier, stories of suffering, reversal, privation, salvation, transformation, and human generosity. Stories of “other worlds.” Toni Morrison wanted to write those stories.

Late in Act IV, Shakespeare has Desdemona sing her famous “Willow Song.” She learned this song, she tells Emilia, from her nurse, Barbary, who died singing it, of a broken heart. In these few lines, Shakespeare offers a powerful image: in Shakespeare’s England, “Barbary” meant “Africa.” Courageous, loving, independently minded Desdemona was raised by an African woman, growing up with African stories and learning African songs.

Shakespeare did not know any Africans. Today, at the outset of the 21st century, Africa is quite present in the world, and our shared worlds have greater proximity and interpenetration than even Shakespeare could have imagined in his “Globe.” “Barbary” is one of Shakespeare’s powerful and enigmatic “missing women”—he did not write for her, possibly because he could not write for her. Tonight, we meet her, and Desdemona meets her again.

Four hundred years later, Toni Morrison and Rokia Traoré can respond to Shakespeare’s *Othello*, offering some missing pieces and wider perspectives. The women now have the scope to speak their minds and their hearts, and Africa is real, not just imagined. The women speak to us from the other side of the grave, older now, no longer teenagers. In African traditions, the dead are quite undead and very present, and for them, as Toni Morrison says, the past and the future are the same. In a time outside of time that illuminates and infuses the present, Des-demon-a confronts her “demons,” reconciling the past, and now, no longer alone, preparing a future.

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## Illumination

## Illumination

My mother had a maid call'd Barbary:  
She was in love, and he she loved proved mad  
And did forsake her: she had a song of 'willow';  
An old thing 'twas, but it express'd her fortune,  
And she died singing it: that song to-night  
Will not go from my mind; I have much to do,  
But to go hang my head all at one side,  
And sing it like poor Barbary.

*[Singing]*

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,  
Sing all a green willow:  
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,  
Sing willow, willow, willow:  
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmur'd her moans;  
Sing willow, willow, willow;  
Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones;  
Lay by these:—  
Sing willow, willow, willow;  
Prithee, hie thee; he'll come anon:—  
Sing all a green willow must be my garland.  
Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve  
I call'd my love false love; but what  
said he then?  
Sing willow, willow, willow:  
If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men!  
So, get thee gone; good night Ate eyes do itch;  
Doth that bode weeping?

—Desdemona, from William Shakespeare's *Othello*, Act IV, Scene 3

*For poetry comments and suggestions, please write  
to programming@LincolnCenter.org*

## Meet the Artists



MURDO MACLEOD

Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison (text) is the Robert F. Goheen Professor Emerita in the Humanities at Princeton University. Her nine major novels, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby*, *Beloved*, *Jazz*, *Paradise*, *Love*, and *A Mercy* have received extensive critical acclaim. She received the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1978 for *Song of Solomon* and the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved*. In 2006 *Beloved* was chosen by the *New York Times Book Review* as the best work of American fiction published in the last quarter-century.

Ms. Morrison wrote lyrics for *Honey and Rue*, commissioned by Carnegie Hall for Kathleen Battle with music by André Previn, which premiered in January 1992; *Four Songs*, with music by Previn, was premiered by Sylvia McNair at Carnegie Hall in November 1994; *Sweet Talk*, written for Jessye Norman with music by Richard Danielpour, premiered in April 1997; *Woman.Life.Song*, commissioned by Carnegie Hall for Jessye Norman with music by Judith Weir, premiered in April 2000; and the opera *Margaret Garner*, with music by Richard Danielpour, premiered in May 2005. In fall 2005 Ms. Morrison was the guest curator at the Musée du Louvre in its Grand Invité program, where she curated a month-long series of events across the arts on the theme of "The Foreigner's Home."

She has received the Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur, the Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, and a National Humanities Medal, among other honors. In 1993 Ms. Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

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RUTH WALZ

Peter Sellars

Opera, theater, and festival director Peter Sellars (director) is one of the most innovative and powerful forces in the performing arts in America and abroad. A visionary artist, Mr. Sellars is known for groundbreaking interpretations of classic works. Whether it is Mozart, Handel, Shakespeare, Sophocles, or the 16th-century Chinese playwright Tang Xianzu, Mr. Sellars strikes a universal chord with audiences, engaging and illuminating contemporary social and political issues.

He has staged operas at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Netherlands Opera, Paris National Opera, San Francisco Opera, and at the Glyndebourne and Salzburg Festivals, establishing a reputation for bringing 20th-century and contemporary operas to the stage, including works by Olivier Messiaen, Paul Hindemith, and György Ligeti. Mr. Sellars has been a driving force in the creation of many new works with longtime collaborator John Adams, including *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *El Niño*, *Doctor Atomic*, and *A Flowering Tree*.

Recent projects have included a staging of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex/Symphony of Psalms* for the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Sydney Festival; a critically acclaimed concert staging of Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Berlin Philharmonic performed in Salzburg and Berlin; a staging of *Nixon in China* for the Metropolitan Opera; and new productions of Handel's *Hercules* in Chicago and Vivaldi's *Griselda* in Santa Fe.

Mr. Sellars is a professor in the department of world arts and cultures at UCLA and

resident curator of the Telluride Film Festival. He is a MacArthur Fellow and the recipient of the Erasmus Prize, a Sundance Institute Risk-takers in the Arts award, and the Gish Prize, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.



**Rokia Traoré**

At once delicate and intense, Rokia Traoré's (Barbary) voice is a dreamlike journey into the world of an artist who has created her own style. Ms. Traoré is from Bamako, Mali. By age 25, audiences and critics alike began to understand that she was on the path to becoming one of the great voices of Africa. Her music is full of freshness and daring, but also spurred on by a natural authority and great integrity in her artistic choices.

Winner of the Radio France International African Discovery of the Year Award in 1997, and revelation of the Musiques Métisses Festival in Angoulême, France, in 1998, Ms. Traoré has invented deliciously original and appealing music. She innovates and has established a singular style in contemporary African music.

In 2006, while pursuing a career filled with works such as her albums *Mouneïssa*, *Wanita*, and *Bowmboï*, Ms. Traoré was invited to collaborate with American opera and theater director Peter Sellars. This first collaboration with Sellars responded perfectly to the desire that she felt to not pursue a career trapped in the eclectic but narrow universe of world music, which for her is artistically limiting. In 2010, after releasing her fourth album, *Tchamantché*, to great acclaim, Ms. Traoré began a second collaboration with Sellars and Toni Morrison, *Desdemona*, which premiered in May 2011 in Vienna.



**Tina Benko**

Actress Tina Benko (Desdemona) recently appeared in Ivo van Hove's production of *The Little Foxes* and Wallace Shawn's *Marie and Bruce*. Other New York theater credits include the Broadway productions of *Irena's Vow*, *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*, and *Top Girls*; Helen of Troy in *The Age of Iron* at Classic Stage Company; and the New York premieres of *Restoration*, *Dark Yellow*, *Post Mortem*, *Rough Sketch*, and Charles L. Mee's *Wintertime*.

Ms. Benko's television credits include *Ugly Betty*, *Law & Order*, *Chappelle's Show*, and three seasons on Showtime's *Brotherhood*. Her films include *The Avengers*, *Puccini for Beginners*, *Photo Op*, *Lucky Days*, *The Hungry Ghosts*, and *The Nanny Diaries*. She has appeared in workshops of new plays with Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab, New York Theatre Workshop, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Women's Project, The Flea, Clubbed Thumb, Lark Play Development Center, and Williamstown Theatre Festival. Ms. Benko has cowritten and starred in the plays *Gazebo* and *Crush the Infamous Thing*, and is currently directing the solo play *Lou*, based on the memoirs of Lou Andreas-Salomé.

### **Fatim Kouyaté, Kadiatou Sangaré, and Bintou Soumbounou**

Kadiatou Sangaré (vocals) is identified as a noble Malinké Fulani in the socioethnic classification of Malians. Bintou Soumbounou (vocals) comes from Garankés family and Fatim Kouyaté (vocals) is a griot. Today, for simplicity, all of these different families who were the pillars of a complex social organization, which is certainly beyond description in a paragraph, are called griots.

These young women have participated in several competitions and events organized around the music of West Africa. Ms. Soumbounou was selected among the finalists of Africa Stars, a musical contest. They are all attracted to traditional Malian music, as well as the music of Rokia Traoré, Beyoncé, Ismaël Lô, and Celine Dion.

In 2009, following the example of 88 other young musicians, Fatim Kouyaté, Kadiatou Sangaré, and Bintou Soumbounou participated in auditions organized by Rokia Traoré, which selected 16 young singers for training in technique. Ms. Kouyaté, Ms. Sangaré, and Ms. Soumbounou were selected and enrolled with other young professional musicians; their training is supported by the Passerelle Foundation.

### Mamah Diabaté

Mamah Diabaté (ngoni) comes from a griot family in the Ségou region of Mali. After auditions, Rokia Traoré chose to work with him in 1998, when he was only 20 years old. Mr. Diabaté, like most griot musicians, was taught to play the ngori as a child by his father. With the exception of *Mouneïssa*, he has participated on all of Rokia Traoré's albums and tours. Mr. Diabaté accompanies other great griot singers in Bamako, Mali, when not on tour abroad.

### Mamadyba Camara

Mamadyba Camara (kora) was born in 1968 in Kita, Mali, and spent part of his childhood in Gambia. He is a Fina, and like any son of Niamakala, he will learn to do the job that his parents do along with them. However, Mr. Camara also plays an instrument, the kora.

He arrived in Bamako with his parents when he was still a teenager. Like the great kora players Toumani Diabaté and Balaké Sissoko, he grew up in the environment of the Niamakalas of Bamako, who more or less have a connection with Gambia. Mr. Camara has accompanied great singers such as Amy Koïta and Oumou Dédié Demba, both famous traditional singers

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from Mali. He began working with Rokia Traoré in 2009.

### James F. Ingalls

James F. Ingalls's (lighting design) work for Lincoln Center's Great Performers and the Mostly Mozart Festival includes *A Flowering Tree*, *La Passion de Simone*, *Mozart Dances*, *Zaide*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*, *Kafka Fragments*, *Ainadamar*, *The Renaissance Muse*, Bach Cantatas, *El Niño* at BAM, and the Bach Cello Suites at St. Ignatius. Recent work includes *Griselda* at the Santa Fe Opera, *L'Allegro il penseroso ed il moderato*, George Crumb's *The Winds of Destiny* at Ojai Music Festival, *Three Hotels* at Williamstown Theatre Festival, and *Nixon in China* at the Met. He often collaborates with Melanie Ríos Glaser and the Wooden Floor Dancers in Sana Ana, California.

### Alexis Giraud

A native of the Paris region, Alexis Giraud (sound design) began his career as a sound technician in 1995 in the Parisian club Le Bataclan. After working with many internationally acclaimed artists and musicians, Mr. Giraud began touring as a sound designer for artists in the French and world-music genres. When he is not touring, he records and continues to bring emerging young artists' music projects to fruition.

### White Light Festival

The White Light Festival is Lincoln Center's annual exploration of music and art's power to reveal the many dimensions of our interior lives. In this, its second year, the Festival offers a spectrum of artistic expression that moves us inward and expands our spirit.

### Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. As a presenter of more than 400

events annually, LCPA's series include American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, and the White Light and Mostly Mozart Festivals. The Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center* extends Lincoln Center's reach to millions of Americans nationwide. As a leader in arts and educa-

tion and community relations, LCPA takes a wide range of activities beyond its halls through the Lincoln Center Institute, as well as offering arts-related symposia, family programming, and accessibility. And as manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and its other resident organizations.

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#### **For Desdemona:**

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Anne Dechêne, *Production Stage Manager*

Janet Y. Takami, *Assistant Stage Manager*

Andrew Hill, *Production Electrician*

Jessica Barrios, *Wardrobe*

Jenny Lazar, *Supertitle Operator*

[insert 3 jazz staff/board pages—Bill can give you latest]