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Kindred Spirits and Chelsea Opera present
Bending Towards the Light...a Jazz Nativity in NYC

Jazz and opera join hands in *Bending Towards the Light...a Jazz Nativity*, the telling of the Nativity story in a thoroughly fresh way. Composed and arranged by Anne Phillips, directed by Beth Ann Kennedy, it is an exciting and moving holiday experience for the entire family. There will be one performance on Sunday, December 18, 2022 at 5:00 pm at St. Paul & St. Andrew United Methodist Church (263 West 86th Street, New York, NY 10024 between Broadway and West End Avenue). Tickets: General admission: \$40 in advance/\$45 at the door, Seniors: \$30 in advance/\$35 at the door, students/children: \$20 in advance/\$25 at the door. Visit www.chelseaopera.org/events.html for more information or call 917-544-4386.

Produced in NYC and other cities since 1985 by Kindred Spirits, the Jazz Nativity has been a co-production of Kindred Spirits and Chelsea Opera since 2016. This year, The Jazz Nativity is making its triumphant return to New York City after the pandemic halted performances.

As in the traditional story, the Three Kings present their gifts. In the **Jazz Nativity**, the Kings present the gift of their talent. This year's Kings will be Latin band leader Bobby Sanabria on Timbales, tap dancer Maurice Chestnut, and a *Quing*, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen. Other performers include soprano Cassandra Douglas as the Archangel, The Royal Bopsters with Amy London, Jeanne O'Connor, Pete McGuinness and Dylan Prumuk as the voices; tenor David Gordon and baritone Sam McDonald as the shepherds; Jon Gordon as the sax playing shepherd, and nine year old Zoe Whittaker singing the title song as the child shepherd. The Guardian Angels will be singers Amy London and Pete McGuinness. The band is made up of New York's jazz best: Adam Asarnow, piano; Tim Horner, drums; Dean Johnson, bass;

Charlie Caranicas, trumpet Art Baron, trombone; Jon Gordon and Scott Robinson, reeds; and Chembo Corniel, congas. Featured as Special Guests will be Latin pianist Arturo O’Farrill, accordionist Eddie Montiero, and tap dancers Jaden and Ellis Foreman.

The music in the show is a combination of traditional carols, original music and arrangements by Anne Phillips and Bob Kindred, and one song by Dave and Iola Brubeck with happy permission given from them.

A wonderful addition to this year’s production is the return of **The Jazz Nativity Children’s Project**. Through sponsorship at \$20 a child, anyone can give children from organizations like The Boys and Girls Clubs and Covenant House the opportunity to experience the Jazz Nativity. This year’s show is dedicated in memoriam to Candido Camero, the famed Cuban jazz percussionist who played the show for 25 years.

Of past renditions, the critics have said:

“By the end of “The Jazz Nativity” you know you’ve been through something wonderful...a stirring celebration of Christmas!” - Dr. Billy Taylor, *CBS Sunday Morning*

“Brilliant, infectious music roars from an all-star band...a spell-binding production!”
- *New York Amsterdam News*

“The memory of this extraordinary performance will keep Christmas in your heart forever!” - Alison Steele, *City Guide New York*

Anne Phillips’ career has covered almost every area of the music business. In addition to recording several solo albums, from the classic *Born To Be Blue*, to her most recent releases *Ballet Time* on which she sings with such old friends as Dave Brubeck and Marian McPartland, and *Live at the Jazz Bakery* with pianist Roger Kellaway and saxophonist, Bob Kindred. She has worked as a singer, choral arranger and conductor with many of the music world's leading artists and is widely known in the industry as the writer/arranger/producer of many national commercials. Through her not-for-profit organization, **Kindred Spirits**, her **Children’s Jazz Choirs** have been instrumental in introducing inner-city children to the Great American Songbook.

In the classical arena, Ms. Phillips’ ten-minute opera *Tempo Fuori del Tempo* was presented at Weill Recital Hall as a part of an evening of Opera Shorts, another short opera “*Plots*” was performed last December at Opera America in a concert by the opera company Aviva Players and her Easter Cantata *Sing, For The Lord Has Risen* was presented in concert by the Remarkable Theater Brigade at Jan Hus Church. Her song cycle *An Alaskan Trilogy*, a setting of three poems by Alaskan poet, Phoebe Newman,

was performed at the CUNY Graduate Center in collaboration with the National Association of Teachers of Singing. More of her songs were recorded by soprano Monica Harte on the classical label MSR Records. Several of her compositions were featured by Chelsea Opera including a song concert, *Musical Portraits*, in 2014, in 2017 *That 'Certain Age'*, a short opera about aging with grace and humor which will also be produced in concert with Aviva Players this year with a grant received from the New York Women Composers. Chelsea Opera also produced "*What Are We Doing To Our World?*" in 2018. A musical celebration of creation and creativity.

Chelsea Opera (co-founded by Leonarda Priore and Lynne Hayden-Findlay) is a professional opera company presenting fully staged operas with chamber orchestra. Currently in its 19th season, the company provides for professional singers to advance their careers while making opera affordable and accessible to a broad spectrum of the community. They have found venues with fine acoustics to provide intimacy and proximity with each audience and allowing them to feel involved and a part of the opera's story. Of Chelsea Opera's sustainability, Anthony Tommasini of *The New York Times* noted: "With American opera companies large and small struggling financially and a few going under, [Chelsea Opera is] a patch of encouraging news..." Following its production of Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land*, writer Jon Sobel declared: Chelsea Opera "certainly ranks as one of the country's preeminent 'small' opera companies."

Formed in 2004 by singers, Leonarda Priore and Lynne Hayden-Findlay, Chelsea Opera was launched with an all-volunteer production of *Suor Angelica*. Initially, Ms. Priore and Ms. Hayden-Findlay intended to produce only this one opera. However, artist and audience response was so compelling they agreed to incorporate and obtained their IRS non-profit designation in a record eight days. They have produced extensive standard and contemporary operas, garnering critical acclaim at each outing. Despite its size, Chelsea Opera is the recipient of two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts – ArtWorks program, most recently for its production of Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied*.

Chelsea Opera has received funding from The Baruch Foundation, The Good News Foundation, The Music Performance Trust Fund, The Alice M. Ditson, The Amphion Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and sponsorship support from JetBlue Airways and Community Bank, N.A., to name a few.

For further information, visit chelseaopera.org and jazznativity.org or write to:

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