

La Celestina

Vélez Blanco Patio

Friday, March 20—Sunday, March 29

During Museum hours

A video opera and immersive dramatic-musical experience

By **ERRATICA**

Written and Directed by Patrick Eakin Young

Composed by Matt Rogers (b. 1976)

Featuring the Voices of:

Catherine Carter

Victoria Couper

Magid el Bushra

Robert Gildon

James Halliday

Edmund Hastings

Oskar McCarthy

Kate Symonds-Joy

Nicholas Scott

Callie Swarbrick

James Halliday: musical director

Seamus Fogarty: sound design

Victoria Couper and James Halliday: additional arrangements

Manual Cinema: shadow puppetry

Burke Brown: lighting design

Hannah Wasileski: video design

This program is made possible by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

#MetCelestina | #MetMuseumPresents

The Story

Calisto, a gentleman, is in love with the beautiful Melibea, but she rejects him. His servant, Sempronio, seeks out the old woman Celestina at her house to enlist her help. Celestina is a witch and a pimp, among other things, and a go-between for lovers. Sempronio tells Celestina of his master's desires, and they agree to share in the profit from helping him win Melibea's affection. Parmeno, Calisto's other servant, is suspicious of Celestina until she promises to let him sleep with her ward Elicia, then he joins the confederacy. Celestina tells Calisto that she will help him for a price and Calisto gives her a hundred coins, which she shares with the others. Returning to her house (with Parmeno in tow), she enchants a spindle of thread with a dark spell. She visits Melibea under the pretext of selling her the thread, but when she mentions Calisto's name, Melibea flies into a rage. Elsewhere, Sempronio, Parmeno, and Calisto drink and sing. Celestina enters triumphant; Melibea will see Calisto! Thrilled, Calisto gives Celestina a gold ring as a reward. Celestina returns home with the gift, pursued by Sempronio and Parmeno. As Calisto climbs up to Melibea's chamber, Sempronio confronts Celestina about the ring and demands that she share it as they had agreed. She refuses, they argue, and he stabs her. Elicia discovers the body and wakes the neighbors, who capture the two servants and lynch them. In the morning as Calisto is leaving Melibea's balcony, his ladder slips and he falls to his death. No accident, Elicia had pushed it over, blaming him for the death of Celestina. Distraught at the loss of her love, Melibea climbs to the top of her house and leaps to her death.

Contains adult content

Patrick Eakin Young on *La Celestina*

Fernando de Rojas' unusual book *La Celestina* is a work of literature that embodies liminality. Written in 1499, it straddles the threshold between the Medieval and the Renaissance. Entirely in dialogue, it is neither a play nor a novel, a comedy nor classical tragedy. Its very form and subject matter seems to reflect the ambiguity of the world in which it was created—a world where Spain was being unified under Ferdinand and Isabella, where a new continent was being discovered and colonized, and where ancient communities of Jews and Arabs were being uprooted and displaced across the Iberian Peninsula. Rojas was himself a converso Jew, and his sprawling, morally ambiguous narrative seems to cut through the pretenses of society with the precision of someone perched precariously on the edge of it.

In adapting Rojas' text, I have tried to make a piece that is similarly liminal:

an opera without singers, whose theater is also its stage, told through hearsay and rumor, neither fully spoken nor sung. The voices that we hear are disembodied; the figures that we see are mere shadows; the bodies that are present are stone, yet strangely animate. Moving around the 'actors' of the piece, the viewer both experiences the performance and becomes part of it. It is this fracturing of perspective that attracted me to *La Celestina*: neither this nor that, being both within and without—a text, a performance, a space, and an experience.

A Word from Limor Tomer on *La Celestina*

When I commissioned *La Celestina* for this gallery, I anticipated it would be innovative, immersive, and provocative. But I now realize, as this operatic experience has come to life, just how groundbreaking it is. The story of *La Celestina* (written by Fernando de Rojas) is one of the great masterpieces of Spanish literature, and ERRATICA, under the artistic direction of Patrick Eakin Young, and in collaboration with Manual Cinema, has created a brilliant multi-sensory experience. Using cutting-edge technology, this unprecedented installation achieves almost zero footprint in the gallery

and yet inhabits the gallery completely. I expect it will change the discourse between performance and objects. A highlight of our spring season, *La Celestina* unites with the art and architecture of the Vélez Blanco Patio for nine days, throughout Museum hours. I invite you to surrender to its power.

ERRATICA

ERRATICA is a London-based performance company that creates diverse musical spectacles in the U.K. and worldwide, including black-box opera, new, collaboratively devised commissions for unaccompanied voices, mash-ups of contemporary and early music, and site-specific multimedia installations.

Patrick Eakin Young (director)

Patrick Eakin Young is a director, designer and artist, originally from Toronto, Canada, now living and working in the U.K. He attended Columbia University in New York where he studied English and Comparative Literature. Patrick has assisted directors in the U.S. both regionally and off-Broadway; held observerships at the Metropolitan Opera and the Royal Opera House; assisted for the South African artist and director William Kentridge, and been a fellow of the Atelier Opéra en Création at the Festival D'Aix-en-Provence, France. Since 2007, he has been directing and producing contemporary musical spectacles through ERRATICA. His work has been presented in New York, Johannesburg, Toronto, and London.

Matt Rogers (composer b. 1976)

Matt is a British composer who has written for and with a host of leading instrumentalists, ensembles, and technologists; creating music and installations for concert halls,

theaters, and galleries. His eclectic output reflects an open attitude, whereby no stylistic element is a given, and even genre is re-evaluated to fulfill the needs of each new piece. Matt has received the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award for Composers and has been Artist in Residence at the Southbank Centre (London) and Tokyo Wonder Site.

Manual Cinema (shadow puppetry)

Manual Cinema is a performance collective, design studio, and production company. Founded in 2010 by Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Ben Kauffman, Julia Miller, and Kyle Vegter, Manual Cinema combines handmade shadow puppetry, cinematic motifs, and live sound manipulation to create immersive stories for stage and screen. Using vintage overhead projectors, multiple screens, puppets, actors, multi-channel sound design, and a live band, Manual Cinema transforms the cinematic experience, and imbues it with liveness, ingenuity, and theatricality. Their work has been featured at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The O, Miami Poetry Festival; and The Tehran International Puppet Festival in Iran. They have collaborated with StoryCorps (N.Y.C.), ERRATICA (London), New York Times best-selling author Reif Larsen, and three time Grammy Award-winning Eighth Blackbird (Chicago).

Seamus Fogarty (sound design)

Seamus is a songwriter, composer and sound designer from the west of Ireland. Based in London since 2011, his installations have been shown in galleries throughout Europe and China. His critically acclaimed debut album *God Damn You Mountain* (Fence Records, 2012), is an eerie and unique collection of field recordings and sparse folk music. It paved the way to numerous festival appearances and extensive tours throughout Europe and the U.K. When not figuring out how to spatialize multichannel virtual operas, Seamus divides his time between the University of Hertfordshire, where he lectures in

songwriting and composition, and finishing his next record due out on Lost Map Records later this year.

Burke Brown (lighting design)

Burke Brown's previous projects with ERRATICA were Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas*, and Handel/Schoenberg's *Orlando/Lunaire*, both performed in Toronto. Based in New York City, Burke's recent lighting designs include: *The Long Shrift* directed by James Franco, *Stay and Basilica* (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater), and *Phoebe in Winter* (Clubbed Thumb). He has designed for La Mama ETC, the Baryshnikov Arts Center, Cal Shakes, Center Stage, Cleveland Playhouse, Abbey Theatre (Dublin), Golden Mask Festival (Moscow), Seoul Performing Arts Festival (South Korea), Festival of Two Worlds (Italy), Aszure Barton & Artists, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Bayerisches Staatsballett, and Houston Ballet. Burke has a MFA from the Yale School of Drama and is a member of Wingspace Theatrical Design.

Hannah Wasileski (video design)

Hannah is an Obie award-winning visual artist and projection designer from Berlin. Her recent design work includes: *Livin' La Vida Imelda* at Theater Row, *The World is Round* at BAM, *La Prose du Transsiberien* at Yale Beinecke, *She Talks to Beethoven* at JACK, *ReAnimator Requiem* at Abrons Arts Center, Sarah Ruhl's *Dear Elizabeth* at Yale Rep and Berkeley Rep, *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Yale Drama, *The Strange Tales of Liao-zhai*, and *My Life in a Nutshell* at HERE Arts Center. Her installation and video art has been exhibited in London, Brighton, and Glasgow. Hannah holds an MFA in design from Yale.