

People & Places

Stage

Met back after shutdown

Aucoin's 'Eurydice' is a modern telling of myth

NEW YORK, Nov 25, (AP) — As Erin Morley sang on the big stage of the Metropolitan Opera, Matthew Aucoin sat in the first row of the orchestra, his score in front of him, taking notes.

Unlike most of her performances, Morley could use rehearsals to suggest adjusting notes to fit her soprano.

Known primarily for Verdi, Wagner, Mozart and Strauss, the Met is presenting three company premieres of 21st century works this season. Aucoin's "Eurydice," based on Sarah Ruhl's 2003 play, opened Tuesday night in the first of seven performances running through Dec. 16. Terence Blanchard's "Fire Shut Up in My Bones" opened the season, the Met's first work by a Black composer, and Brett Dean's "Hamlet" will be presented in May.



Aucoin

Aucoin and Ruhl were paired by the composer's sister, the playwright **Christine Aucoin**, and André Bishop, the artistic director of Lincoln Center Theater, which commissioned the piece as part of its joint new works program with the Met.

Boston-born Aucoin had composed "Orphic Moments," a 15-minute work, for counter-tenor Anthony Roth Costanzo that premiered in 2016.

"Writing it really kind of set me on fire creatively, so I thought 'I want to go deeper here,' but I didn't really want to just spend 2 1/2 hours delving into male artistic narcissism, so both my sister and Andre said, 'You got to call Sarah Ruhl.'"

Aucoin and Ruhl met for lunch in a Manhattan restaurant and decided to adapt Ruhl's modern-day retelling of the legend focusing on Eurydice's point of view, rather than Orpheus' descent to Hades to rescue her.

Operatic versions have included Monteverdi's "L'Orfeo" from 1607, Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice" from 1762 and Offenbach's "Orphée aux enfers" from 1858, with its famous "Can Can." More recent renditions have included Philip Glass' "Orphée" in 1993 and Anais Mitchell's hit musical "Hadestown," which opened on Broadway in 2019.

Composers

"It's catnip for composers, isn't it?" Aucoin said. "It kind of says that music can conquer death, but humans will always screw it up. It sort of says that we're not worthy of music, and so I think it captures something really essential, which is that music is both human and more than human."

Ruhl wrote the libretto, Aucoin composed from 2016-19 and the work premiered at the LA Opera on Feb. 1, 2020. The composer conducted in LA but Met music director Yannick Nézet-Séguin will lead the New York performance with Morley taking over the title role from Danielle de Niese and baritone Nathan Berg replacing Rod Gilfry as Eurydice's father. Holdovers include baritone Joshua Hopkins (Orpheus) and tenor Barry Banks (Hades).

"I think Sarah's play is much, much more than a reimagining of the myth," Aucoin said. "The myth is part of the play, but really it's an autobiographical deep dive into a young woman's psyche."

The Met returned from the longest shutdown in its 138-year history when it opened the season with Terence Blanchard's "Fire Shut Up in My Bones" from 2019, its first work by a Black composer. Brett Dean's "Hamlet," which opened at Britain's Glyndebourne Festival in 2017, follows in May, and next season includes Kevin Puts' "The Hours" with Renée Fleming and 2023-24 features Anthony Davis' "X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X."

Now 31 and a resident of Stamford, Vermont, Aucoin didn't listen to the previous Orpheus operas until after his work premiered.

Morley, 41, first looked at the lush, tonal score three years ago after she received a call from Met General Manager Peter Gelb.

"I did tell him that I thought that the role was not perfectly tailored to my voice yet," she recalled. And he said, "That's why we work with living composers."

Aucoin shifted notes higher in the register, a process that continued through rehearsals. Between accepting the role and now, Morley became the breakout star of the Met's At-Home Gala Zoom gala, accompanying herself on the piano in "Chacun le sait (Everyone Knows It)" from Donizetti's "La Fille du Régiment (The Daughter of the Regiment)."

"There are certainly challenges. One is that there is no reference recording. I had not heard the orchestration in all its glory until this past week," she said just a few days before the opening. "There's a lot of contrast in the role. There are all of these sort of very chatty sections and then there are moments of extreme lyricism. And all of the rhythms are quite complicated, and that is time consuming."

Aucoin and Ruhl have created an accessible mix of myth, fantasy and humor.

Also:

NEW YORK: Greg Kinnear was just a month away from making his Broadway debut in the play "To Kill a Mockingbird" when the pandemic shut theater down in March 2020. He's not giving up: Early next year, he'll try again.

The two-time Emmy Award-winner and Oscar nominee is slated to take over the role of Atticus Finch from **Jeff Daniels** beginning Jan. 5, 2022.

"There is nothing in the Greg Kinnear IMDb credits that you will find that will suggest that I am in any way an obvious choice for far taking on this role," he tells The Associated Press. "This will all be a new endeavor for me. I welcome it and I'm thrilled about it."

"To Kill a Mockingbird" by **Harper Lee** won a Pulitzer Prize in 1961 and has been widely praised as a sensitive portrait of racial tension in 1930s Alabama. At its core is **Atticus Finch**, a lawyer called upon to defend a Black man falsely accused of raping a white woman.

Lee's iconic book has been adapted for the stage by **Aaron Sorkin**, who won an Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award for his screenplay for "The Social Network." The play is directed by **Bartlett Sher**.

Sorkin's script — which cuts the undergrowth of minor characters and enhances others, particularly the maid Calpurnia and **Tom Robinson**, the man falsely accused of rape — was the thing that really grabbed Kinnear.

Kinnear has visited New York to discuss the role with the creative team and while he hasn't yet seen the show, he has walked onto the empty 1,435-seat Shubert Theatre stage. "I did feel a little catching my breath," he says.

He is scheduled to start rehearsals in December and hasn't yet decided whether or not he'll see Daniels in the role during his four weeks of preparation.



This image released by Disney+ shows, (from left), Ringo Starr, Paul McCartney, John Lennon and George Harrison, with Yoko Ono, (seated right), in a scene from the nearly 8-hour Peter Jackson-produced documentary 'Get Back', airing over three days starting Thanksgiving. (AP)

Music

Jackson revisits making of 'Let It Be'

'Get Back' explores Beatle myths

NEW YORK, Nov 25, (AP) — For 50 years, the fixed narrative had the Beatles' "Let It Be" recording session as a miserable experience with a band where members were sick of each other, sick of their work and in the process of breaking up.

The nearly 8-hour, Peter Jackson-produced documentary culled from film and recording outtakes of those sessions instead reveal a self-aware band with a rare connection and work ethic that still knew how to have fun — yet was also in the process of breaking up.

The "Get Back" series unspools over three days starting Thanksgiving on Disney+.

Produced by a Beatlemaniaic for fellow Beatlemaniaics, it can be an exhausting experience for those not in the club. But the club is pretty big. Beyond the treats it offers fans, "Get Back" is a fly-on-the-wall look at the creative process of a band still popular a half-century after it ceased existence.

Jackson, the Academy Award-winning maker of the "Lord of the Rings" series, was discussing another project with the Beatles when he inquired about what happened to all the outtakes of director Michael Lindsay-Hogg's 1970 "Let It Be" film.

Nearly 60 hours of film taken over three weeks existed, mostly unseen, and the band had been considering what to do with it. Jackson took that material, as well as 150 hours of audio recordings, and spent four years building a story.

He approached with the fear that it might be a depressing slog.

Lindsay-Hogg's film is viewed as a chronicle of the band's demise — unfairly, in Jackson's view — because it was released shortly after the breakup was announced. Individual Beatles reinforced the notion with negative comments about the experience, where they had given themselves a tight deadline to write and record new material in preparation of a live show, with cameras following it all.

Arguments

"I just waited for it to go bad," Jackson said. "I waited for the arguments to begin. I waited for the conflict to begin. I waited for the sense that they hated each other. I waited for all the things I had read in the books, and it never showed up."

Oh, there's conflict. History overshadows the enjoyable moments revealed in the outtakes, like John Lennon singing "Two of Us" as a Bob Dylan impersonator, or he and Paul McCartney challenging each other to a run-through without moving their lips. Jackson restores the balance.

"The connection was incredible," drummer Ringo Starr recalled in a recent Zoom interview. "I'm an only

child (but) I had three brothers. And we looked out for each other. We looked after each other. We had a few rows with each other — that's what people do. But musically, every time we would count in — one, two, three, four — we were into being the best we could be."

Jackson follows the sessions day-by-day from their start in a cavernous film set that was eventually abandoned in favor of their familiar London recording studio, to the brief rooftop performance that was the last time the Beatles played in public.

The filmmaker is sensitive to the idea that he was brought in to "sanitize" the sessions, pointing out that "Get Back" depicts George Harrison briefly leaving the band, an event Lindsay-Hogg was not permitted to show.

That moment unfolded after a morning where Harrison watched, silently stewing, as Lennon and McCartney displayed their tight creative connection working on "Two of Us" as if the others weren't there. When a lunch break came, Harrison had something more permanent in mind.

"I'm leaving the band now," he says, almost matter-of-factly, before walking out.

After a few days, and a couple of band meetings, Harrison was coaxed to return. The morning he does, the film shows he and Lennon reading a false newspaper report that they had come to blows, and faced off in boxing stances to mock it.

Dispels

Along the way, Jackson's project dispels and reinforces pieces of conventional wisdom that has solidified through the years.

Myth No. 1: McCartney was a control freak.

Verdict: Partly true. The film shows Harrison visibly chafing at McCartney giving him and other band members instructions on how to play and cajoling them into a decision on a live concert. The band had been somewhat aimless since the 1967 death of manager Brian Epstein. McCartney had taken on the "daddy" role, and isn't entirely comfortable with it.

"I'm scared of me being the boss, and I have been for a couple of years," he says. "I don't get any support."

Myth No. 2: Yoko Ono broke up the Beatles.

Verdict: Not true. She's there at virtually every recording session, but mostly as a benign force sitting next to Lennon. The other Beatle spouses all show up in the studio, although not as often. At one point, McCartney even makes a prescient joke about her.

"It's going to be such an incredible comical thing in 50 years time — they broke up because Yoko sat on an amp," he says.

The afternoon after Harrison left, the remaining Beatles clearly take out their frustration with some aggressive, atonal music, and Ono takes over his microphone — a spellbinding moment.

Myth No. 3: The Beatles had essentially turned into four solo artists, with the others as sidemen to each other's songs.

Verdict: Not true. They're constantly collaborating, seeking and taking advice. At one point, Harrison confesses to Lennon that he's been having trouble completing the line that became "attracts me like no other lover" in "Something." Lennon suggests using a nonsense phrase — "attracts me like a cauliflower" — until something better emerges.

Through the film, viewers can see how the song "Get Back" emerged from McCartney working out a riff on the side, to he and Lennon trading lyrical suggestions and throwing out an idea to make it a song criticizing anti-immigrant sentiment, to the full band working out the arrangement. Pleased with the final result, it's Harrison who suggests immediately releasing it as a single.

"A glimpse of them working together is an enormously important artifact, not just for Beatles fans but for anybody who is creative," said Bob Spitz, author of "The Beatles: The Biography," published in 2005.

Creativity

Myth No. 4: Filming showed the Beatles breaking up.

Verdict: Essentially true. It becomes clear that Lennon and Harrison's enthusiasm for being Beatles is waning. Lennon is clearly in love with Ono; McCartney tells Harrison and Starr that if it ever came down to a choice between her and the Beatles, Lennon would go with her.

Harrison, growing creatively, is becoming uncomfortable with his secondary role. He talks with Lennon about doing a solo album because he has enough songs written to fill his "quota" on Beatles albums for another decade. As if to prove his point, the Beatles rehearse Harrison's majestic "All Things Must Pass," but decline to record it.

In the film, Lennon and Starr also discuss a meeting with Rolling Stones manager Allen Klein about taking over the Beatles' business, foreshadowing a bitter split with McCartney.

"The whole thing is full of mini-stories," Jackson said.

Jackson, who had been expected to make a conventional documentary, said he was nervous taking his much longer final product back to McCartney, Starr and the families of Lennon and Harrison.

"But they came back and said, 'great, don't change a thing,'" he said.

happened." Sebold, 58, wrote in "Lucky" of being raped as a first-year student at Syracuse in May 1981 and then spotting a Black man in the street months later that she was sure was her attacker.

"He was smiling as he approached. He recognized me. It was a stroll in the park to him; he had met an acquaintance on the street," wrote Sebold, who is white. "Hey, girl," he said. "Don't I know you from somewhere?" (AP)



Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones performs on Tuesday, Nov. 23, at the Hard Rock Live in Hollywood, Fla. (AP)

Variety

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark: A federal judge says no phones, laptops or recording devices will be allowed at next week's child pornography trial for former reality TV star **Josh Duggar**.

US District Judge **Timothy L. Brooks** issued the order ahead of the trial, which is set to begin Tuesday in Fayetteville, the Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported.

Duggar, who appeared in TLC's "19 Kids and Counting," was charged in April.

Duggar, 33, faces up to 20 years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000 on each count if convicted.

Duggar has also apologized for his admission and for cheating on his wife.

Meanwhile, his father, **Jim Bob Duggar**, has announced plans to run for a recently vacated state Senate seat. **Jim Bob Duggar** was also featured prominently on the TLC show and previously served in the Arkansas House.

The primary election in that race is Dec 14. (AP)

□ □ □

DETROIT: A 38-year-old man was charged Wednesday in the stabbing death of long-time Detroit rock radio personality **John O'Leary**, authorities said.

Sean Lamoureux, who was O'Leary's housemate in **Highland Park**, was arraigned in 30th District Court and charged with open murder and larceny, the Detroit Free Press reported. He is scheduled to return to court for a probable cause hearing on Dec 7.

The body of O'Leary was found Sunday in the backyard of his home, hidden beneath shingles, sheets and a wheelbarrow.

Friends of the 67-year-old O'Leary told the newspaper that he'd been missing for nearly a week, and had stopped returning phone calls, attending scheduled meetings and posting on his Facebook page.

O'Leary was a popular Detroit rock radio personality for four decades. His last time on a station was at the classic-rock station WCSX-FM, where he worked from 2002 to 2013. (AP)

□ □ □

LOS ANGELES: A rape conviction at the center of a memoir by award-winning author **Alice Sebold** has been overturned because of what authorities determined were serious flaws with the 1982 prosecution and concerns the wrong man had been sent to jail.

Anthony Broadwater, who spent 16 years in prison, was cleared Monday by a judge of raping Sebold when she was a student at Syracuse University, an assault she wrote about in her 1999 memoir, "Lucky."

Broadwater shook with emotion, sobbing as his head fell into his hands, as the judge in Syracuse vacated his conviction at the request of prosecutors.

"I've been crying tears of joy and relief

the last couple of days," Broadwater, 61, told The Associated Press. "I'm so elated, the cold can't even keep me cold."

Onondaga County District Attorney **William Fitzpatrick** told state Supreme Court Justice **Gordon Cuffy** at the court hearing that Broadwater's prosecution was an injustice, The Post-Standard of Syracuse reported.

"I'm not going to sully this proceeding by saying, 'I'm sorry.' That doesn't cut it," Fitzpatrick said. "This should never have



O'Leary



Duggar