

*A Conversation from the Kitchen
with Kitchen Theatre Company
Artistic Director, Rachel Lampert*

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THE SEASON AND THE TIME IS NOW

For all our boldness on stage, backstage the Kitchen Theatre Company is a thoughtfully run, fiscally conservative business. We are cautious and resourceful in our use of materials, and we use our people-power to its fullest. This season we are enjoying good houses so ticket sales are reaching their projected goals. **Our Annual Fund Fall Appeal is underway** and we are glad that so many of you have responded. **To do the kind of work we produce, at the high level of quality and originality, we need your support.**

Our many friends, new and long-standing, generously helped us build this wonderful new theater. We thank you for joining us in this effort. We encourage you to join us again in our Annual Fund Fall Appeal so we can continue to bring you the bold, intimate, engaging theater that is unique to the Kitchen.



Rachel Lampert with Managing Director Stephen Nunley



Erica Steinhagen and Brad Drummer in the 2002 production of *Bed & Sofa*

COMING NEXT! OPERA IN THE KITCHEN

I love live music! I simply cannot wait for the treat we are all going to share when our production of *Bed & Sofa — a silent movie opera* begins in January. But, before I launch into a flood of anticipation and excitement about this next production, I want to make sure everyone is clear that this is not *Bed No Breakfast*, a musical we premiered a few years ago about a group of guests stranded in a snow storm at a B&B that I wrote with composer Larry Pressgrove. No, it is not that play. *Bed & Sofa — a silent movie opera* written by Polly Pen and Laurence Klavin is a wonderfully complex chamber opera based on a 1928 Russian silent movie. And, here is what I love — it is an evening of wall-to-wall live music sung by three fabulous singers, with music director Richard Montgomery accompanying the performance on piano. It is bound to resonate in everyone's sternum, and our beautiful new walls and ceiling will ring with sound.

We did a production of this play during the summer of 2002. In those days, we added one to three summer productions to the regular main stage season. The Clinton House was particularly uncomfortable then, before central air conditioning. We turned on our three window unit air conditioners at 3 o'clock before every show and the temperature was fine for 30 minutes, tolerable for the next 15, stuffy for the next 15, programs became fans in the next 15, and after that a quick ascent to stultifying and claustrophobic. So we did short pieces and played to brave, lightly clothed and lightly attending crowds. I was delighted with the production and particularly taken with Erica Steinhagen's performance. I think it was her work in that production that inspired me to write roles for her in *Precious Nonsense*, *Tony & the Soprano* and that other play with *Bed* in the title. Susannah Berryman directed that production and will also direct this one. I spoke with Erica and Susannah about the play.

RACHEL: Erica, by my count you have been in nine Kitchen Theatre Company productions, including starring in *Tony & the Soprano* and *Precious Nonsense*. But your first main stage production was *Bed & Sofa*. Is that true?

ERICA: Yes, that was the first. I remember auditioning for you and Susannah in her home, and how even that was such an amazing experience. I knew if I got it, I would have a life-changing experience and I was right.

RACHEL: And I also think that many of the characters you have played have a strange commonality — they are pregnant. What about that?

ERICA: Well, that's your fault, Rachel! Kidding. In fact, only two characters I've played out of the many have been pregnant — "Chance" in *Bed No Breakfast* and "Ludmilla" in *Bed & Sofa* — goes with "Bed" in the title.

RACHEL: Wait, didn't the character you played in *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* fake being pregnant?

ERICA: HA!!! That's right! I even faked giving birth onstage!! How could I forget?? And of course, during the first run of *Tony & the Soprano* I was ACTUALLY pregnant, which made for an interesting run. There was lots of lying on the floor in the dressing room between scenes. And for those who saw those floors in the old Clinton House space, you know I must have been desperate.

RACHEL: What makes it interesting to return to the character Ludmilla?

ERICA: Wow, it's been 8 years, so it will be such a new experience. I have been married now for over 11 years, I have a 4-year old son—so much has changed for me personally. I will be coming at it from a very different place. I love the character so deeply, and I can't wait to dig in from where I am now.

RACHEL: *Bed & Sofa* is called a chamber opera. Is there anything about the singing that will be different from, say, *Tony & the Soprano*?

ERICA: Well, Polly Pen wrote a modern opera in that the style is a little closer to musical theatre than when you think of classical opera. There is a slightly different vocal quality, although it does lean toward an operatic style more than Larry Pressgrove's music from *Tony & the Soprano*. The opera arias that you heard in that show (for example *O Mio Babbino Caro*) were very traditionally sung, however.

RACHEL: Susannah, how is this piece different from a musical? Is there anything audiences will hear that will surprise them?

SUSANNAH: First, it will be very exciting to hear the sounds of this piece in the new space. We have three terrific voices and the beautiful musicianship of Richard Montgomery, and I can't wait to begin our work together. A chamber opera is different from a musical in that it is sung through; there are no dialogue scenes. Audience members who associate opera with a grand or ponderous aesthetic may be surprised by the delicacy of parts of the music, also by the amount of quirkiness and humor in the score. Although the plot deals with matters of the heart, which of course are turbulent and disaster-ridden (did I say that?), the elf of irony definitely watches over this score. I mean, it's an opera based on a silent movie—how far from irony can one expect to get?

RACHEL: The libretto has scenes and solo arias, but there are many sections where the characters have just one or two words to sing. In fact, sometimes they each sing the same one or two words, one character after the other. And yet, with this sparseness, the story continues. How do you work with the actors in scenes where they might only be singing, “You.” “You.” “You.” Etc.?

SUSANNAH: The first time I directed it, in the scene you reference, which has many iterations of “you,” “I,” “bed,” and “sofa,” I wanted to make sure we were all on the same page with the story we were trying to tell in that moment. So I typed up a kind of sub-textual map indicating which person the character should be singing to on each iteration and what sub-textual message should be communicated. Mostly, the actors have the privilege of making their own choices around such matters, but that scene was so beautifully spare we needed a way to make sure we were all playing the same volleyball game. We’ll see this time if we follow the same map or a different one.

RACHEL: Is there anything different about directing an opera than a straight play?

SUSANNAH: Yes, there’s music in it (just kidding). I would say the main differences to me are that in opera, the music carries you down a strong river to its destination. A play is similar, but the spoken language is not always as inexorable as the musical idiom—I might call it the difference between swimming with the current (straight play) and floating on a raft on the current (opera). Another big difference is that the characters’ moment-to-moment actions (in a realistic play, at least) tend to be somewhat apparent. In opera, the whole sense of time is often different, and a character may repeat a musical and lyrical phrase many times, and with considerable temporal duration, before moving on. Many beginning actors have quailed at the prospect of having to utter a line such as, “Blood, blood, blood, blood!” or “Oh, oh... oh my...oh, oh.” An early lesson says that each of those “bloods” is there for a reason; and the character is doing something slightly—or radically—different with each one. But the amount of repetition and the time elapsing during the repetition, which may be full of rests or extended notes, can be daunting. The first opera I ever directed was *The Magic Flute* (also with Richard Montgomery as Music Director). When I opened the score and saw page after page of Pa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pa and Papageno/Papagena/Papageno/Papagena, I almost fainted. Twenty years or so later, it’s a little less scary.

LET THE LAUGHTER IN! KEEP THE COLD OUT!

If the truth be known, I tend to fall more on the side of the Grinch at this time of year. But my orneriness is placated by the return of *The Santaland Diaries* to the Kitchen Theatre Company. We are all thrilled to welcome Karl Gregory back.

The play runs through December 19. We hope you will spread the word, and if you need a good escape from the maddening shopping and didn’t choose this on your subscription, call and add it now.



Karl Gregory in *The Santaland Diaries*

FRIDAY, DEC 17TH - COME AND DANCE!

We tried this in October and it was real success. **After the show on the 17th, Casey Max and the Hound Dogs will be playing live music—a great mix of swing and rock ‘n’ roll—for your dancing pleasure.** If you are coming to the show that night, plan on staying for some dancing. And if you’re not in the audience that night but love to dance, come to the theater at 9:30 PM and join in!



BRUNCH & THEATER - A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY

This season, the Kitchen is hosting pre-show brunches in the homes of staff and board members. A Bed & Sofa-themed brunch is coming up on Sunday, January 30th. It will be held at the home of Artistic Director Rachel Lampert & David Squires and feature Russian-style food and lots of fun conversation. Brunch begins at 2pm. The group will then attend the 4pm matinee followed by dessert with the cast in the beautiful lobby of the Kitchen Theatre Company.

This fun fund raising event costs \$50 per person. It does not include the price of the ticket, but subscribers may exchange their ticket for the Sunday, January 30th performance. Seating is limited. If you are interested in joining this bold, intimate and engaging group, please contact **Lesley Greene at lesley@kitchentheatre.org** or **607 272-0403**.



KTC ALL DRESSED UP

Whether it is sitting in the lobby late-nights after the show with staff, cast and patrons who feel like hanging out, or doing the chores that have to be done daily like mopping, cleaning, arranging the furniture, we are enjoying all aspects of owning our own space. So, when the Kitchen Theatre Company received the 2010 Pride of Ownership Award from the Rotary Club and the City of Ithaca, we were gushing. We thank Rotary and the City for recognizing the beautiful beacon entranceway and we are excited to be opening those beautiful doors at every performance.

GIVE THE GIFT OF THEATRE

Kitchen Theatre gift certificates make great holiday gifts! Call us at (607) 272-0403 or stop by our Holiday Bazaar (half an hour before every performance, Wednesdays through Sundays through December 19th) to get yours.

OUR EVER-EVOLVING NEW THEATER

It’s still new so there continue to be things to figure out. There have been lots of questions about a variety of things. Here are some answers.

Hours of Operation

We continue to occupy office and rehearsal space at our studio at **108 West Martin Luther King Jr./West State Street** where we have been for several years. And, we still have the same number of office staff, so spreading their time out between our studio and the new building is challenging. The Studio/Office is usually occupied Mon/Wed/Thu/Fri from **11:00AM - 4:00PM** and on Tues from **1:00PM- 4:00PM**.

Phone Calls

Oh, the road to good working phone service is worthy of a one-act play! We think we have it figured out. Our long-time phone number **(607) 272-0403** rings in the theater and the studio. **Office Hours are 11:00AM- 4:00PM, Tuesday - Friday.** If you miss us, please leave messages. We will return your call.

Exchanging Tickets

One of the benefits of being a subscriber is that you can exchange your ticket. You can do this at no cost by calling the **Ticket Center (607) 273-4497**. This is your best option for ticket exchanges. They will give you the best available seats. The Ticket Center is open **Monday - Saturday, 9:30AM - 5:00PM**.

Parking

There is free street parking after 6pm on Martin Luther King, Jr./State Street and all side streets. After 7pm, you can park in the NAPA lot across the street, at Diane’s Automotive on the corner, or in the Wylie Dry Cleaner lot on Seneca and Corn Street. You can park at the Department of Social Services at MLK/State Street and Albany Streets after 6pm.

For Thursday matinees, you can park at meters. We will be sure you can replenish at the intermission. Or find meterless parking on the side streets — Corn or Plain Streets.

We are waiting for a final step with the city to get a handicapped parking spot in front of the theater.