

(Angels & Demons Entertainment), Miss Jessel in *Turn of the Screw* (Eugene Opera). <http://www.tessaltiveros.com/>

Basil Considine is the Artistic Director of Really Spicy Opera. A musicologist turned composer, playwright, and director, he has won numerous awards for both scholarly and artistic pursuits. In 2020, he musically directed RSO's tour to France, including the second-ever performance of Grétry's opera *Émilie, ou la belle esclave*. <http://basilconsidine.org/>

Vienna-based soprano **Anne Wieben** has been hailed by critics as 'sensual' and 'secure' (Münchner Merkur) with a 'hint of femme fatal in her velvety soprano' (Süddeutschezeitung). She is the founder and creative director of Opera on the Lake, a summer opera festival in her home state of Minnesota.

Most recently, Wieben jumped-in as Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* with Musiktheater Vorarlberg. Reviews praised her as "a radiant diva with dramatic versatility and great coloratura" (Kulturzeitschrift). In July 2019, Anne covered the role of Médée in Cherubini's opera of the same name at the prestigious Salzburger Festspiele. Summer 2019 also saw Anne once more as Rosalinde, first with with Oper Rund Um and the Wir Sind Wien festival in June, and then in July with Opera on the Lake.

Wieben performs regularly with Vienna's premier interactive theater ensemble, Nesterval and recently starred in their sold-out show "Das Dorf". This world premiere piece created in cooperation with Brut Wien has been nominated for the Austrian Theater Prize 2019 (Nestroy Prize). Last year, she starred in their sold-out, critically acclaimed "Dirty Faust" which ran 30 performances from October 2017 through January 2018. Austrian newspaper "Die Presse" ranked the piece as the second-best theater experience of 2017. <http://www.annewieben.com/>

About the Company

Really Spicy Opera (f. 2005) is an award-winning jewel-box opera company based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It specializes in creating and producing new musical and dramatic works for the stage. <http://spicyopera.com>

 REALLY SPICY OPERA

The Aria Institute: Soprano Edition Showcase

Featuring Suzanne Karpov, soprano & Steven Seigart, piano

Part 1

"Artemis", from *Virginia Hall*

Librettist: Jessica Grams
Composer: Jane Wong

In this projected opera about real-life World War 2 spy Virginia Hall, codenamed "Artemis", Hall goes from ambulance driver in the Battle of France to undercover British SOE spy to leading American OSS agent in occupied France – all while sporting a wooden leg. (The real-life Hall also became a CIA operative after the war.) The Gestapo issued a kill-or-capture order for her, stating "The woman who limps is one of the most dangerous Allied agents in France. We must find and destroy her."

In this scene, Virginia is in her early 30s, and has just received information from another woman in the French Resistance. She marvels at the ignorance of men who let important information slip to her agents, and predicts their downfall.

Jessica Grams is a Saint Paul, MN-based multimedia artist whose work is fueled by social justice. She is an alum of the Wesley Balk Opera Performer workshop and the Spoleto Vocal Arts Symposium.

Jane Wong is a Cambridge, MA-based composer and pianist from Hong Kong. She teaches for the Cantata Singers, and works as an accompanist for the Cantata Singers and Boston Ballet. She is an alum of the New Musicals Inc composition workshop and the New York Musical Festival.

**“Rey’s Aria”, from *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*
– *The Opera***

Librettist: Caroline Cao
Composer: SiHyun Uhm

In this imagined stage version of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, the Resistance is being wiped out by Supreme Leader Smoke’s fleet. Rey and Kylo Ren have just teamed up to defeat Smoke and his guards in an epic battle. Kylo Ren makes an unexpected offer to Rey, suggesting that she join him in his plans to create a new world order – by force – for the galaxy.

Caroline Cao is a poet, playwright, and screenwriter based in the Greater Houston, TX area, with roots in Vietnam. She is an alum of BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center’s Writers in Performance workshop.

SiHyun Uhm is a Rochester, NY-based composer, pianist, and multimedia producer. A native of Seoul, South Korea, her music has been performed by organizations such as the Riverside Symphony and Daegu MBC Orchestra.

“A Poet is a Painter”, from *Aphra Behn*

Librettist: Jessica Grams
Composer: Nathan Scalise

Aphra Behn was the first English woman to succeed in a professional writing career. She was also a successful Royalist spy and one of the most prolific writers of the English Restoration, with 18 published plays and contemporaries who compared her favorably to Shakespeare.

In this projected opera, as in real life, Behn’s financial success as a writer triumphed over considerable social stigmas about women in “men’s fields”. In this scene, Behn has just discovered that her latest play is being excoriated by critics on account of her being a woman, when she is stopped on the street by a “well-meaning admirer” who tries to engage her in a discussion about Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

Nathan Scalise is a composer, pianist, and trombonist based in the New Haven, CT metro area. An alum of NYC SongSLAM and Choral Chameleon’s Virtual Institute in Choral Arranging, he has written several musicals.

**“What the Hell Just Happened?” /
“Sharknado”, from *Sharknado the
Opera: COVID Spring Break***

Librettist: Marcus Yi
Composer: SiHyun Uhm

There are five films in the B-movie *Sharknado* franchise, in which tornados bring hungry sharks to shore to terrorize (and devour) attractive young men and women. In this imagined operatic adaptation, a group of college coeds with poor impulse control decide to visit the Florida beaches in the middle of the COVID outbreak. Nature has other ideas and sends shark-carrying tornados their way.

In this scene, the wind-whipped sharks have devoured numerous nameless chorus members and left the stage spattered with blood and gore. More tragically, Faye’s boyfriend has just been eaten in front of her. “What the hell just happened?” she asks.

Marcus Yi is a multitalented artist based in New York, NY. He has worked on more than 100 theatrical productions as writer, composer, director, performer, and more. He is an Indie Theater Now Playwright, and an inaugural member of the 92nd Street Y Musical Theater Development Lab Collective.

**“We Are Still Here”, from *Princess
Peach’s Ascension***

Librettist: Jessica Grams
Composer: Dina Pruzhansky

In this videogame-inspired opera sketch, Princess Peach of *Super Mario Brothers* and other fame has escaped from a series of princess-in-peril and other adventures starting Mario and Luigi. A party is thrown to celebrate Peach’s induction into a group of female leaders, which Mario attends and assumes is a celebration of his own accomplishments. After he makes a very theatrical exit, Peach and the other women – all princesses – announce their plans for actual political reform.

Dina Pruzhansky is a New York, NY-based composer and pianist with roots in the former Soviet Union and Israel. She is an Alum of the BMI Advanced Musical Theater Workshop and was the liturgical composer-in-residence of Temple Israel of Northern Westchester and Temple Shalom (Dallas).

“Carole Baskin’s Confession”, from *Tiger King: The Opera*

Librettist: Caroline Cao
Composer: Jane Wong

Everyone’s favorite COVID streaming video treat *Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem, and Madness* has made its way to the operatic stage! In the original documentary series, private zoo operator Joe Exotic accused Carole Baskin, the infamous CEO of Big Cat Rescue, of killing her husband. No one was able to prove it, so was it slander...or insidious murder? In this aria, Carole is back...and ready to tell the audience her side of the story.

Part 2

“I Can Do Better”, from *Homecoming*

Librettist: Marcus Yi
Composer: Dina Pruzhansky

In this sketched out opera, Ellie – a very successful entrepreneur – returns to her economically depressed hometown. She is reunited with Brad, her high school crush who absolutely humiliated her at the Homecoming dance many, many years ago. Brad’s really let himself go – he’s living in his mother’s basement, unemployed, and a shadow of his football glory days. The town’s not looking much better, and the Mayor and City Council beg Ellie to use some of her billions to bail out their economy.

Both Brad and the town embark on a whirlwind courtship of Ellie. In this scene, she responds to both of their proposals.

“What I Want”, from *Divas and Dragons*

Librettist: Marcus Yi
Composer: Nathan Scalise

International opera star Nobiledonna Pryma arrives for a gig and discovers that all is not as it should be. She lays into the management, detailing the (unusual) artist rider that they had agreed to and listing what will happen if everything is not quickly made right.

“Steak, Potatoes, and Greens”, from *Suburban Dream*

Librettist: Marcus Yi
Composer: Jane Wong

It is the 1950s: the economy is booming, and Donna and Robert have just moved into the brand-new suburb of Levittown, NY. Donna plays the model housewife, but has more than a crush on Robert’s wartime buddy...their next-door neighbor, George. Rather than split with her husband, who she still loves, Donna dreams of having a relationship with both men. When Robert arrives home for dinner, Donna presents him with dinner...and a surprising proposal!

“Belinda’s Resignation”, from *The Last Straw*

Librettist: Basil Considine
Composer: SiHyun Uhm

Belinda is an overworked, underpaid, and highly exploited early/mid-career soprano singer at a mid-sized American opera company. She has put up with innumerable slights over the years, including management with wandering hands and plenty of everyday misogyny. However, on the eve of her big debut as a leading lady, she discovers something even worse: the company’s star conductor has a habit of abusing children.

“Belinda’s Resignation” is the Act I finale of *The Last Straw*. Belinda has reported the abuse to the Powers That Be, only to be told that she will be fired and replaced if she continues to “make a fuss”. She decides to go ahead with the premiere – and then kills the conductor offstage with his own baton. She then proceeds to a private backstage reception with the Powers That Be to whom she reported the abuse. She leads the toast – but unbeknownst to them, Belinda has poisoned all the drinks.

As all of the abusive conductor’s enablers collapse to the ground around her, choking, Belinda surveys the scene, a lighter in hand on a very flammable stage...

Reprise: “A Poet is a Painter”

Librettist: Jessica Grams
Composer: Nathan Scalise

END

About the Aria Institute

Headed by Tess Altiveros, Basil Considine, and Anne Wieben, the Aria Institute trains composers and librettists to write thrilling contemporary opera. The next incarnation, The Aria Institute: Mezzo Edition, is currently accepting applications and will run Sept. 11–Oct. 8.

<http://spicyopera.com/seasons/aria-institute-mezzo-edition/>

About the Performers

Soprano **Suzanne Karpov** is an Alexandria, VA-based singer. Hailed by the San Francisco Chronicle for her “elegant” soprano, both “incisive and tender”, Suzanne is quickly distinguishing herself as one of the country’s leading young sopranos. Ms. Karpov recently made her Carnegie Hall debut as the soprano soloist in Poulenc’s Gloria with DCINY, and performed recently with the New York Philharmonic as part of the Handel and Haydn Society in their *Messiah*.

Oratorio highlights as a soprano soloist include performances of Handel’s *Messiah* with the Washington Bach Consort, the American Bach Soloists, Richmond Symphony Orchestra, the National Philharmonic, and the Washington National Opera Orchestra at the Kennedy Center, and soprano soloist in Haydn’s *The Creation* with the UC-Davis Symphony Orchestra.

Operatic highlights include performances with Washington National Opera, Boston Early Music Festival, Light Opera of New Jersey, and the New Hampshire Music Festival. <http://www.suzannekarpov.com/>

Dr. Steven Seigart is a conductor, organist, and collaborative pianist based in the Washington, DC area. Dr. Seigart earned his doctorate in Choral Conducting from the University of Maryland, a Master of Sacred Music degree from Boston University, and bachelor’s degree in organ at the Eastman School of Music. As an organist, he specializes in improvisation of various styles, was featured on NPR’s *Pipedreams Live!*, and was a semi-finalist in the 2012 National Competition in Organ Improvisation.

Dr. Seigart is currently the Director of Music and Organist at the historic Old Presbyterian Meeting House in Alexandria, VA, where he continues

nearly 250 years of ministry, and directs several amateur and professional choirs, and runs their popular “Concerts with a Cause” series, whose recent highlights have included period-instrument performances of Handel’s *Messiah* and Mozart’s *Requiem*. He is also active as a conductor, having recently lead choir festivals of *Pueri Cantores*, and is the founder and director of the period-instrument Orchestra of Saint Joseph. As an opera conductor, he has served as assistant or principal conductor for the Arezzo Opera Festival, Opera Saratoga, the Boston University Opera Institute, and the Maryland Opera Studio. Dr. Seigart lives in Alexandria, VA with his wife, soprano [Suzanne Karpov](http://www.suzannekarpov.com/), and their musically inclined Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Schubert. <http://stevenseigart.com>

About the Administrators

Soprano **Tess Altiveros** was praised for her “particularly soulful” (L.A. Times) interpretations and a “captivating combination of skilled singing and magnetic acting” (Pioneer Press). She is equally at home in a wide range of repertoire, performing roles from the 17th century to the 21st, and is a faculty member at Seattle University. Her recent portrayal of Female Soldier in Seattle Opera’s *The Falling and the Rising* was described as “a triumph” (Classical Voice North America) and “enthraling” (Seattle Times), while Opera Magazine described her voice in Pacific MusicWorks’s “Leading Ladies” as “...darker, creamy, sensuous, but she can fill it with so much drama that the stereotyped tropes of a Baroque lament offers a fully rounded portrait of a woman’s pain...sprezzatura personified.”

Other roles include Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Kentucky Opera), E in Seattle Opera’s *O + E*, Clorinda in Seattle Opera’s *The Combat*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan Tutte* (Skylark Opera Theatre), L’enfant in *L’Enfant et les Sortilèges* (Pacific Symphony), Dalila in Handel’s *Samson* (Pacific MusicWorks), Hannah in *The Merry Widow* (Inland Northwest Opera), Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* (Pacific Symphony), Maria in *West Side Story* (Central City Opera/Boulder Philharmonic), Bach *St. Matthew Passion* (Colorado Symphony, staged), Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (Juneau Lyric Opera), Musetta in *La Bohème* (Colorado Symphony), Carmen in *La Tragédie de Carmen* (Skylark Opera Theatre), Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*