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Dog Days

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

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Prologue: A Man in a Dog Suit

ACT I: Summer
Scene 1: Dinner
Scene 2: Friends
Scene 3: Parents
Scene 4: Brothers
Scene 5: Letter

ACT II: Fall
Scene 1: Naming
Scene 2: Alea
Scene 3: Mirror
Scene 4: Rubicon

ACT III: Winter
Scene 1: Odds
Scene 2: Endgame

Epilogue: The Three Ravens

COMPOSER’S NOTE

I have always believed that it is an artist’s duty to ask questions—in particular, questions that can be difficult to hear, and often impossible to answer. *Dog Days* pursues exactly this goal, exploring the unspoken truth of what we become upon the dissolution of civilization and the nature of choice and consequence.

Based on the darkly comedic short story of the same name by Judy Budnitz, *Dog Days* is told predominantly from the perspective of Lisa, a 13-year-old girl whose world slowly falls apart. We watch as her family slowly starves: as her mother gives up on life, her father struggles to fulfill the myth of the provider, and her brothers flee their boredom through an increasing assortment of antisocial activities. Then we meet Prince, a man in a homemade dog costume who begs for food on the family’s front porch. Appearing to truly believe he is a dog, his presence introduces unsettling questions about the nature of humanity.

They say that you can tell a lot about a culture by the way it treats its animals. It also stands to reason that you can tell a lot about a man by how long he can remain truly human during the most traumatic times. *Dog Days* explores the ultimate struggle of humanity, stuck between the dispassionate gaze of nature and the often violent artifices of society.

Dog Days is dedicated to Beth Morrison, with special thanks to Eileen Mack, Alan Pierson, Dawn Upshaw, Osvaldo Golijov, Ellie Lee, Judy Budnitz, Jeffrey Edelstein, Cece Wasserman and the Cheswaty Foundation, Michael Lonergan and the Park Avenue Armory, Mary and Gordon Gould, Gregory Crewdson, and Jed Wheeler for his vision and commitment to the creation of new opera.

“He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man.” (Samuel Johnson)

—David T. Little

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

David T. Little (Composer) writes potently dramatic music that draws upon his experience as a rock drummer and fuses classical and popular idioms, often undertaking political and

existential themes. His music has been performed throughout the world by such performers as the London Sinfonietta, Alarm Will Sound, Sō Percussion, NOW Ensemble, Brooklyn Philharmonic, PRISM Quartet, New World Symphony, American Opera Projects, New York City Opera, and Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under Marin Alsop. Upcoming projects include new works for Kronos Quartet, London Sinfonietta, and Maya Beiser. He is a member of the HERE Artist Residency Program (2012–13). He has received awards and recognition from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Meet The Composer, American Music Center, Harvey Gaul Competition, BMI, and ASCAP and has received commissions from Carnegie Hall, New World Symphony, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, and Dawn Upshaw’s Vocal Arts program at Bard Conservatory, among others. He is the founding artistic director and drummer for the amplified chamber ensemble Newspeak, which released its first CD of commissioned works in November 2010 to critical acclaim. Little holds degrees from Susquehanna University, the University of Michigan, and Princeton University. He has taught in Carnegie Hall’s Musical Connections program, served as the inaugural digital composer-in-residence for the UK-based DilettanteMusic.com, and is currently executive director of New York’s MATA Festival. He was recently appointed director of composition and coordinator of new music at Shenandoah Conservatory, beginning in fall 2012. His music is published by Project Schott New York.

Royce Vavrek (Librettist) has contributed libretti and lyrics for a variety of opera, music theater, and concert works including *Vinkensport*, or *The Finch Opera* (Bard Conservatory, New York City Opera VOX, Shenandoah Conservatory), *Last Nightfall* (21c Liederabend), *archaeology* (Opera America), and *Am I Born* (Brooklyn Philharmonic/ Brooklyn Youth Chorus) with composer David T. Little. His world premieres last season included *Song from the Uproar* with Missy Mazzoli (Beth Morrison Projects at The Kitchen), *Angel’s Bone* with Du Yun (Mann Center for the Performing Arts), *Canvas* with Matt Mehlan (Brooklyn Philharmonic/ Brooklyn Youth Chorus’s Young Men’s

Ensemble), *1882* with Mark Baechle (Swiss Society of New York), and *A Song for Wade* (*This is Not That Song*) with Matt Marks (Alarm Will Sound). Upcoming projects include collaborations with Joshua Schmidt, Andrew Gerle, Hannah Lash, Rachel Peters, Jeff Myers, and Conrad Winslow. Co-artistic director of opera/theater company The Coterie with soprano Lauren Worsham. Resident Artist: American Lyric Theater’s Composer Librettist Development Program. BFA, Concordia University’s Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema; MFA, New York University’s Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program.

Judy Budnitz (Author of the original short story “Dog Days”) has had her stories appear in *The New Yorker*, *Harper’s Magazine*, *Story*, *The Paris Review*, *The Oxford American*, *Glimmer Train*, *Fence*, and *McSweeney’s*. She is the recipient of an O. Henry Award and a Lannan Literary Fellowship, and in 2007 she was chosen as one of Granta’s “Best Young American Novelists.” Her debut collection, *Flying Leap*, was a *New York Times* Notable Book in 1998. Budnitz is also the author of *Nice Big American Baby* and *If I Told You Once*, which won the Edward Lewis Wallant Award and was short-listed for the Orange Prize in the United Kingdom. She lives in San Francisco.

Robert Woodruff (Director) has directed over 60 productions across the US at theaters including Lincoln Center Theater, The Public Theater, Brooklyn Academy of Music, American Conservatory Theater, Guthrie Theater, and Mark Taper Forum, among others. He directed the Pulitzer Prize–winning *Madame White Snake* for Opera Boston and the Beijing Music Festival and Philip Glass’s *Appomattox* for the San Francisco Opera. Internationally, his work has been seen at the Habima National Theatre in Israel, Sydney Arts Festival, Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, Hong Kong Festival of the Arts, Jerusalem Festival, Toneelgroep Amsterdam, and Spoleto Festival USA. Early work includes many premiere productions with Sam Shepard, including the Pulitzer Prize–winning *Buried Child*. In 1976 he founded the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, which continues to be a center for new writing for the stage. From 2002 to 2007, Woodruff was the artistic director of American Repertory Theatre. He was named a 2007 USA Fellow by United States Artists. He teaches at the Yale School of Drama.

Alan Pierson (Music Director) is the artistic director and conductor of the Brooklyn Philharmonic and of Alarm Will Sound. Pierson has appeared as a guest conductor with the London Sinfonietta, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the Steve Reich Ensemble, Carnegie Hall’s Ensemble ACJW, the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, the New World Symphony, and the Silk Road

Project, among other ensembles. He is also principal conductor of the Dublin-based Crash Ensemble and has been a visiting faculty conductor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, at the Eastman School of Music, and for the League of American Orchestras. He has collaborated with major composers and performers, including Yo-Yo Ma, Steve Reich, Dawn Upshaw, Osvaldo Golijov, John Adams, Augusta Read Thomas, David Lang, Michael Gordon, La Monte Young, and choreographers Christopher Wheeldon, Akram Khan, and Eliot Feld. Pierson has recorded for Nonesuch Records, Cantaloupe Music, Sony Classical, and Sweetspot DVD.

Jim Findlay (Scenic and Video Designer) works across specialties as a designer, director, performer, and creator with a constellation of theater, performance, and music groups. He was a founding member of the Collapsible Giraffe and Accinosco/Cynthia Hopkins. He is a frequent collaborator with Ralph Lemon, Bang on a Can, Ridge Theater, Stew, and Heidi Rodewald and was a designer at the Wooster Group from 1994 to 2003. His work has been seen at Carnegie Hall, BAM, Arena Stage, A.R.T., and in more than 50 cities worldwide, including Berlin, Istanbul, London, Moscow, and Paris. He recently co-wrote and directed *Botanica*. Awards include two Obies, two Bessies, a Lucille Lortel, and a Henry Hewes.

Matt Frey (Lighting Designer) designed Harry Partch’s *Oedipus* and *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* with Peak Performances. Recent work includes *Feng Yi Ting* directed by Atom Egoyan (Spoleto Festival, Lincoln Center Festival), *Lonely, I’m Not* (Second Stage), *The Winter’s Tale* (Yale Rep), *The Ugly One* (Soho Rep), *Close Up Space* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *7 Homeless Mammoths Wander New England* (Two River Theatre), *This* (Center Theatre Group, Playwrights Horizons), *Middletown* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), *Go Back to Where You Are* (Playwrights Horizons), *Woodysez* (London Westend, A.R.T.), and *Freefall* (Corn Exchange, Dublin). He has also collaborated with Brooklyn Academy of Music, Naked Angels, The New Group, Manhattan Class Company, New York Theatre Workshop, and Paper Mill Playhouse, as well as many other theaters, regional and abroad.

Victoria “Vita” Tzykun (Costume Designer) has designed sets, costumes, and projections for companies such as Norwegian Opera, Dallas Opera, the Kennedy Center, Kristiansund Opera (Norway), Juilliard Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Teatro Imeras (Athens), 3LD Art & Media Center, NY Classical Theatre, Cherry Lane Theatre, and the 92nd Street Y. Her numerous film and TV credits include art direction for Lady Gaga’s ABC

Thanksgiving Special; production design for several features and shorts, including the top-grossing feature film *Love in the Big City*; and commercials for PBS, DirectTV, Axe, Bulova, Qualcomm, the US Army, and the NY Department of Health, among others. A native of Odessa, Ukraine, and Tel-Aviv, Israel, Tzykun holds an MFA from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts and a BFA from Tel-Aviv University. She currently lives and works in New York and is a member of IATSE Local 829.

Garth MacAleavey (Sound Engineer), a classically trained percussionist and jazz drummer (UC Santa Cruz), moved to New York City in 2004 to pursue music and recording engineering. After a year of studio engineering and post-production audio for film, he began mixing live sound professionally. Currently a house engineer at Le Poisson Rouge, MacAleavey specializes in new music classical amplification and sound design for everything from Carnegie Hall–level shows (Helene Grimaud) to minimalist legends (Terry Riley, Steve Reich).

Connor Lynch (Video Engineer) is a filmmaker and projections designer out of New York City. As an assistant, he has worked with some of the greats in projections design, and as a designer in his own right he has worked with the Abingdon Theatre Company and Yale University.

Lindsey Turteltaub (Production Stage Manager) Recent Beth Morrison Projects credits include *Elsewhere*, *Brooklyn Village*, *Song from the Uproar*, *Brooklyn Babylon*, and *Soldier Songs*. Other New York credits: *Food and Fadwa* (NYTW), *The Mikado* (Carnegie Hall). Regional theater: *Autumn Sonata*, *A Delicate Balance*, *Battle of Black and Dogs*, *Pop!* (Yale Rep); *Carnage*, a *Comedy*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Love’s Labor’s Lost* (Actors’ Gang).

Christopher Rountree (Assistant Music Director) is the artistic director and founder of a new music ensemble in Los Angeles called wild Up. He has conducted a number of orchestras in the United States, Europe, and Canada including the Winnipeg Symphony, Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic, American Youth Symphony, Michigan Pops Orchestra, and the Rose City Chamber Orchestra in

PRODUCTION STAFF

Build Crew

Technical Director **Colin Van Horn**
Master Carpenter **Jesse Monahan**
Carpenters **Jared Forsythe**, **Philip Rossi**
Advance Props **Jeremy Lydic**
Scenics **Heather Ball**, **Carla Ramos**
Installation **Lois Catanzaro**, **Hector Cruz**, **Jason Fiamos**, **Liz Flynn**, **Alfredo Macias**, **Sebastian Moon**, **Philip Rossi**, **Rocco Terranova**, **Benjamin Weill**

Portland, Oregon. His critically lauded recording of Shostakovich’s Chamber Symphony with wild Up has been featured in Los Angeles on KUSC and nationally on *Performance Today with Fred Child*. Rountree also has been assistant conductor of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, artist-in-residence at the Hammer Museum and American Composers Orchestra, artistic advisor for new music at American Youth Symphony, and director of orchestras and lecturer in conducting at UC Santa Barbara.

Ashley Kelly Tata (Assistant Director) has directed *A Weimar Flute* (Morningside Opera), Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Person of Szechwan* (trans. Tony Kushner), Gertrude Stein’s *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*, and *Dirt (Part 1)* (HERE). She was assistant director on David Lang’s *love fail* (New Haven Festival of Arts and Ideas, BAM’s Next Wave). Upcoming projects include *Orchard-less*, a site-specific, company-devised riff on *The Cherry Orchard* (NOLA Fringe). She holds a BA from Marymount Manhattan College and an MFA from Columbia University. www.enthusetheater.org

Kate Lindsay (Assistant Stage Manager) has stage managed shows including *Food and Fadwa* (NYTW), *Atomic Holiday Free Fall* (Actors’ Gang), and the upcoming *Civil War Christmas* (NYTW). Directing credits include *Happy Hour* (Vox Theater), *Oyster* (Theatre/ Theater), *Beyond Therapy*, *Closer*, *The Shape of Things* (Displaced Theater Company), and *Doubt* (Dartmouth College). She holds a BA from Dartmouth College.

Michael Minahan (Assistant Scenic Designer/Props Master) is currently working with Zane Pihlstrom on the new opera *Orientale* with Le Poisson Rouge and *Eurydice* for the National Theater of Helsinki. Upcoming design work includes *Aida* for Opera Charleston. Recently he designed *Yellow Dress* (NYC Fringe), *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea* (Seeing Place), *Tartuffe* (TAM), and *Groove Factory* (NYMF). This spring he partnered with the Bushwick Starr, PS 123, and Superhero Clubhouse for the Big Green Theater Festival. He has painted for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Opera, and is currently the resident scenic artist for Westport Country Playhouse. www.minahandesign.com

Run Crew

Master Electricians **Ryan Osborn**, **David O. Smith**
Lighting Intern **Laura Chrismon**
Audio Engineer **Andrew Lulling**
Audio Technician **Marc Critelli**
Stagehand **Jared Forsythe**
Wardrobe **Kristine Biglin**, **Liz Sargent**

Opera

Opera

Opera

Dr. Susan A. Cole, President
 Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts
 Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts & Cultural Programming

Peak Performances presents:

World Premiere!

Dog Days

Composed by **David T. Little**
 Libretto by **Royce Vavrek**
 Based on the short story "Dog Days" by **Judy Budnitz**
 Directed by **Robert Woodruff**
 Music Direction by **Alan Pierson**

Scenic and Video Design by **Jim Findlay**
 Lighting Design by **Matt Frey**
 Costume Design by **Victoria "Vita" Tzykun**
 Sound Engineering by **Garth MacAleavey**
 Video Engineering by **Connor Lynch**

CAST:
 Howard (Father) **James Bobick**
 Mother **Marnie Breckenridge**
 Captain **Cherry Duke**
 Prince **John Kelly**
 Elliott **Michael Marcotte**
 Pat **Peter Tantsits**
 Lisa **Lauren Worsham**
 Soldier **Justin Jacobs**

NEWSPEAK and
 Special Guests:
 Clarinet **Eileen Mack**
 Percussion **Peter Wise**
 Percussion **Molly Yeh***
 Piano **James Johnstone**
 Guitar **Taylor Levine**
 Violin **Heidi Schaul-Yoder***
 Viola **Hannah Levinson***
 Cello **Brian Snow**
 Double Bass **Kris Saebo***
 * special guest

Production Stage Manager **Lindsey Turteltaub**
 Assistant Music Director **Christopher Rountree**
 Assistant Director **Ashley Kelly Tata**
 Assistant Stage Manager **Kate Lindsay**
 Assistant Scenic Designer/Props Master **Michael Minahan**
 Costume Assistantship **John Dunnett**
 Prince's Hair and Make-up Design **Ashley Ryan**
 Fight Coordinator **Steven White**

Dog Days was produced by **Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ)** in association with **Beth Morrison Projects**.

Dog Days was commissioned by Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ). Selections from *Dog Days* were commissioned and presented by Carnegie Hall for the Weill Music Institute. Scenes from *Dog Days* were presented as part of New York City Opera's VOX Contemporary American Opera Lab.

Dog Days makes use of the "1840 Grandfather Clock" sample by daveincamas, found at freesound.org and used under a Creative Commons Attribution license.

Special thanks to Dr. Meena Mahadevan, Dr. Amanda Birnbaum, and Denise Rodak for their expertise and assistance.

Duration: 2 hours 15 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission after Act I.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

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TRACY K. SMITH
 October 17, 2012 • 7:30pm
 Alexander Kasser Theater

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To view our complete season and for more information, visit www.peakperfs.org.
 To view the *Dog Days* libretto, visit www.peakperfs.org/DDlibretto.



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Peak Performances

12/13
 SEASON



Credit: James Matthew Daniel

World Premiere!
Dog Days
 September 29–October 7, 2012
 Alexander Kasser Theater
 Montclair State University