

MARY BIRNBAUM

ARTISTIC PRODUCER | DIRECTOR | EDUCATOR

engaging experiences | prestige productions | digital creations



ARTISTIC PRODUCER

Born and based in New York City, ancestral lands of the Lenape, **Mary Birnbaum** (she/her) invites the audience to experience performance in innovative ways.

As the founder and Artistic Director of art.party.theater.company (2009-12), Mary produced events that engaged the audience in adventurous art. Audiences grasped flashlights to collectively light the Duchess of Malfi (*Duchess in the Dark*), became celebrities in Bryant Park (*STARBOX*), and turned the key to poetry salons all over NYC (*SCHOOLED: or Moliere's The Learned Ladies*). In Paris, she produced and developed [*se balader*], a performance walk about nostalgia. She has collaborated with playwrights in the Soho Rep Writers/Directors Lab and as a Resident Director at Ars Nova. Mary co-founded and produced the artists' accelerator program called *The Greenhouse* for the Orchard Project. Each year, 12 multi-hyphenate artists were selected to create performance experiences, with her guidance and coaching.

In February 2020, Mary translated an American version of *The Barber of Seville*, set in the early 1990's in Seville, Florida. The fourth wall was as broken as Bartolo's heart when the audience got in on the act at the "dream date" booths at Berta's Tiki Bar, where they were served drinks and snacks during the show. She directed the premiere at Opera Columbus. She produced/co-wrote/directed the Feminist Pop Concert *Baby No More Times*, in 8 different venues from 2015-2019.

During the pandemic, Mary shifted her focus to digital productions. She directed the cameras and actors for the virtual Juilliard Gala and live virtual Commencement, coordinating over 400 remote students and alums, with over 20K viewers. For the gala, she directed an entirely digital version of *Knee Play 5* by Philip Glass (reorchestrated by Nico Muhly) and enacted by Juilliard students and Lorraine Toussaint. She wrote the libretto for and directed the filmed opera *Apart/Mental*, a puppet murder mystery based on an actual theft in her building, with music by Ken Steen and co-direction by Anna Pool. With Julia Dawson, she devised the création lyrique *Obscura Nox*, a film of Mozart's "Exsultate, Jubilate" with interpolated music by composer Iman Habbibi. Both films are available on Helio Arts.

A member of the inaugural *New York City Center Junior Board*, Mary ran several fundraising events and cultivated donors from 2011-14. She developed and led campaigns for art.party each season, and delights in meeting donors, patrons and prospective donors for the arts everywhere she directs. In 2022, she completed her Certificate in Fundraising from BU and was mentored by Andrea Puentes-Catan, Major Gifts Officer at San Diego Opera, as part of Opera America's Women's Opera Network Mentorship Program for Women Administrators.

Mary engages the following artists for joyful collaboration: Anshuman Bhatia, Grace Laubacher, Oana Botez, Adam Cates, Yuki Nakase-Link, Mimi Lien, Kristen Robinson, Nicole Pearce, Claudia Schreier, Jeffrey Page, Amanda Seymour, Sara Jean Tosetti, Geoff Kanick, Mikaela Mahony, Julia Dawson, Ariadne Grief & Camellia Koo.

DIRECTOR

New York Times critic Anthony Tommasini called Mary's direction "viscerally overwhelming" (*The Rape of Lucretia* at Juilliard) and "genuinely insightful...vibrant" (*The Classical Style* at Carnegie Hall). Mary directs opera and theatre in New York (*The Magic Flute* and the "assured, affecting, and playful staging" of *L'Orfeo* at Juilliard, *NYT Best Classical Music of 2021*) as well as internationally, from Taiwan (*Otello*) to Central America (*L'elisir* at the National Theatre of Costa Rica and *La Bohème* in Guatemala), Australia and Israel, and across the U.S. (Montclair Peak Performances, Opera Philadelphia, Seattle Opera, Bard Summerscape, Opera Columbus, Virginia Arts Festival, Ojai Festival, and Boston Baroque, amongst others). Mary opened the 2019 Santa Fe Opera season with a new production of *La Bohème*, to sold out houses. That same summer, her production of *Dido and Aeneas* played Opera Holland Park in London and Opera de Versailles. In 2021, she directed a site-specific *Das Rheingold* at a TOP GOLF for Virginia Opera.

In standard repertoire, Mary uncovers stories that have been overlooked or buried within a text, at times recentering the narrative to include a wider expression of human experience. All her shows include artistic sleight of hand, the collision of classical and pop culture, and rigorously fun ensemble work.

She is in demand as a director of new work for her skills as a collaborator and a dramaturge, and has created world premieres with Elise Thoron/Frank London, Kristin Kuster/Megan Levad, Jeremy Denk/Steven Stucky and Rene Orth. Most recently, Mary directed the world premiere of Christopher Cerrone and Stephanie Fleischmann's *In A Grove*, which was deemed "alluring and dramatically hypnotic" by *The Wall Street Journal*.

Mary was nominated for Best Newcomer at The European Opera Awards in 2015 and won the Opera America Director/Designer Showcase for her production of Gertrude Stein & Virgil Thompson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*.

EDUCATOR

On faculty at *The Juilliard School* since 2011, Mary helps singers listen to their dramatic impulse and connect to the moment in her current role as Dramatic Advisor to the Masters of Music and Graduate Diploma Program in the Vocal Arts Department.

She has developed curricula which include mask, ensemble and physical work, and has taught acting for singers at UCLA, Bard College, IVAI, Mannes/The New School, Santa Fe Opera, and the Lindemann Young Artists Program at the Metropolitan Opera.

A graduate of *Harvard College*, Mary trained professionally in physical theater at *L'Ecole Jacques Lecoq* in Paris. She completed the Harvard Business School CORE. Mary currently lives on the Upper West Side of New York City with her husband, Justin, her son, Jasper and dog, Greg. She is only able to continue to do any of this because of the amazing community of caregivers and family around her. For more information, www.marybirnbaum.com