



## ***BLUE ELECTRIC*, an opera about adolescence, Paris in the 1980s, and trans-generational trauma in the shadow of the Holocaust**

Live performances this October at the Playground Theatre of an opera from husband and wife team, acclaimed writer Alba Arikha and composer Tom Smail

- Based on **Alba Arikha's acclaimed memoir *Major/Minor***, *BLUE ELECTRIC* is an opera of juxtapositions: contemporary orchestral music and bursts of pop, adolescent preoccupations and concentration camps
- The book has been translated into three languages, shortlisted for the Spear's Awards, and **the subject of a German/French documentary for Arte TV**
- The story tells of an adolescent in Paris struggling to find her own identity against the backdrop of her **artistic father's Holocaust-driven demons**
- By day, Maya, a seventeen-year old Parisian girl, smokes in secret, wears blue electric eye shadow, dreams of boys and tries to fit in. By night, she wonders why her father screams in German and where his anger comes from. She fights him, and he fights her back. Slowly, as the gulf between them widens, the harrowing truth begins to emerge
- The opera, although not primarily about the Holocaust, does not shy away from provoking or reminding us of its legacy
- As in the memoir, **Samuel Beckett plays a significant role in the opera as Alba Arikha's godfather**
- The score is written by composer Tom Smail, whose latest commissions include a First World War song cycle and a choral setting of Blake's *thro' midnight streets*
- This is the couple's second opera together. The first, *Soon*, was given its première at the Riverside Studios as part of the Tête-à-Tête Festival in 2013
- A 40-minute, work-in-progress version of *BLUE ELECTRIC* was performed at the 2018 Tête-à-Tête festival, directed by Hugh Hudson (*Chariots of Fire*)
- *BLUE ELECTRIC* soloists include Mimi Doultou, Jonathan Brown, Helen Charlston, Camilla Seale, Christopher Bowen, and Emily Wenman. **Conducted by Gabriella Teychenné, the opera is directed by the acclaimed Orpha Phelan**
- **Tom Smail** is a composer of orchestral, chamber, choral and vocal music. His works have recently been performed in the Barbican, the QEH, BAM, the Royal Court and around the country with English Touring Opera. His most recent film, *Last Words*, directed by Jonathan Nossiter, was selected at Cannes in 2020
- **Alba Arikha** is the author of five books, both fiction and non-fiction. Her memoir, *Major/Minor*, which inspired this opera, was shortlisted for the Spear's Awards. Her novel, *Where to Find Me*, was selected among the best books of 2018 in the Evening Standard and longlisted for the 2020 Wingate Prize

### **For any enquiries:**

Olivia Brown  
olivia@wildkatpr.com  
+44 (0)203 422 3344

- Based in London, **Orpha Phelan** hails from Co. Kilkenny, Ireland. Her production of **A Quiet Place** was awarded the prestigious Place de l'Opera prize of Best Opera 2018 in The Netherlands. She is two years running the recipient of Denmark's most prestigious arts prize, the Reumert Award, for Best Opera Production 2016 for **Powder Her Face** at the Royal Danish Opera and Best Opera Production 2017 for **Dead Man Walking**, also for The Royal Danish Opera
- **Gabriella Teychenné** studied at the University of Cambridge, Royal College of Music and St Petersburg Conservatoire. She has worked with the Residentie Orkest, BBC Slingers, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Covent Garden Sinfonia, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre de Picardie, Staatsoper Hamburg, LUDWIG Orchestra and ensemble unitedberlin. Future engagements include l'Orchestre de Chambre de Geneve, Ensemble Contrechamps, and the Russian National Orchestra

## Biographies

Tom Smail	<a href="https://www.tomsmail.net/biography/">https://www.tomsmail.net/biography/</a>
Alba Arikha	<a href="https://www.albaarikha.com/">https://www.albaarikha.com/</a>
Orpha Phelan	<a href="https://www.orphaphelan.com/biog">https://www.orphaphelan.com/biog</a>
Gabriella Teychenné	<a href="https://gteychenne.com/">https://gteychenne.com/</a>

**Tickets** <https://lineupnow.com/event/blue-electric>

## UK dates:

Tuesday 27 October	7:30pm at Playground Theatre [sold out]
Wednesday 28 October	7:30pm at Playground Theatre [sold out]
Friday 30 October	7:30pm at Playground Theatre [sold out]
Saturday 31 October	7:30pm at Playground Theatre [sold out]

The Playground Theatre has a strict policy for Covid-19, which can be found [here](#). Do let us know if you have any questions regarding health and safety

**For any enquiries:**  
 Olivia Brown  
 olivia@wildkatpr.com  
 +44 (0)203 422 3344