

## PERELMAN THEATER

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 8 PM

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2:30 PM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 7:30 PM

KIMMEL CENTER PRESENTS THE CURTIS OPERA THEATRE  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE OPERA COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA

**Wozzeck**

Music by Alban Berg

Text adapted by the composer from Georg Büchner's play *Woyzeck*

Corrado Rovaris, conductor

The Curtis Opera Theatre

The Curtis Symphony Orchestra

Emma Griffin, stage director

David Zinn, scenic design

Jessica Trejos, costume design

Mark Barton, lighting design

*There is no intermission during the performance.*

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## CAST AND SYNOPSIS

<i>Wozzeck, a soldier</i>	Shuler Hensley, guest artist (Opera '93)
<i>Tambourmajor, the drum major</i>	Jason Collins, guest artist (Opera '03)
<i>Andres, a soldier</i>	Jason Coffey
<i>Hauptmann, the captain</i>	Joshua Stewart
<i>Doktor</i>	Evan Boyer
<i>Handwerksbursch 1, an apprentice</i>	Joseph Barron
<i>Handwerksbursch 2, an apprentice</i>	Adrian Kramer
<i>Der Narr, the fool</i>	Diego Silva
<i>Marie, Wozzeck's mistress</i>	Charlotte Dobbs
<i>Margret, Marie's neighbor</i>	Tammy Coil
<i>Marie's son</i>	Peter Momjian, guest artist
<i>Soldaten</i>	Allen Boxer, Branden Cedel, Evan Hughes, Elliot Madore, Kevin Ray, Thomas Shivone
<i>Women</i>	Karen Jesse, Kirsten MacKinnon, Amanda Majeski, Marquita Raley, Elizabeth Reiter, Shir Rozzen, Allison Sanders, Sarah Shafer, Ashley Thouret

## SYNOPSIS

## Act I.

*The Captain's room.* The soldier Wozzeck shaves his Captain. The officer says Wozzeck lacks morality, citing his bastard child. Wozzeck answers that virtue is a luxury and not for "us poor folk."

*An open field.* Wozzeck and a fellow-soldier, Andres, are cutting firewood for the Captain. Wozzeck is frightened by his own visions.

*Marie's room.* Marie and a neighbor, Margret, watch a military band pass, and Marie first takes notice of the Drum Major. She sings a lullaby to her child. Wozzeck arrives and describes his visions. Marie wants to comfort him, but he rushes off.

*The Doctor's study.* To earn a little extra money, Wozzeck allows himself to be experimented upon by the Doctor.

*Street before Marie's door.* Marie resists the Drum Major's advances but then succumbs.

## Act II.

*Marie's room.* Wozzeck sees the earrings given to Marie by the Drum Major. She says she found them. Wozzeck gives her his wages and leaves. She berates herself for the deceit.

The Captain and the Doctor talk morbidly of sickness and death. As Wozzeck passes by, they goad him with allusions to Marie's infidelity.

*Street before Marie's door.* Wozzeck confronts Marie with his suspicions and tries to force her to confess.

*A beer garden.* Two drunk apprentices amuse the crowd. Wozzeck enters and sees Marie and the Drum Major dancing together. A fool says he smells blood; Wozzeck sees everything covered in a red mist.

*The barracks.* The Drum Major comes in among the soldiers and flaunts his seduction of Marie. He then beats Wozzeck.

## Act III.

*Marie's room.* Marie, alone, reads from the Bible the story of Mary Magdalene.

*A path near a pond.* Marie and Wozzeck are walking together. Marie wants to hurry back to town, but Wozzeck makes her sit with him. Wozzeck's reminiscences about their life together make her nervous. She attempts to escape, but he draws a knife and murders her.

A tavern. Margret and the apprentices spot blood on Wozzeck's hands and clothing. He cannot explain it and rushes out.

*A path near a pond.* Wozzeck searches for the knife so he can more safely hide it. He wades into the water to wash himself. The Doctor and Captain, passing by, hear him drown.

*A street before Marie's door.* While playing, neighbor children tell Marie's child that his mother is dead, but he does not understand.

*Reprinted courtesy the Metropolitan Opera.*

## ALBAN BERG'S TABLE OF DRAMATIC AND MUSICAL STRUCTURE

Act I—Stage: *Wozzeck in relationship to his surroundings*; Music: *Five character-pieces*

Wozzeck and the Captain	Suite
Wozzeck and Andres	Rhapsody
Marie and Wozzeck	Military march and lullaby
Wozzeck and the Doctor	Passacaglia
Marie and the Drum Major	Andante affettusoso (quasi Rondo)

Act II—Stage: *Dramatic development*; Music: *Symphony in five movements*

Marie and the Child, later Wozzeck	Sonata movement
Captain and Doctor, later Wozzeck	Fantasy and fugue
Marie and Wozzeck	Largo
Beer-garden	Scherzo
Sleeping in the quarters in the Barracks	Rondo con introduzione

Act III—Stage: *Catastrophe and epilogue*; Music: *Six inventions*

Marie with the Child	Invention on a theme
Marie and Wozzeck	Invention on one note
Inn	Invention on a rhythm
Wozzeck's death	Invention on a chord of six notes
Orchestral interlude:	Invention on a key
Children at play	Invention on quaver figure

Source: *Kobbé's Opera Book*

## A CHAT WITH THE DIRECTOR BY LAURA C. KELLEY

Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, about the personal struggles of a soldier, feels particularly contemporary with obvious resonances to post-traumatic stress disorder among today's soldiers. That relevance is part of the opera's appeal to stage director Emma Griffin, who was inspired by the universal nature of the story. "Like all great art," she said, "this opera is as relevant now as the day it was written and will continue to tell us something important about the human condition."

However, relevance is not a production concept, and Ms. Griffin wasn't interested in a literal take on the 1925 opera. Instead she wanted to maintain the militaristic environment—marked by the loss of individuality against the attention to rank—and focus on the main character's hallucinogenic visions, a fundamental tool to describe a cruel world.

So how did she approach staging a challenging and complex opera that she considers the equivalent of *King Lear* in its powerful theatrical stature? By thinking of the opera as a landscape, built through staging a series of small moments and events that, in the end, create a large, complex picture.

The elements of *Wozzeck's* landscapes come from the apocalyptic visions of the title character: fire in the sky, a ring of toadstools, noises underground. They may be invisible to everyone else in the opera, but Ms. Griffin chose to believe them. "By framing *Wozzeck's* trauma and fear through his hallucination prophecies," she said, "the opera examines our collective capacity for cruelty through blindness to individual suffering."

She quotes Jean Genet: "The world is dying of panicky fright." *Wozzeck* is the only one to recognize that fact. "This awful burden, coupled with the impact of his poverty," Ms. Griffin said, "fragments him from Marie—the only force in his life who can offer him stability."

*Wozzeck's* personal destruction is also the profoundly universal tragedy of a working man, anonymous in his world. "This is the story of someone very poor with no choices, unable to see that actions have consequences," Ms. Griffin said. "This is the downfall of both Marie and *Wozzeck*."

"The play on which the opera is based, Büchner's *Woyzeck*, is remarkable in part because it was really the first piece of western drama to say, 'The tragedy of a common man is just as

important as the tragedy of a king.' This is a story that we need to be reminded of again and again," she said, "and this is why the psychological landscape of Berg's opera is so moving."

While the Curtis cast was becoming deeply grounded in the music through its own rehearsals, Ms. Griffin discussed the music with conductor Corrado Rovaris and studied the score with Curtis opera and voice coach David Moody. "The music is tremendously powerful," Ms. Griffin said.

They examined the musical connections to her theatrical impulses, such as the conversational vocal patterns of Berg's rhythmic *Sprechstimme* and the structural connections that Berg created between story and music (see the above chart). Her stage direction should, she said, make the audience hear the music more clearly by creating a series of images, like the sequence of storytelling images of stained-glass windows.

"The music is complex and difficult, absolutely," she said, "but always when I'm in the room, rehearsing, it becomes so clear, so alive and moving. The experience of live music is always so much more tactile, rich, and present than it ever is on a recording. And I think it's an amazing gift that people get to experience this opera live."

Ms. Griffin is thrilled to have two Curtis alumni join the cast in lead roles, for the first time in recent memory. Shuler Hensley brings both acting and life experience to a demanding role that, Ms. Griffin notes, is not unlike his Tony-winning character of Jud in *Oklahoma!*—tortured and unhappy, yet capable of arousing incredible compassion. Jason Collins played the Drum Major with the Opera Festival of New Jersey in 2003, not long after graduating from Curtis. His "showy flair" caught the eye of the *New York Times*.

*Wozzeck* received its American premiere on March 19, 1931, at Philadelphia's Metropolitan Opera House. More than two dozen Curtis students participated with the Philadelphia Grand Opera Company and members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, under the direction of Leopold Stokowski. Twenty-five members of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra formed the stage band. The production was reprised in November 1931, first in Philadelphia, then at New York City's Metropolitan Opera House.