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Kindred Spirits and Chelsea Opera present
Bending Towards the Light...a Jazz Nativity

Jazz and opera join hands in *Bending Towards the Light*, the telling of the Nativity story in a thoroughly fresh way. Composed and arranged by Anne Phillips, it is an exciting and moving holiday experience for the entire family. Hosting this year's Jazz Nativity, which is a co-production of Chelsea Opera and the jazz producing company Kindred Spirits, will be Terrance McKnight of WQXR and Sheila Anderson of WBGO. Singing the title song at the opening of the show will be Deborah Voigt, star of the Metropolitan Opera. Performances are on Sunday, December 20 at 5:00 pm and 8:00 pm at Christ and St. Stephen's Church (120 West 69th Street, between Broadway and Columbus). Tickets: Preferred seats: \$40 in advance/\$50 at the door, General admission: \$35 in advance/\$45 at the door, Seniors general admission: \$25 in advance/\$30 at the door, students/children (any section): \$25 in advance/\$30 at the door. Visit <http://www.chelseaopera.org/events.html> for more information or call 212-260-1796.

Though *Bending Towards the Light...a Jazz Nativity* is performed annually in cities around the country it has not been seen in NYC for three years. The show was originally hosted by the late Charles Kuralt. With additional music and lyrics by Dave and Iola Brubeck, Bob Kindred, Henry Timm, the production is under the direction of Beth Ann Kennedy. In years past, many of the jazz world's greatest have appeared in the show including Dave Brubeck, Tito Puente, Lionel Hampton, Clark Terry, Al Grey, Jon Faddis, Phil Woods, Jon Hendricks, Paquito D'Rivera, Houston Person, Stanley Turrentine, the tap-dancing Kings, Honey Coles, Harold Nicholas and Jimmy Slyde and, appearing in it again for his 25th year, 93 year old Latin conga great, Candido.

Of past renditions, the critics have said:

“By the end of “The Jazz Nativity” you know you’ve been through something wonderful...a stirring celebration of Christmas!” - Dr. Billy Taylor, CBS Sunday Morning

“Brilliant, infectious music roars from an all-star band...a spell-binding production!” - New York Amsterdam News

“The memory of this extraordinary performance will keep Christmas in your heart forever!” - Alison Steele, City Guide New York

Anne Phillips’ career has covered almost every area of the music business. In addition to recording several solo albums, from the classic *Born To Be Blue*, to her most recent release, *Ballet Time* on which she sings with such old friends as Dave Brubeck and Marian McPartland, she has worked as a singer, choral arranger and conductor with many of the music world's leading artists and is widely known in the industry as the writer/arranger/producer of many national commercials. Through her not-for-profit organization, **Kindred Spirits**, her **Children’s Jazz Choirs** have been instrumental in introducing inner-city children to the Great American Songbook.

In the classical arena, Ms. Phillips’ ten-minute opera *Tempo Fuori del Tempo* was presented at Weill Recital Hall as a part of an evening of Opera Shorts, another short opera “Plots” was performed last December at Opera America in a concert by the opera company Aviva Players and her Easter Cantata *Sing, For The Lord Has Risen* was presented in concert by the Remarkable Theater Brigade at Jan Hus Church. Her song cycle *An Alaskan Trilogy*, a setting of three poems by Alaskan poet, Phoebe Newman, was performed at the CUNY Graduate Center in collaboration with the National Association of Teachers of Singing. More of her songs were recorded by soprano Monica Harte on the classical label MSR Records. Several of her compositions were featured by Chelsea Opera on a song concert, *Musical Portraits*, in 2014. This year she received a grant from the New York Women Composers and produced a concert with Aviva Players, entitled That ‘Certain Age,’ short Operas about aging with grace and humor.

Chelsea Opera is a professional company presenting fully staged operas with chamber orchestra. The company provides a nationally recognized venue for professional singers to advance their careers while making opera affordable and accessible to a broad spectrum of the community. The fine acoustics of the space provide excellent hearing, and its intimacy allows the audience to feel involved in the opera’s story. Of Chelsea Opera’s sustainability, Anthony Tommasini of The New York Times noted in June 2009: “With American opera companies large and small struggling financially and a few going under, [Chelsea Opera is] a patch of encouraging news...” Following its 60th anniversary production of Aaron Copland’s *The Tender Land* last year, writer Jon Sobel declared that Chelsea Opera “certainly

ranks as one of the country's preeminent 'small' opera companies.”

Formed in 2004 by singers, Lynne Hayden-Findlay and Leonarda Priore, Chelsea Opera was launched with an all-volunteer production of *Suor Angelica*. Initially, Ms. Priore and Ms. Hayden-Findlay had only intended to produce this one opera. However, artist and audience response was so compelling that they agreed to move forward, incorporating the company and obtaining their IRS non-profit designation in a record eight days. They have since produced an extensive range of standard repertory and contemporary operas, garnering critical acclaim at each outing. Despite its size, Chelsea Opera is the recipient of two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts – Artworks program, most recently for its recent production of Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied*.

Chelsea Opera has received funding from The Barbara Bell Cumming Foundation, The Tow Foundation, The Amphion Foundation, the H.O. Peet Foundation, the NYU Community Fund, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). In-kind support has been provided by JetBlue Airways, the official airline of Chelsea Opera.

For further information, visit www.ChelseaOpera.org or write to ChelseaOpera@aol.com.

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