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JUNE 13 - AUGUST 16, 1997



The Banff Centre
for the Arts

THE BANFF CENTRE FOR THE ARTS AND HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ASSOCIATION
PRESENT THE BANFF ARTS FESTIVAL PRODUCTION OF

Jackie O

An Opera in Two Acts
(in which the events are based on history,
but are largely imaginary or metaphorical)

Music by
Michael Daugherty

Libretto by
Wayne Koestenbaum

The Creative Team

Bruno Ferrandis	Music Director
Nicholas Muni	Director
Graham Cozzubbo	Associate Stage Director
Peter Werner	Set/Costume Designer
Harry Frehner	Lighting Designer
Bruce Brown	Choreographer
Rick Rinder	Stage Manager
Richard Armstrong	Extended Voice/Vocal Interpretation
Kelly Arnsby	Head of Movement
Marie-France Lefebvre	Music Coach
Mary Morrison	Singing Teacher
Marguerite Witvoet	Music Coach
Tania Miller	Assistant Music Director
*Joven Chiao-Wen Lin	Assistant Lighting Designer <i>Ian S. Lee Memorial Scholarship</i>
*Shauna Adams	Assistant Stage Manager
*Erin Mackie	Assistant Stage Manager

*Work study in Theatre Production, Design and Stage Management Programs

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Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

Photofest

Eric Harvie Theatre
August 7, 9, 14, 16

The Cast

(in order of appearance)

The Crowd	
Lindsay Bramley, Sung Taek Chung, Bremner Duthie, Catherine Gagnon, Brenda Gluska, Patti Harelkin, Timothy Isherwood, Marion Newman, Robert Martin Reid, Jason Roberts, Stacie Robinson, Michael Ryan, Caterina Santa Lucia, Russell Smith, Ostap Soroka, Jennie Such, and Erika Tanner.	
Iren Bartok	Liz Taylor
<i>Hicks Memorial Scholarship</i>	
Karen Ydenberg	Grace Kelly
<i>Higgin Memorial/Calgary Theatre Singers Scholarship</i>	
Rayanne Dupuis	Jackie
<i>Nickle Family Foundation Scholarship</i>	
Doug MacNaughton	Andy Warhol
<i>Annie Romanchuk Scholarship</i>	
Craig Ramsey	Dancing Jackie
Thomas Goerz	Aristotle Onassis
Valerie Komar	Maria Callas
Bruce Brown	Paparazzo
Marcel van Neer	JFK's Voice

The Synopsis

ACT I

The Happening

The year is 1968, five years after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The place: Andy Warhol's Factory in New York City. The event: a Happening. Café society *in extremis*. Hollywood celebrities Liz Taylor and Grace Kelly complain about the perils of fame. The partygoers wonder at all the stars who are *not* present at the event: where's Ringo? where's Mia? where's Jackie? The phone rings: Jackie Kennedy's back! She's on her way to the party. Her time of mourning JFK's death is over: she wants to re-enter society. She arrives at the Happening and must face her public: their attention thrills but also fatigues and frightens her. She meets Pop artist Andy Warhol: she consents to pose, and he paints her portrait. The portrait turns into a Dancing Jackie ballerina, whom the real Jackie commands to dance. Then Aristotle Onassis, one of the world's richest playboys, arrives at the party with opera diva Maria Callas. The two squabble, and Ari jilts her. He introduces himself to Jackie, and in an attempt to win her favour invites her to flee the Happening and go to see a new art-house movie, *I Am Curious (Yellow)*. Still immured in melancholy reflection, she is unsure: but when the phone rings, bringing the news of another assassination (Bobby Kennedy's? Martin Luther King's) she accepts Ari's offer of security and, on his arm, leaves the party for the island of Skorpios to marry him.

ACT II

The Island

One year later, Ari and Jackie are on the yacht *Christina*, moored at the island of Skorpios. Jackie is reading a book; Ari is carousing with his playboy pals, with whom he sings a drinking song. He offers Jackie a drink: she refuses. The marriage is clearly on the rocks. Jackie is increasingly given to fits of remembrance, of trance: she remembers Jack (JFK), her past life, the lost promise. The phone rings; it is Maria, who tells Ari of her career troubles. They agree to a tryst at the Lido, a swank hangout. After Ari hangs up, the phone on the yacht rings again: Ari hears the tragic news that his son has been killed in an accident.

Dreaming of the new frontier, Jackie sleepwalks onto the island; Maria follows her, and the two sing – apart, but more and more together – of their parallel traumas, their eternal flames. At the end of their duet, they embrace, reconciled at last. The Paparazzo, who has been following Jackie throughout the opera, bursts onto the island, and tries to take their pictures. Maria is happy to be photographed, but Jackie orders her to smash the camera. Maria relents and carries out the command, freeing Jackie from the spell. Maria wishes her well, and leaves the island. Jackie, alone, makes her long-awaited phone call to the other side, to JFK, who asks to be forgiven for the suffering he has caused. Together they dream of what might have been. Strengthened and transfigured by her encounter with the voice of her beloved, she decides to return to America, to her children, to the fragments of the new frontier.

Maria Callas / Aristotle Onassis / Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis

While *Jackie O* the opera is largely imaginary and/or metaphorical, the key events are based on history. Much of the action revolves around the 'Jackie/Ari/Maria' love triangle. Maria Callas had a long history with Aristotle Onassis before and after his marriage to Jacqueline Kennedy. Until she learned that Aristotle and Jacqueline were married, Maria had reason to expect eventual marriage to Onassis. After Jacqueline and Aristotle's estrangement (rumour had it he was planning to divorce Jacqueline when he became terminally ill) he and Maria spent time together in Paris.

HISTORICAL TIME LINE

- January 15, 1906** – Aristotle Onassis is born
- December 2, 1923** – Maria Callas is born
- July 28, 1929** – Jacqueline Lee Bouvier is born
- April 12, 1950** – Maria Callas' debut at La Scala
- September 12, 1953** – Jack and Jacqueline Kennedy are married
- October 29, 1956** – Maria Callas' New York debut
- September 5, 1957** – Maria Callas attends a party on Aristotle Onassis' yacht the *Christina*
- July 22, 1959** – Maria Callas and her husband Giovanni Battista Meneghini join Aristotle Onassis and his wife Tina for a cruise of the Mediterranean.
- August 8, 1959** – On board the *Christina*, Maria Callas announces to her husband that their marriage is over
- September 8, 1959** – Maria confirms to the press that the break-up of her marriage is 'complete and final'
- September 22, 1959** – Tina Onassis files for divorce
- November 14, 1959** – Maria Callas' divorce from Meneghini is settled.
- May, 1962** – Maria Callas sings at Madison Square Garden in honour of President Kennedy's 44th birthday
- November 22, 1963** – President John Fitzgerald Kennedy is assassinated
- October 1964** – Jacqueline Kennedy holds a supper at New York's 'Sign of the Dove' to mark her re-entry into society after her period of mourning.
- 1965** – Jacqueline Kennedy meets Maria Callas backstage after one of Maria's New York Metropolitan *Tosca*s
- July 5, 1965** – Maria Callas' last operatic performance
- June 6, 1968** – Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated
- October 20, 1968** – Jacqueline Kennedy marries Aristotle Onassis
- October, 1968** – Maria Callas learns, after the fact, of Aristotle and Jacqueline Onassis' wedding
- January 22, 1973** – Aristotle Onassis' son Alexander is killed in an airplane crash
- March 15, 1975** – Aristotle Onassis dies
- September 16, 1977** – Maria Callas dies
- May 19, 1994** – Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis dies

Musical Numbers

ACT I

Jackie's Song	Overture
1968	Liz, Grace and the Crowd
Jackie's Coming	Liz, Grace and the Crowd
Egyptian Time	Jackie
Goldfinger	Andy and Jackie
Painter's Credo	Andy and the Crowd
Jackie's Credo	Jackie and Andy
Ballerina	Jackie, Liz, Grace, Andy, Dancing Jackie and the Crowd
Addio del passato	Ari and Maria
I am Curious (Yellow)	Ari and the Crowd
Don't Look Back	Ari, Jackie and the Crowd
1968 (reprise)	Liz, Grace and the Crowd

ACT II

SCENE ONE

I Resemble A God	Ari
Stiff Drink	Ari and the Playboys
All His Bright Light	Jackie and the Playboys
I Will See You at the Lido	Ari, Maria and Jackie

SCENE TWO

Flame Duet	Jackie and Maria
Smash His Camera!	Jackie, Maria and Paparazzo
Jack's Song	JFK and Jackie
The New Frontier Is Here	Jackie and the Crowd

ORCHESTRA

Bruno Ferrandis	Conductor
Tania Miller	Assistant Conductor
Mary Osoko	Violin I
Sara Serban	Violin II
Elizabeth Catherine Reid	Viola
Nathaniel Chaitkin	Violincello
Peter Pavlovsky	Contrabass
Megan Winsor-Lovely	Flute/Piccolo
Simon Aldrich	Clarinet/Eb/Bass Clarinet
Sara Stack	Oboe/English Horn
Marc Feldman	Bassoon/Contrabassoon
Peter Lutek	Tenor/Soprano/Alto Saxophone
Colleen Young	Horn
Merrie Klazek	Trumpet
Bob Nicholson	Trombone/Euphonium
Aaron Lovely	Tuba
Richard L. Moore	Percussion
Samuel Morganstein	Percussion
Alicia Romeo	Harp
John Goulart	Guitar
Marie-France Lefebvre	Piano/Synthesizer

A Note by Michael Daugherty

Jackie O is a celebration of musical life in the late sixties, a pop opera that explores the interplay of musical idioms associated with 'high' and 'popular' culture in America. To compose these various idioms into my own musical language, I draw on my background as a musician who came of age during the sixties, playing in rock and jazz ensembles, performing in avant-garde improvisation groups, and paying my dues as a cocktail pianist in nightclubs, while also being trained as a composer of concert music in the symphonic tradition.

Over the past decade, I have composed music inspired by American popular icons, I am fascinated by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who draws us closer yet always eludes us. To capture the mystery, the tragedy, and the glamour of Jackie, the opera plays out the contradictions of a private Jackie in the public sphere and a public Jackie in the private sphere. Just as Jackie moves between different worlds, the music I composed for *Jackie O* mediates between the worlds of opera and American musical theatre. In the continual juxtaposition and intersection of different styles, rhythms, and melodies, I create a musical counterpoint that reflects the many facets – the many faces – of Jackie.

The overture, entitled 'Jackie's Song', introduces Jackie as a

melancholy figure. An elegiac theme is performed on solo cello, but interrupted by a riveting snare drum rim-shot. This leitmotiv, comprised of a tritone and a perfect fifth interval, is the compositional core for many of the melodies and harmonies heard throughout the opera. As the iconic image of Jackie is given voice, her theme is repeated and transformed with increasingly, elaborate orchestration. By the end of the opera, the song of Jackie has resonated in many registers, like a ricocheting bullet.

While the opera is composed in an arch form, beginning and ending with 'Jackie's Song', interruption also forms an important part of the compositional structure. The telephone, interrupting the action at critical moments, is represented by the repetition of staccato cluster chords in the brass. I also use sudden shifts in timbre, abrupt tempo changes, and contrasts in consonance and dissonance to create a complex, multi-layered music that amplifies the multiple meanings in Wayne Koestenbaum's libretto. At times the percussion also serves to disrupt the flow of song, with a ratchet for the ringing telephone, the sound of a siren, or the clicking camera and clicking heels of the tap-dancing paparazzo. All the musical numbers are rigorously structured, with a central motif or 'hook' that I transform through polyrhythmic counterpoint and unusual orchestrations.



Photo by Don Lee

Creative Team, Cast and Orchestra Seated on floor (left to right): Lindsay Bramley, Brenda Gluska, Karen Ydenberg, Valerie Komar, Jennie Such, Shauna Adams, Michael Ryan. Seated (left to right): Marguerite Witvoet, Joven Chiao-Wen Lin, Erin Mackie, Tania Miller, Bruno Ferrandis, Ostap Soroka, Timothy Isherwood, Erika Tanner, Mary Morrison, Stacie Robinson, Marie-France Lefebvre, Craig Ramsey, Merrie Klazek, Thomas Goerz, Elizabeth Catherine Reid, Bremner Duthie, Rick Rinder. Standing first row (left to right): Bruce Brown, Harry Frehner, Peter Werner, Nicholas Muni, Caterina Santa Lucia, Richard Armstrong, Patti Harelkin, Catherine Gagnon, Jason Roberts, Kelly Arnsby, Robert Martin Reid, Marcel van Neer, Rayanne Dupuis, Graham Cozzubbo, Mary Osoko, Colleen Young, Megan Winsor-Lovely, Alicia Romeo, Sara Serban, Marc Feldman, Sara Stack, Samuel Morganstein, Richard L. Moore, Aaron Lovely, Peter Lutek, John Goulart. Standing back row (left to right): Iren Bartok, Doug MacNaughton, Nathaniel Chaitkin, Sung Taek Chung, Marion Newman, Peter Pavlovsky, Bob Nicholson, Simon Aldrich. Missing: Russell Smith.

Most important is the human voice, and each character in the opera has a unique sound world. Jackie's arias, such as 'Egyptian Time', 'Jackie's Credo', and 'All His Bright Light', are exotic, mournful and highly expressive. By contrast, the songs performed by Ari have a Vegas sound: 'I am Curious (Yellow)' and 'Stiff Drink' are reminiscent of Dean Martin or Sammy Davis Jr., members of the Sixties 'Rat Pack'.

Maria gets the operatic treatment in arias such as 'Addio del passato' and 'The Flame Duet'. Since Maria was losing her voice in the sixties, she sings melodramatically in the low range, and even speaks on occasion. Liz Taylor sings bluesy, cat-on-a-hot-tin-roof riffs, while Princess Grace croons à la Doris Day. Andy Warhol's aria, like his art, is a series of inflected repetitions.

The chorus plays an important role throughout the opera. They comment on the action like a Greek chorus or the cast of a sixties television variety show such as *Laugh In*. In '1968' and 'Jackie's Coming!' the chorus performs whirlwind, snappy musical numbers punctuated by pulsating brassy rock rhythms. 'Don't Look Back' features contrapuntal layering of voices, and in '1968' (reprise) the chorus sings one last time in a minor key, as if drugged.

In Act Two, the chorus turns into a gaggle of playboys, singing an updated version of the traditional operatic drinking song: 'Stiff Drink' is a catalogue of cocktails from A to Z. They perform to a grooving bass line, crotale, funky guitar, Hammond organ, and flutter-tongued brass. In 'All His Bright Light', the playboys provide a contrast to Jackie's lyrical meditations, as

they chant like robots: 'The essence of tragedy is repetition'.

The operatic plot further evolves through a series of dramatic duets, such as the exchange of credos between Jackie and Andy Warhol in the first act. Here the soprano and high baritone sing melodies that are mirror images of each other, introduced separately and then combined. In the second act, 'The Flame Duet' features Jackie and Maria in a vocal tour de force for two sopranos, framed by the dissonant cluster chords previously associated with the ominously ringing telephone.

Finally, in 'Jack's Song', Jackie sings a duet with the ghostly voice of JFK. This is the dramatic climax of the opera; Jack asks for forgiveness, as fragments of 'Jackie's Song' are repeated in an ostinato bass line.

The opera concludes with a folk guitar strumming chords that are familiar yet foreboding, while Jackie and the chorus sing 'The New Frontier is Here'. But is it really here? A downward glissando breaks the spell, and the solo cello returns one last time, plaintively and prophetically, in anticipation of another rim-shot which may, or may not, happen.

Jackie is a complex figure, continually reflecting on her conversion into an American icon. So also Jackie O reflects on the medium of opera itself, as a living form rediscovered and revived within an American context.

I composed the music for *Jackie O* from September 1995 to February 1997 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The work is scored for piccolo/flute, oboe/English horn, clarinet/bass clarinet, tenor/alto/soprano saxophone, bassoon/contrabassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone/euphonium, tuba, harp, acoustic guitar,

synthesizer/piano, percussion and strings.

I would like to thank members of the Opera Studios at the Houston Grand Opera and the University of Michigan School of Music, and also sopranos Lisa Bielawa, Elizabeth Eshleman, Dora Ohrenstein, and Joan Morris. I also thank Yopie Prins, and composers William Bolcom and John Harbison for their encouragement, and am grateful for support from the Guggenheim Foundation and the University of Michigan for the completion of this project.

A Note by Wayne Koestenbaum

When friends ask: 'What's the plot of your opera?' I usually answer in two words: 'Jackie Sings'. Isn't that enough? If asked to elaborate, I say: 'Jackie sings in Texas'. If invited to continue, I say: 'Jackie thinks about democracy'. If implored to clarify, I add: 'Jackie marries Ari, meets Maria, conquers the paparazzo, forgives Jack, embraces her fate – which is to be an icon'. If asked once more to explain, I say: 'Jackie gives up her widowed sanctity, goes to a party, marries Ari, sleepwalks onto an imaginary island, and faces the fact that she incarnates the shards of JFK's shattered "new frontier" idealism'.

The opera's genesis: Houston Grand Opera commissioned Michael Daugherty to write an opera. Michael asked me to write the libretto. I proposed Jackie, for I was writing the book *Jackie Under My Skin: Interpreting an Icon* and I felt that her story merited operatic treatment.

For the libretto – a collage – I sewed bits of Jackie lore together into symbolist crypto-cartoonish (think Roy Lichtenstein) 'woman's picture', melodramatic yet oblique, in the style of Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theater. I aimed to compose a quilt of allusion and metaphor that would, without actually retelling the story of Jackie's life, remain faithful to its mysteriously resonant ephemera. For example: in the first act, Jackie meets Ari, who invites her to escape the happening and see a new art-house movie, *I am Curious (Yellow)*. In real life, Jackie and Ari saw this film and outside the theatre (Jackie left ten minutes before the movie was over, without Ari), she allegedly judo-flipped a paparazzo, Mel Finkelstein. Or so Life magazine insinuated, alongside an alluring photo of Mrs. Onassis wearing a leather mini-skirt and walking away from prone Mel.

The stylistic model I kept in mind, while writing, was Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, a bold earnest, and ethereal epitome of the anti-naturalistic performance text.

Our opera, not a summary of Jackie's life, captures two opposed moods: festivity and grief. Jackie's music has gravity and seriousness, but she finds herself incongruously placed against 'pop' (up-tempo) backgrounds. Michael's smart, catchy rhythms and melodies provide ironic annotation to a story that we think we already know.

Before I wrote the libretto, Michael composed 'Jackie's Song', which set the tone for my conceptions: in this overture, a keening cello line (an emblem of Jackie's melancholy reverie) gets interrupted by a bullet-simulating snare drum.

Act One's 'Happening' is modelled on Jackie's re-entry into society after her years of mourning: in real life, she held a supper at New York's 'Sign of the Dove'. Andy Warhol was among the guests: he brought Edie Sedgwick. Imagine Jackie

hobnobbing with downtown artists: although she was an uptown aristocratic, she was also fond of decadent culture (Oscar Wilde, Baudelaire).

One guest at our fictional Happening is Liz Taylor, who, during the Kennedy administration, was America's other queen, the adulterous, voluptuous antithesis to the First Lady: (In *Cleopatra*, Liz played the Queen of the Nile as Jackie gone wild, a house-proud divinity.) Another guest is Andy Warhol, who was the first to transform Jackie's image into art. In real life, Jackie met Andy, and rode in a car with him to the Brooklyn Museum. On the way, the two of them discussed aesthetics. I always wonder whether Jackie secretly appreciated his silkscreen, "Sixteen Jackies".

The Happening takes place in a disco inferno: Jackie's descent, down the staircase, into the crowd, repeat Eurydice's journey into the underworld. The photographer is her unso- licited Orpheus, whose camera arrests her in Hades.

Maria Callas is Jackie's main link to opera: the former First Lady even attended one of Maria's New York Metropolitan *Toscas*, and the two women met backstage. We chose to make Callas a mezzo – in part because (some fans argue) a movement to that repertoire might have saved her voice.

Tabloids hypothesised rendezvous between Mrs. Onassis and Callas. Maria once called Jackie 'the other side'. In our opera, Jackie sleepwalks to the other side – an island as lonely as Ariadne's – where she and Maria effect a transgressive reconciliation. (Maria's sister's name was Jackie.) Behind Ari's back, the rivals dream of eternal flames – Norma's pyre; Arlington.

Every opera revives Orpheus, the art form's genesis. The crux of our opera is Jackie's backward glance (to 1963, to JFK): she, too, is an Orpheus. Obsessive recollection immobilises her. 'Look back' and 'don't look back': Jackie is caught between these two contrary commands. If she looks back, she will be stuck in tragic repetitions. If she doesn't look back, she will remain amnesiac, cold and mute.

Throughout the opera, Jackie utters fragments of the late President's speeches; when, after Maria smashes the camera, Jackie finds the magical power to communicate with the other side – the afterworld – and speak to Jack, she experiences transfiguration, for she is able to forgive him for his infidelities, much as the radiant Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* forgave the Count. Our JFK is a plaintive revenant, an offstage voice incorporeal as Manrico in his tower in *Il trovatore*.

When Jackie, at the end of the opera, sings (optimistically, wistfully, delusionally), 'The new frontier is here', she remains in limbo between epochs. Was Jackie ever really 'here'? Is the new frontier here? Did it ever arrive? Might it still, like Elijah, come? What year is it? Are we living in 1968 or in 1986, or in a year marked by some other chance recombination of forms? Like Jackie, we want to overcome the vertigo of not knowing how to step forward – a limbo akin to delirium, an aesthetic thrill to be pursued, not avoided. An aesthete and dandy, Jackie wishes to retreat to Lotus-Eater's island, a dream yacht safe from the surge.

That island is performance. May operatic vocalism illuminate the underseam of American Fantasy.