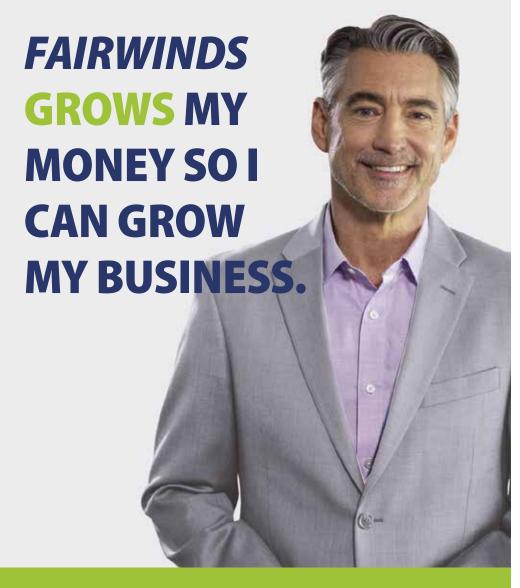


Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

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2020-21 | The Curtain Rises

Dear Friends.

Welcome to Mead Botanical Garden, and welcome to this special workshop presentation of *The Secret River*. Opera Orlando was honored to commission composer Stella Sung and librettist Mark Campbell to collaborate on this heartfelt, compelling story, and now we add singers and musicians to begin to refine and prepare the work for its world premiere this coming December. AND you are part of that process!

The Secret River is truly an opera for all audiences and a story we all can relate to. Based on the book by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, the opera is set in the forests of Central Florida and follows Calpurnia's journey as she looks for a secret river to help save her family during tough times. It is a story of perseverance, of courage, and of hope, with local flavor and universal truths. It also allowed us as a company to partner with MicheLee Puppets to help bring the world of Calpurnia's imagination to life through puppetry; you will see some prototypes of that today. In addition to the world premiere of the opera, it is our hope that next fall we will be able to share this production with local schools, encouraging our youth to trust in the power of their own imaginations just as Calpurnia does.

We are more grateful than ever to be back, presenting live theater, and our "On the Town" series continues next month with the intimate and inclusive chamber opera *As One* at Harriett's Orlando Ballet Centre, featuring musicians from the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra. We are also starting to plan and look forward to our 2021-22 season, and we could not do any of this without you and your amazing support, patronage, and enthusiasm for this glorious art form. It is great to see you back at **The Opera!**



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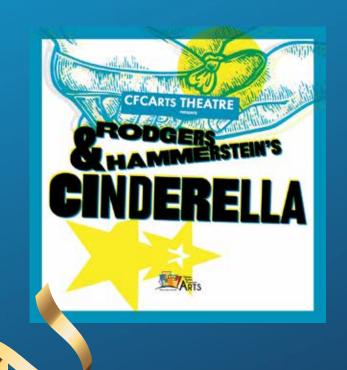
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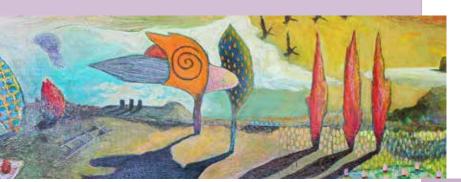
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presented by



music by **Stella Sung**libretto by **Mark Campbell**

Sung in English

Commissioned by Opera Orlando

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The commissioning of Stella C.Y. Sung for **THE SECRET RIVER** (a new opera for all audiences based on the book by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings) received funding from OPERA America's Opera Grants for Female Composers program, supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation.

Additional funding provided by the Morse Genius Foundation and the Pabst Steinmetz Foundation

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A NOTE FROM THE COMPOSER

Librettist writing words, composer writing music. Each brings their artistic spirits together to create a new work. As the composer, I began to write the music once I received the beautifully crafted libretto from Mark, which was already nuanced with rhyme and rhythm.

The piano workshop process provides the opportunity for the production team to join the composer and librettist to bring the music and words to life. Through the process, I will be making changes where necessary, working with our singer-actors and conductor to refine the music, structure, and pacing of the work, discussing these changes with Mark, and listening intently. After the workshop, my work as the composer continues as I then begin the task of orchestration and adding instrumental support. When I have finished that process, I give the score over to the conductor, parts to the musicians, and then... try to patiently wait! Once rehearsals begin, the stage director, scenic designer, costume designer, lighting designer, puppeteers, cast, and crew add their magic and talents as we work towards presenting the show.

Please join us again when we premiere *The Secret River*, an opera and tale filled with imagination and love, poetry and music, and a celebration of the human spirit.

Stella Sung, composer



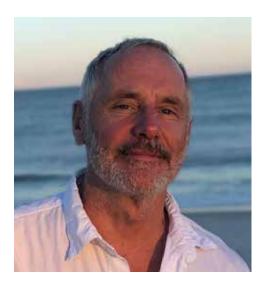
The music of Stella Sung is published by Theodore Presser, Editions Henry Lemoine, Southern Music Company, and Sonic Star Music Productions, and is currently available on Koch International Recordings, Naxos, Sinfonica (Italy), MSR, and Albany Records. She was the first composer-in-residence for the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra (2008-2011), and was one of the five composers awarded a "Music Alive" award (Dayton Performing Arts Alliance, 2013-16). Dr. Sung's work includes pieces for cellist Yo-Yo Ma, the German Ministry of Culture (Rhineland-Pfalz), the National Symphony Orchestra, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, and the Cincinnati Pops. Dr. Sung holds a B.M. degree from the University of Michigan, an M.F.A from the University of Florida, and a D.M.A. from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Sung is an endowed trustees chair professor and director of the Center for Research and Education in Arts, Technology, and Entertainment at the University of Central Florida, College of Arts.

A NOTE FROM THE LIBRETTIST

Adapting Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's novel *The Secret River* into an opera libretto was a relatively easy assignment. There were no massive jungles of plot twists in the book to hack at, no curious reversals of characters to bend into logic, and no overwrought sentences to wrangle into lyrics; the story is told simply and directly and for want of a better word—although what better word is there?—it "sings." If there was and is a challenge for both Stella and me—and for our production team—it would be welding the novel's expert balance of magic and realism and making it both believable and, in the best way possible, unbelievable. We live in a world where the imagination is diminished with each new Google search; where maps that once used to help us find a way are replaced by a GPS which now tells us how to find a way; where a beautiful sunset can't blossom in memory but must be stored on a rectangular device to have happened. Isn't it exciting—even subversive—that this new opera celebrates the imagination?

Unfortunately, because this is a workshop, that celebration will be somewhat muted. Stella and I are still making changes to improve the opera before the December (gulp) premiere. So, please view this workshop as Opera Orlando intends it; a sort of amuse-bouche before you're served the full entrée in December. See you then.

Mark Campbell, librettist



The work of Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning librettist/ lyricist Mark Campbell is at the forefront of the contemporary opera scene in this country. Mr. Campbell has written 39 opera librettos, lyrics for 7 musicals and text for 6 song cycles and 2 oratorios. His best known works are Silent Night, The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs, As One, The Shining, Elizabeth Cree, Sanctuary Road, Stonewall, Later the Same Evening, The Nefarious, Immoral but Highly Profitable Enterprise of Mr. Burke & Mr. Hare, Volpone, Rappahannock County, The Manchurian Candidate, Volpone, Bastianello/Lucrezia, and Songs from an Unmade Bed. Other awards include: the first Kleban Foundation Award for Lyricist, two Richard Rodgers Awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, three Drama Desk nominations, a Jonathan Larson Foundation Award, a NYFA Playwriting Fellowship, and the first Dominic J. Pelliciotti Award. Mr. Campbell is involved in the training of future generations of librettists and composers and serves as mentor to the American Opera Project, American Lyric Theater and the American Opera Initiative. In 2020, he also

created and funded the first award for opera librettists in the history of the art form: the annual Campbell Opera Librettist Prize, which is administered by OPERA America. Upcoming premieres include: *Edward Tulane* for Minnesota Opera, *A Thousand Acres* for Des Moines Metro Opera, and *A Nation of Others* for the Oratorio Society of New York.

MarkCampbellWords.com



SYNOPSIS

A young girl named Calpurnia lives near Cross Creek, Florida, during the Great Depression. When she learns that her community has fallen on hard times and faces starvation and that her father's livelihood as a fisherman is threatened, she seeks the advice of Mother Albirtha, a wise woman who lives deep in the forest. Albirtha tells Calpurnia about a secret river teeming with fish and that she'll find it only when she learns to trust her imagination. Calpurnia heeds Mother Albirtha's advice, saves the community and her father's business—but in the end, also learns a profound lesson about humility and the true meaning of altruism.



The Secret River is truly an opera for all audiences! You are now part of the creation of this moving and increasingly relevant work, The Secret River. In preparation for its world premiere planned for December of 2021, you can experience earlier works to truely understand the world Pulitzer Prize winner Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings created for Calpurnia.

WORTH A READ

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Original publication date: 1955. Revised Version with new illustrations: 2009



The powerhouse illustrator pair of Leo and Diane Dillon re-imagine the only story Pulitzer Prize winner Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, *The Yearling,* even wrote for children. Calpurnia discovers a secret river in a Florida forest, where she catches enough fresh fish to feed her hungry neighbors.

WORTH A WATCH

Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment Released: **1983**



In the 1930s Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings moves to Florida's backwaters to write in peace. She feels bothered by affectionate men, editors, and confused neighbors, but soon she connects and writes The Yearling, a classic of American literature.





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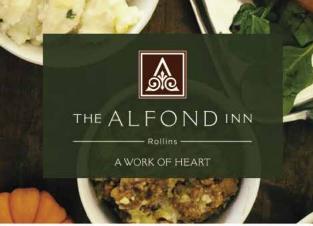




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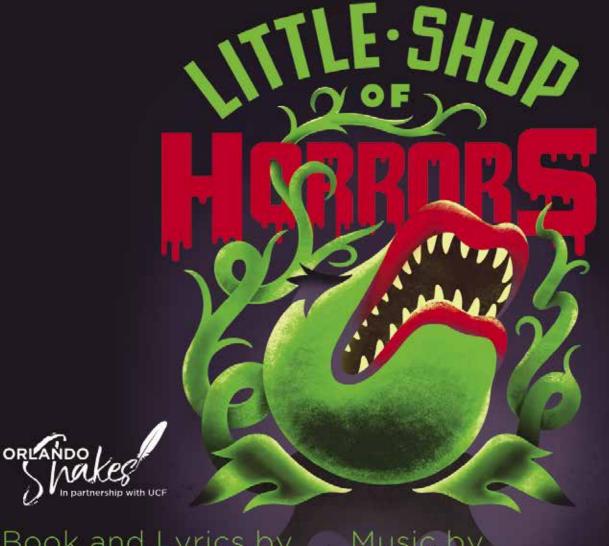
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