

Consulate General of the Czech Republic  
in New York



Franz Kafka  
Oil Pastel by Rüdiger von Voss, 2010

present

## THE WORLD ACCORDING TO KAFKA A MUSICAL-LITERARY COLLAGE

Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Franz Kafka's death

Concept and Introduction: **Michael Lahr von Leitis**  
With **Peter Kendall Clark** (Recitation),  
**Jeannie Im** (Soprano)  
and **Dan Franklin Smith** (Piano)

**March 5, 2024 at 7.00 pm**  
**Bohemian National Hall**  
**321 East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street**  
**New York, NY 10021**

Part dramatic reading, part concert, the musical-literary collage *The World According to Kafka* juxtaposes texts from Franz Kafka's short stories, diaries, letters, and aphorisms with compositions by his Czech contemporaries as well as Kafka-settings by German contemporary composer Stefan Heucke.

In his stories, Franz Kafka (1883 – 1924) leaves behind the realm of the possible and probable world in order to better understand the real world. His protagonists often are helplessly confronted by anonymous powers; they are imprisoned in a maze without exit. Fear and failure are dominant topics. In vain his protagonists look for a way out. A master of the absurd, Kafka describes the most fantastic events with a clarity and precision, that leads the reader to the limits of thinking. In Kafka's work the great upheaval of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is expressed almost like a vision. Like no other author, Kafka describes the emotional framework and living conditions of modernity.

Baritone **Peter Kendall Clark** will narrate Franz Kafka's texts. Soprano **Jeannie Im** will present some of Kafka's favourite melodies by Friedrich Silcher and Carl Loewe, as well as songs by Czech composers Max Brod, and Adolf Schreiber, and twelve-tone-settings of Kafka's prose by Stefan Heucke. Elysium's Music Director **Dan Franklin Smith** complements the musical selections with piano solo pieces by Joseph Bohuslav Foerster, Pavel Haas, Leos Janáček, Bohuslav Martinu, Vítěslav Novák, Erwin Schulhoff, Josef Suk and Viktor Ullmann.

The musical-literary collage *The World According to Kafka* consists of four parts: the first one deals with *The Ideal and its Unattainability*, the second part is titled *The Individual and the World*, the third one is centered around the topic of *Illness and Death*, and the fourth part focuses on *Redemption and Paradise*.

Münchener Merkur, one of Germany's biggest newspapers, wrote about the premiere of this program on June 11, 2011 as part of the Elysium Festival Bernried:

*'Away - from - here - that is my goal', Gregorij von Leitis read in his captivatingly high-timbered voice. 'I do not need a supply of food, because this journey is so long, that I MUST die of hunger'. The Elysium director allowed the courage of desperation as well as the strength in recognizing absurdity and the quiet humility before God resonate, as Kafka concluded: 'Luckily this is after all a truly gigantic journey'.*

*Before this final sentence, which gave one goose pimples, the audience, within a scant two hours, had gotten to know a Kafka mosaic of a different kind. (...)*

*Soprano Jeannie Im provided interspersed songs favored by Kafka, as reported by Max Brod. Pianist Dan Franklin accompanied immaculately with pieces by the Kafka's contemporaries Janacek, Ullmann, and Schreiber. From the present came the concentrated touches for the piano by the composer Stefan Heucke, who was present in the audience.*

*Reciter Leitis found God in Kafka's lines and read with the dignified voice of God the Father: 'This one, you should not lock him up again. He will come to me...' Thus an evening of discoveries was rounded out.*

## Program Sequence for *The World According to Kafka – A Musical-Literary Collage*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Genre</b>
No. 3 from <i>Impressions</i> , op. 73	Joseph Bohuslav Foerster		Piano Solo
Count Eberstein	Carl Loewe	Ludwig Uhland	Song
The Refusal		Franz Kafka	Spoken Text
The word stumbles	Leos Janacek		Piano Solo
You say, that my striving for perfection...		Franz Kafka	Spoken Text
In Tears	Leos Janacek		Piano Solo
A Hunger Artist		Franz Kafka	Spoken Text
Suite for Piano op. 13, No. 2 con molta espressione	Pavel Haas		Piano Solo
When you stand in front of me and look at me / Ach, Neni Tu	Antonin Dvorak	Franz Kafka	Recitation over Piano Music
Allegretto grazioso from Sonata No. 6, op. 49	Viktor Ullmann		Piano Solo
This border territory between solitude and community...	Stefan Heucke	Franz Kafka	Song
The Street Window		Franz Kafka	Spoken Text
No. 2 from <i>Grotesken</i> , op. 21	Erwin Schulhoff		Piano Solo
In der Ferne	Friedrich Silcher	Albert v. Schlippenbach	Song
You can refrain from the suffering of the world... / from: Hulán	Bedřich Smetana	Franz Kafka	Recitation over Piano Music
The Convalescent	Adolf Schreiber	Peter Altenburg	Song
1st movement from the Suite "In the mist"	Leos Janacek		Piano Solo
We rummage through ourselves like moles	Stefan Heucke	Franz Kafka	Song
During a walk...		Franz Kafka	Spoken Text
Foxtrott	Bohuslav Martinu		Piano Solo
One of the first signs of the beginning of understanding / from "Eight Pieces" op. 12. no. 3	Josef Suk	Franz Kafka	Recitation over Piano Music
The May Tree	Adolf Schreiber	Detlev v. Liliencron	Song
In any case I behave today towards the tuberculosis...		Franz Kafka	Spoken Text
2nd Movement from the Suite "In the Mist"	Leos Janacek		Piano Solo
The Vulture		Franz Kafka	Spoken Text
The Dance of the Immortals	Adolf Schreiber	Li-Tai-Pe	Song
It is not necessary.../ Spring	Viteslav Novak	Franz Kafka	Recitation over Piano Music
In front of the Law		Franz Kafka	Spoken Text
The Cry	Erich Zeisl	Walther Eidlitz	Song
Melody	Josef Suk		Piano Solo
There are two main human sins... / Prélude	Bohuslav Martinu	Franz Kafka	Recitation over Piano Music
Instructive Duo for the Nervous	Bohuslav Martinu		Piano Solo
Paradise	Max Brod	Franz Kafka	Song
The Departure		Franz Kafka	Spoken Text

*Performed without intermission*

*(approximate running time: 80 minutes)*

*Subject to change*

## Franz Kafka

was born on July 3, 1883 into a middle-class, German-speaking Jewish family in Prague, the capital of Bohemia, a kingdom that was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father, Hermann Kafka (1852–1931), was described by Kafka himself as "a true Kafka in strength, health, appetite, loudness of voice, eloquence, self-satisfaction, worldly dominance, endurance, presence of mind, [and] knowledge of human nature ...". Hermann was the fourth child of Jacob Kafka, a butcher, and came to Prague from Osek, a Jewish village near Písek in southern Bohemia. After working as a traveling sales representative, he established himself as an independent retailer of men's and women's fancy goods and accessories, employing up to 15 people and using a jackdaw (*kavka* in Czech) as his business logo. Kafka's mother, Julie (1856—1934), was the daughter of Jakob Löwy, a prosperous brewer in Poděbrady, and was better educated than her husband.

Kafka was the eldest of six children. He had two younger brothers, Georg and Heinrich, who died at the ages of fifteen months and six months, respectively, before Kafka was six, and three younger sisters, Gabriele ("Elli") (1889–1941), Valerie ("Valli") (1890–1942), and Ottilie ("Ottla") (1892–1943). On business days, both parents were absent from the home. His mother helped to manage her husband's business and worked in it as much as 12 hours a day. The children were largely reared by a succession of governesses and servants.

Kafka's sisters were sent with their families to the Łódź ghetto and died there or in concentration camps. Ottla is believed to have been sent to the concentration camp at Theresienstadt and then to the death camp at Auschwitz.

Kafka learned German as his first language, but he was also almost fluent in Czech. Later, Kafka also acquired some knowledge of French language and culture; one of his favorite authors was Flaubert. From 1889 to 1893, he attended the Deutsche Knabenschule, the boys' elementary school at the Fleischmarkt (meat market), the street now known as Masná Street in Prague. His Jewish education was limited to his Bar Mitzvah celebration at 13 and going to the synagogue four times a year with his father. After elementary school, he was admitted to the rigorous classics-oriented state gymnasium, Altstädter Deutsches Gymnasium, an academic secondary school with eight grade levels, where German was also the language of instruction, at Staroměstské náměstí, within the Kinsky Palace in the Old Town. He completed his Matura exams in 1901.

Admitted to the Charles University of Prague, Kafka first studied chemistry, but switched after two weeks to law. This offered a range of career possibilities, which pleased his father, and required a longer course of study that gave Kafka time to take classes in German studies and art history. At the university, he joined a student club, named Lese- und Redehalle der Deutschen Studenten, which organized literary events, readings and other activities. In the end of his first year of studies, he met Max Brod, who would become a close friend of his throughout his life, together with the journalist Felix Weltsch, who also studied law. Kafka obtained the degree of Doctor of Law on June 18, 1906 and performed an obligatory year of unpaid service as law clerk for the civil and criminal courts.

On November 1, 1907, he was hired at the Assicurazioni Generali, an aggressive Italian insurance company, where he worked for nearly a year. On July 15, 1908, he resigned, and two weeks later found more congenial employment with the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute for the Kingdom of Bohemia. However, he did not show any signs of indifference towards his job, as the several promotions that he received during his career prove that he was a hard working employee. In parallel, Kafka was also committed to his literary work. Together with his close friends Max Brod and Felix Weltsch these three were called "Der enge Prager Kreis", the close Prague circle.

In 1911, Karl Hermann, spouse of his sister Elli, proposed Kafka collaborate in the operation of an asbestos factory known as Prager Asbestwerke Hermann and Co. Kafka had to dedicate much of his free time to the business. During that period, he also found interest and entertainment in the performances of Yiddish theatre, despite the misgivings of even close friends such as Max Brod, who usually supported him in everything else. Those performances also served as a starting point for his growing relationship with Judaism.

In 1912, at the home of his lifelong friend Max Brod, Kafka met Felice Bauer, who lived in Berlin and worked as a representative for a dictaphone company. Over the next five years they corresponded a great deal, met occasionally, and twice were engaged to be married. Their relationship finally ended in 1917.

In 1917, Kafka began to suffer from tuberculosis, which would require frequent convalescence during which he was supported by his family, most notably his sister Ottla. Despite his fear of being perceived as both physically and mentally repulsive, he impressed others with his boyish, neat, and austere good looks, a quiet and cool demeanor, obvious intelligence, and dry sense of humor.

In the early 1920s he developed an intense relationship with Czech journalist and writer Milena Jesenská. In 1923, he briefly moved to Berlin in the hope of distancing himself from his family's influence to concentrate on his writing. In Berlin, he lived with Dora Diamant, a 25-year-old kindergarten teacher from an orthodox Jewish family, who was independent enough to have escaped her past in the ghetto. Dora became his lover, and influenced Kafka's interest in the Talmud.

It is generally agreed that Kafka suffered from clinical depression and social anxiety throughout his entire life. He also suffered from migraines, insomnia, constipation, boils, and other ailments, all usually brought on by excessive stresses and strains. He attempted to counteract all of this by a regimen of naturopathic treatments, such as a vegetarian diet. However, Kafka's tuberculosis worsened; he returned to Prague, then went to a sanatorium near Vienna for treatment, where he died on June 3, 1924. His body was ultimately brought back to Prague where he was interred on June 11, 1924, in the New Jewish Cemetery in Prague-Žižkov.

## Peter Kendall Clark, Recitation & Baritone

is a distinguished interpreter of opera and musical theater who also excels in traditional concert and song repertoire. He created the role of Ermanno Finzi-Contini in the world premiere of *The Garden Of The Finzi-Continis* by Ricky Ian Gordon and Michael Korie, a co-production with New York City Opera and The National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene. He also recently appeared in the New York premiere of Tom Cipullo's *The Parting* as the Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti, presented by Chelsea Opera. He has created roles in numerous world premieres, portraying Older Erich in Ted Rosenthal's jazz opera *Dear Erich* with New York City Opera, garnering praise from The New York Times' Anthony Tommasini for bringing "gravity and an earthy sound" to his "impressive" performance. He also created the role of Jehovah in Mark Blitzstein's *Cain*. Over the past two decades, Mr. Clark has had return engagements with New York City Opera, Virginia Opera, Caramoor Opera, Ashlawn Opera, Syracuse Opera, St. Petersburg Opera, Chelsea Opera, and Skylight Music Theatre.



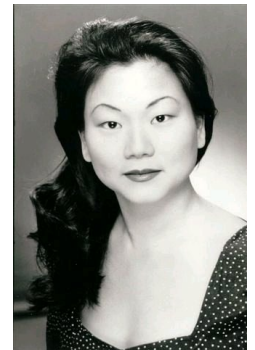
Mr. Clark made his debut with New York City Opera in their sold out production of *Candide*, directed by Harold Prince. Since then he has been a regular with the company, appearing as Older Erich in the world premiere of *Dear Erich*, and as Officer Cahn in the world premiere of Iain Bell/Mark Campbell's *Stonewall* among others. Other recent performances include the Baron/Inquisitor/Slave Captain/Pasha Prefect at Anchorage Opera, a return to St. Petersburg Opera as Harold Hill in *The Music Man*, Harry Easter in *Street Scene* with Virginia Opera, Vaughan Williams Five Mystical Songs and Fauré Requiem with Grace Chorale, Bach b minor Mass with Helena Symphony, and MacHeath in *the Threepenny Opera* at Syracuse Opera.

Since May of 2020 he has given nearly 300 outdoor concerts in Brooklyn Heights and in New Rochelle in his weekly community concert series Songs From The Ledge which The New York Post has called "the hottest ticket in town!" Deborah Norville of CBS Inside Edition: "Call him the 'Brownstone Baritone'. Once a week Peter Kendall Clark gets on a stoop in Brooklyn and the magic begins!" As the "Brownstone Baritone" he has also been profiled on ABC News, Only Good Heroes for OGTV, Voice Of America, The New York Post, Japan's Public Television's (NHK) Catch! World Top News, and WQXR's New York in Concert. With his collaborator Alex Rybeck, he continues to perform his one-man show around the country.

Last season Mr. Clark made his Carnegie Hall debut as the Shopkeeper in Eric Whitacre's *The Gift of the Magi*. Recently he made a triumphant return to Union Avenue Opera as Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* and made his debut with Opera Company of Middlebury as Older Thompson in his fourth production of Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied*.

## Jeannie Im, Soprano

has been a member of Elysium since 2000 when she was a participant of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Summer Academy. Her collaborations with Elysium include the role of Gloria in the Italian premiere of Ernst Krenek's *What Price Confidence* at the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, premiering the role of Beatrice in the world-premiere of Egon Lustgarten's opera *Dante in Exile*, first at the Elysium Festival Bernried, then at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall in 2005, and numerous concerts, featuring music by composers who were exiled or killed during World War II. Her artistic contributions to Elysium go beyond performing: she was the assistant director for the International Summer Academy in Bernried in 2011 and 2012; in 2014 she conceived and directed the Operetta Revue and Tribute to Marta Eggerth's Artistry *Mein Liebeslied muss ein Walzer sein*, and the program *Ich wandle unter Blumen: Songs of Art Nouveau Vienna* in 2015. In 2022 she directed the literary-musical collage *Campaigning for Women's Rights – Fighting against Fascism* at the Austrian Cultural Forum and narrated the texts of Nazi resistance fighter Käthe Leichter, and directed and sang in the kick-off concert for *Innovators in Exile*.



Since 2016, Jeannie has been a recurring guest artist with the Caroga Arts Collective in upstate New York. She has performed throughout Europe and the US, including the Altenburger Musikfestival, Caramoor Music Festival, Carnegie Hall, Underworld Productions. A Cum Laude graduate from U.C. Berkeley with an award for Academic and Theatrical Excellence, Jeannie Im obtained an M.A. in Musicology and a Certificate in Early Music Performance from NYU.

## Michael Lahr von Leitis, Elysium's Artistic Director & Concept

studied philosophy at the College of Philosophy in Munich and at the Jesuit University Centre Sèvres in Paris. He is author and editor of the books *The Erwin Piscator Award*, and *Erwin Piscator's Legacy Lives On: Conversations about Theater, Music and Politics*, and a co-author of the volume of essays *Bilder des Menschen (Images of Man)*. As a specialist in Erwin Piscator, the founder of the political and epic theater, he curated the exhibit *Erwin Piscator: Political Theater in Exile*, which so far has been seen in Bernried, New York, Catania, Salzburg, Munich, Vienna, and Berlin.

He has unearthed numerous works by artists who were persecuted by the Nazi regime. Many of these compositions were performed for the first time in concerts in Europe and the U.S.



He lectures regularly on questions of general social and political significance.

He has directed various Elysium productions, such as *New Beginnings: Fragments of an Era*, *Found Pieces: Musical-Literary exploration through the Lahr von Leitis Archives*, and *Remember - For the Future*, and conceived many programs, such as *The Gospel according to Kafka*, *Defending Democracy*, and *Heinrich Heine: Tell me what does it mean to be human?*

Michael Lahr von Leitis is Executive Director of *The Lahr von Leitis Academy & Archive*, Chairman of the Erwin Piscator Award Society, and an advisor to the Nietzsche Forum Munich e.V. He is a Fellow Researcher at the Exilarte Center of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna.

## Dan Franklin Smith, Piano

has been working with Elysium since 1996 and served as its Music Director from 2005 until 2013. Under his musical direction Egon Lustgarten's opera *Dante in Exile* received its world premiere at the Elysium Festival Bernried 2005. He conceived various Musical-Literary Collages, and regularly gave piano solo recitals at the Elysium Festival Bernried. In 2008, he and Gregorij von Leitis presented Ullmann's musical legacy from Theresienstadt, *The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke* at a tour organized by Elysium in seven European cities.

He made his European recital debut in 1997 in Sweden. In 1998 he made his European orchestral debut in Stockholm at *Sofia Kyrkan* and was later featured on Swedish TV.

A debut recording with the *Gäyle Symfoniorkester* soon followed. In 2004, he recorded two piano concerti (a premiere) by the Swiss late-romantic composer Hans Huber with the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra. These premier recordings received outstanding reviews and are broadcast on dozens of classical stations throughout the US.

Dan Franklin Smith has performed at such venues as the National Gallery in Washington, DC, the Cleveland Museum's Distinguished Artist Series, Alice Tully Hall in New York City, the Savannah Music Festival, as well as tours in Bermuda, Taiwan, and Puerto Rico.

He is the recipient of a Performing Artist Grant from the American Scandinavian Foundation of New York City. He is a member of the Recording Society as well as the American Matthay Association, and frequently performs at their yearly conferences.



## Elysium – between two continents' Mission The Lahr von Leitis Academy & Archive's Mission

*Elysium – between two continents* fosters artistic and academic dialogue, creative and educational exchange and mutual friendship between the United States of America and Europe. Elysium fights against ignorance, discrimination, racism, hatred, and anti-Semitism by means of art.

Elysium's history is closely linked with Erwin Piscator and his groundbreaking ideas of a politically and socially relevant theater. Founded on October 11, 1983 by Gregorij von Leitis as a theater company in New York, Elysium presented numerous American premieres of German-language plays in English translation. From the very beginning, Gregorij von Leitis used theater and the arts for the integration of socially marginalized groups; he worked with the children of Puerto-Rican immigrants in the East Village and initiated the program *Theater for the Homeless*. In 1993, the Elysium Theater Company was transformed into the trans-Atlantic cultural exchange organization, Elysium – between two continents. During the last two decades, one programmatic focus has been the rediscovery and presentation of music and literature created by artists who were persecuted by the Nazis.

In 1985, Gregorij von Leitis founded *The Erwin Piscator Award Society* to honor and commemorate the artistic and humanitarian legacy of the great theater man Erwin Piscator and his lasting influence on theater on both sides of the Atlantic. Since then, the Erwin Piscator Award has been presented annually in association with Elysium. Piscator was convinced that "art only achieves its purpose when it contributes to the improvement of man."

*The Lahr von Leitis Academy & Archive* in association with Elysium presents "Art and Education without Borders." We strongly believe that education and art can empower and enlighten the younger generation. Through lectures, seminars, workshops and master classes – that are offered for free – we want to familiarize young people with the treasures of exiled art to help them create a meaningful future that incorporates the lessons learned from history.

Since December of 2018, the collection of the Lahr von Leitis Archive has been housed at the *exil.arte* Centre of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna / Austria.

Elysium – between two continents, Inc. is registered as a non-profit organization. It is governed by an independent Board of Directors and not affiliated with any university, religious or governmental body. Any donation is tax-exempt to the extent of the law and is gratefully acknowledged and deeply appreciated.

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