



Video still from *A House in Bali*. Available in high resolution at www.christinajensenpr.com in the *A House in Bali* gallery.

Bang on a Can presents **A House in Bali**

New Opera by Evan Ziporyn

Boston & New York Premieres in October

Bang on a Can All-Stars & Gamelan Salukat

Libretto by Paul Schick based on

the memoir of Colin McPhee

Directed by Jay Scheib

Info: www.houseinbali.org

“an ingenious and often beautiful fusion of contemporary classical strains and Balinese gamelan”
– *San Francisco Chronicle*

Boston: Friday, Oct. 8 & Saturday, Oct. 9 at 7:30pm

Cutler Majestic Theater at Emerson College

219 Tremont Street, Boston, MA

Tickets: \$30, 40, 50 at 617.824.8000 or www.maj.org/events/2010/Bali.cfm

Presented by Bang on a Can in association with ArtsEmerson and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

New York: Thursday, Oct. 14; Friday, Oct. 15; & Saturday, Oct. 16 at 7:30pm

Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) Howard Gilman Opera House

30 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

Tickets: \$20, 35, 45, 55 at 718.636.4100 or www.bam.org/view.aspx?pid=2229

New York, NY & Boston, MA—In October, Evan Ziporyn’s cross-cultural opera *A House in Bali* will be performed for the first time in Boston (October 8 and 9 at 7:30pm, Cutler Majestic Theater at Emerson College) and New York (October 14, 15, and 16 at 7:30pm, BAM Howard Gilman Opera House). Produced by Bang on a Can, this visually stunning, two-hour multimedia spectacle brings together the alkaline sounds of 16-piece Balinese Gamelan Salukat and New York’s iconoclastic electric chamber ensemble Bang on a Can All-Stars. Written by Evan Ziporyn with librettist Paul Schick, and directed by Jay Scheib, *A House in Bali* is based on composer Colin McPhee’s famous 1947 memoir of the same title. (See the end of this press release for a synopsis.)

The opera features Balinese choreography by Kadek Dewi Aryani and vocals by leading operatic and traditional Balinese singers, including Peter Tantsits as Colin McPhee; Kazakh tenor Timur Bekbosunov as Walter Spies; and Canadian soprano Anne Harley as famed researcher Margaret Mead. The Balinese boy the Westerners meet, Sampih, will be portrayed by 14-year-old Boston native Nyoman Triyana Usadhi. The roles of Sampih’s parents will be performed by celebrated Balinese artists (and Nyoman’s real-life parents), I Nyoman Catra and Desak Made Suarti Laksmi.

Of the inspiration for his new opera, Evan Ziporyn says, “Everyone involved in this project follows in the footsteps of Colin McPhee, Walter Spies, and the Balinese artists who interacted with them. There are now hundreds of American gamelans, and none would have been possible without McPhee’s trailblazing work. Every painting you see on the streets of Ubud grows out of Spies’ work with the young painters of the 1930s. Yet the Bali they loved was the old Bali, the Bali that would change so radically in subsequent years. Part of the motor for that change was the connection to the West, so in a sense they themselves contributed to the end of that era. Making this opera is a way to reflect on that encounter, a tragic love story between two cultures. Opera always has to have a tragic love story.”

Staged by Jay Scheib with set design by Sara Brown, Balinese art forms blend seamlessly with live projection, pushing the boundaries of theatrical innovation. Taking their cue from archival film footage shot on location by Colin McPhee and

Margaret Mead in the 1930s, Aryani's inspired blend of contemporary dance and centuries-old Balinese forms are amplified by Scheib's signature use of live video projections resulting in a motion portrait of two cultures caught up in a musical east and west. *A House in Bali* premiered at Puri Saraswati in Ubud, Bali in June 2009 (the first-ever performance of any form of Western opera in Bali) and was performed at the Zellerbach Hall in Berkeley, CA in September last year.

Synopsis: Eighty years ago, "quite by accident," Colin McPhee, a young Canadian composer studying in Paris, heard a scratchy recording of Balinese gamelan. He was entranced, throwing away a promising career to travel to the island and document what he had heard. His memoir, *A House in Bali*, recounts his sojourn there: a found paradise, a tradition threatened by modernity, the pleasures and agonies of the not-so-innocent abroad. Eschewing the colonial lifestyle of the capital, McPhee instead built a house in a traditional village, navigating the inscrutable and shifting opinions of the village elders. Once ensconced, he scandalized the Dutch authorities by befriending the Balinese, and began his task of documenting music he considered doomed to extinction. His guides and mentors are two fellow émigrés, each with their own agenda, German-Russian artist Walter Spies, and noted American anthropologist Margaret Mead. McPhee's diligent transcription project is disrupted by the arrival of a ten-year-old peasant boy, Sampih, who had saved him from drowning in the river during a flash flood. McPhee brought the boy into his household, first as a domestic worker, and then hiring the finest teachers on the island to train him in classical Balinese dance. McPhee's fragile paradise is soon shattered by politics, war, the supernatural, and his own inability to control the boy. Along the way is a tragic love story, not between two people but between two cultures. This is mirrored in McPhee's relationship with Sampih, in whom he sees everything he thinks he sees in Bali: purity, effervescence, an unconscious out-flowing of grace and beauty, unencumbered by restrictions and taboos of western culture. The opera telescopes the story: it is a single journey, beginning with McPhee's Parisian crisis and ending with his final departure. It balances on that ridge between two cultures, each singing in its own distinctive voice through the music of Evan Ziporyn. Under Jay Scheib's direction, we see the action both directly and through the camera lens, itself projecting images from both past and present, filtered – literally – to blur the distinction.

Evan Ziporyn: Like McPhee, Ziporyn has oscillated between two artistic worlds, west and east, for his whole adult life. Circumstance provided him with many more avenues to bring them together than were available to McPhee; for Ziporyn, this project is a culmination. His 30-year involvement with Balinese gamelan began with a research trip to Bali in 1981. He studied legong drumming with I Madé Lebah, who had been a good friend of Colin McPhee. Returning to America, Ziporyn joined Gamelan Sekar Jaya, traveling with them on their famous first Balinese tour in 1985. As a Professor of Music at MIT, he founded Gamelan Galak Tika, composing numerous cross-cultural works, including the memorial work for gamelan and orchestra, *Ngaben (for Sari Club)*. He also collaborated with dalang Wayan Wija on a full length wayang kulit with Western accompaniment, *Shadow Bang*, which has been performed in New York, Boston, and Amsterdam. In 2005 he brought Galak Tika to Bali, performing at the International Arts Festival and throughout the island. At the same time, he has traveled the world with Bang on a Can, collaborating with artists such as Steve Reich, Iva Bittová, Don Byron, Yo-Yo Ma & the Silk Road Project, Meredith Monk, Terry Riley, and Matthew Shipp. Ziporyn is Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Music at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. For more information, visit www.ziporyn.com.

Jay Scheib: Known for his use of media in live performance, Jay Scheib's works have been seen throughout Europe and the United States. Recent and upcoming productions include Beethoven's *Fidelio* at the Saarländisches Staatstheater in Saarbrücken Germany; *Bellona, Destroyer of Cities*, after Samuel Delany's novel *Dhalgren* was premiered at The Kitchen earlier this year and will be performed again at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston next year. Born in Shenandoah, Iowa, Scheib is recipient of the MIT Edgerton Award, The Richard Sherwood Award, and the NEA/TCG Program for Directors. He is a regular guest professor at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria and is Associate Professor for Theater at MIT. For more information, visit www.jayscheib.com.

For additional artists' bios, please visit www.houseinbali.org/bios.html.

A House in Bali Credits:

Bang on a Can All-Stars & Gamelan Salukat

Music by Evan Ziporyn

Libretto by Paul Schick

(based on the memoir of Colin McPhee)

Directed by Jay Scheib

Choreography by Kadek Dewi Aryani and I Nyoman Catra

Set design by Sara Brown

Costume design by Oana Botez-Ban

Lighting design by Peter Ksander

Sound design by Andrew Cotton

Video design by Jay Scheib and AKA

Performed by Bang on a Can All-Stars, Gamelan Salukat, Peter Tantsits, Kadek Dewi Aryani, Desak Madé Suarti Laksmi, I Nyoman Catra, Timur Bekbosunov, Anne Harley, Nyoman Triyana Usadhi

Produced by BANG ON A CAN

Producer - Kenny Savelson, Bang on a Can

Assistant Director - Laine Rettmer

Stage Manager - Jennifer Bowman

A House in Bali is produced by Bang on a Can and is made possible by generous support from the NIB Foundation. A House in Bali was commissioned by Real Time Opera with support from the LEF Foundation, the Argosy Foundation, The Byrne Foundation, and the NIB Foundation. Endowment funding for A House in Bali at BAM Next Wave 2010 has been provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fund for Opera and Music-Theater, with additional support provided by The SHS Foundation.

Additional Performances of Evan Ziporyn's Music in New York (Oct. 30) and Boston (Nov. 13):

In addition to the Boston and New York premieres of *A House in Bali*, Evan Ziporyn will be featured in a portrait concert at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall (57th St. and 7th Ave., NYC) as part of the Making Music series on Saturday, October 30 at 7:30pm. The program includes his works *Tsmindao Ghmerto*, *In Bounds*, and the New York premieres of *Hive* and *Bayu Sabda Idep*. Performers include Ziporyn on bass clarinet, Gamelan Galak Tika, Signal, and clarinetist David Krakauer. (Tickets from \$32 at 212.247.7800 or www.carnegiehall.org)

In Boston, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project led by music director Gil Rose will perform the world premiere of Ziporyn's *Concerto for Tabla: Mumbai* written for Sandeep Das at Jordan Hall at New England Conservatory (30 Gainsborough St., Boston) on Saturday, November 13 at 8pm. (Tickets \$10-\$52 at 617.585.1260 or www.bmop.org)

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Press contacts:

Christina Jensen, Christina Jensen PR: 646.536.7864, christina@christinajensenpr.com

Jessica Kiger, Christina Jensen PR: 646.536.7864, jessica@christinajensenpr.com