

**BOSTON  
UNIVERSITY**

**Boston University** College of Fine Arts  
School of Music: Opera Institute  
and School of Theatre

# Alice Tierney

**MUSIC BY  
MELISSA DUNPHY**

**LIBRETTO BY  
JACQUELINE GOLDFINGER**

**MUSIC DIRECTOR • ALLISON VOTH  
STAGE DIRECTOR • CLAIRE CHOQUETTE**

**OCTOBER 13 - 15, 2023**

**STUDIO ONE**

**FRINGE  
FESTIVAL  
2023**



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The annual Boston University Fringe Festival, now in its 27th season, is a collaboration between the College of Fine Arts School of Music: Opera Institute and School of Theatre. Fringe's mission is to produce new or rarely performed significant works in the opera and theatre repertoire, bringing performances and audiences together in unique theatrical settings. For over two decades, Fringe Festival at BU has celebrated and amplified new work, shown in spare and minimal productions.

Spurred by the dynamic and diverse programs within BU College of Fine Arts, this year's Fringe features additional programming from BU School of Visual Arts and School of Music.

You're invited to experience the innovation and artistry at this year's performances!

Boston University College of Fine Arts  
School of Music: Opera Institute and School of Theatre

*present*

# Alice Tierney

Music by Melissa Dunphy  
Libretto by Jacqueline Goldfinger

Allison Voth, music director  
Mariia Kurochkina, conductor  
Claire Choquette, stage director

Cleo Brooks, scenic design  
Sydney Hovasse, costume design  
Conor Thiele, lighting design

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Quinn.....\*Madeleine Lew, +Madalyn Ivy  
Lyra.....\*Margaret Tigue, +Jiayu Li  
Zandra.....\*Rebekah Daly, +Annabrett Ruggiero  
John.....\*Chris Hunter, +Christopher Ellers  
Alice 1, 2, 3..Megan Cook, Michaela Usher, Alena Feldman  
*Friday evening & Sunday afternoon performances*  
Alice 1, 2, 3.Kailey Berry Rebecca Nehmeh, Doohyun Jung  
*Saturday afternoon performance*  
Alice 1, 2, 3...Yomi Park, Laura Beth Couch, Kira St. Pierre  
*Saturday evening performance*

*\*Denotes Friday evening & Saturday afternoon performances*  
*+Denotes Saturday evening & Sunday afternoon performances*

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## **ENSEMBLE**

### **Conductor**

Mariia Kurochka

### **Violin I**

Rachel Orth

### **Violin II**

Manuel Alejandro  
Ordonez Sierra

### **Viola**

Kara Charles

### **Cello**

Pin-Hsuan Chen

### **Bass**

Justin Cao

### **Flute/Piccolo**

Karen Chiang

### **Oboe/English Horn**

Kayla Farnsworth

### **Clarinet/Bass Clarinet**

Rodolfo Mireles-Manzano

### **Horn**

Daniel Klugman

### **Piano**

Hsing-Ho (Simon) Hou

### **Percussion**

Robert Lenau  
Jiahao Fang

### **Repetiteur**

Kimly Wang

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## DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Stage Manager.....	Adrian Speth
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Sienna Siciliano
Production Assistant.....	Hannah Johnson, Ailsa Smith
Production Manager.....	Lauren Davis
Associate Production Manager.....	Ash Strange
Technical Director.....	Reanna Valencia
Assistant Technical Director.....	Andrew Green
Assistant Scenic Designer/Properties Coordinator..	Liv King
Scenic Charge Artist.....	Cameron Carcasson, Liv King, Ethan Vettesse
Assistant Costume Designer.....	Taylor Needleman
Wardrobe Crew.....	Frankie Kraus, Alisa Saisakorn
Drapers.....	Stacy Brannan, Julianna Devaney
First Hand.....	Aldi Hegger
Crafts.....	Ava Luman, Esther O'Shea
Assistant Lighting Designer.....	Hope Debelius
Production Electrician.....	Noah Wrafter
Assistant Production Electrician.....	Davin Martin
Conventionals Programmer.....	Rachael Harned
Light Board Operator.....	Kara Zacharewicz
Supertitles.....	Allison Voth
Sound Engineer.....	Irene Wang
Assistant Sound Engineer.....	Rory Shea
Sound Board Operator.....	Blythe DeWitt
Sound Crew.....	Margaret Deely, Gavin Mariani, Tori Pascrell
Front of House Manager.....	Zachary Kautter
SOT Lighting & Sound Shop Manager.....	Ben Sigda
SOM Director of Production.....	Christopher Dempsey
SOM Ensembles Manager.....	Katharine Hurd
SOM Stage Manager.....	Anna Richardson
Opera Institute Artistic Director.....	William Lumpkin
Opera Institute Managing Director.....	Oshin Gregorian

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## SYNOPSIS

A present-day archaeological dig in Philadelphia. Three graduate students, John, Quinn, and Zandra, are digging amid the ruins of a boarding house once run by Alice Tierney, a 19th-century sex worker whose death remains a mystery. The students count artifacts and joke about inconsequential finds, exhausted by the drudgery of the dig. Quinn discovers a teaspoon, triggering memories of her working-class childhood, while Zandra shares her heartbreak from a recent broken engagement. Lyra arrives at the site; she and Zandra have just begun a relationship, though Zandra is troubled by its rapid intensity. John sees them together and crudely reminds them of HR guidelines governing workplace relationships, causing Quinn to snap at him.

John shares his evolving passion for archaeology. Zandra imagines Alice through her feminist lens, while Lyra warns her about the dangers of projecting herself onto historical figures. Lyra expresses her love for Zandra, revealing some of their relationship's backstory and her confidence that Zandra is "the one" ("I Wish That You Could See You").

John and Quinn discover artifacts of significance. As John explains how his artifact, a shoe with a broken heel, unveils information about Alice Tierney, a version of her appears ("I Am Alice 1"). As imagined by John, Alice is a 19th-century sex worker trope: a coquettish femme fatale who manipulates men for pleasure and profit. Quinn is unimpressed with John's version of Alice, criticizing him for his reliance on sexist stereotypes. She shares her artifact, a teapot with a suffragette slogan, and her version of Alice: an anachronistically liberated feminist who joins Quinn in a powerful pop-rock duet.

John throws Quinn's words back at her as he pronounces her Alice unrealistic. Zandra and Lyra break up the argument, and Zandra encourages them to focus on what they know, rather than making assumptions. Her version of Alice Tierney appears and gives a nuanced if indistinct biography ("I Might Be Alice 3").

The four argue about the power and currency of certainty in academic careers, but the argument is cut short when prior sexual drama between Quinn and John is unexpectedly revealed. After an awkward moment, they

all return to work. John and Quinn continue to interact with their Alices, each respectively realizing that they have created inauthentic visions of her, which fade away.

Lyra accepts Zandra's version of Alice, and the three women share how they are each struggling to break free of society's assumptions. They promise to embrace the uncertainty of Alice Tierney's life and death, as Lyra declares her love for Zandra's human complexity.

Quinn and John join Lyra and Zandra in accepting what they do not know. The four archaeologists recognize their pasts' influence on the way they construct their stories and view the world. Together, the characters look to the future as they continue to work on the dig, watched by the three Alices.

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## **STAGE DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

At the Opera America conference earlier this year, I had a lovely conversation with composer Melissa Dunphy. She asked me what kinds of stories I wanted to tell as a director and I found myself passionately ranting about the lack of queer relationships represented on opera stages, concluding that it was high time for a lesbian couple in an opera. Melissa, always prepared and resourceful, gifted me a printed score to peruse. It was *Alice Tierney*. About a month later on a zoom call with the team at Boston University's Opera Institute, I was invited to direct a BU Fringe show. My heart skipped a beat when I heard, "It's a newer opera and you've probably never heard of it, called *Alice Tierney*?" Over pixelated screen, I promptly whipped out my copy for proud display. It was meant to be.

I love that this piece challenges our traditional definition of opera. It's perfectly bite-sized, contains a handful of 'fucks,' and there's a drum kit to boot. Best of all, it tells a deeply human story. However we choose to define opera, storytelling is its lifeblood. The world is ugly and mean—it's hard facing the muck all alone, so we tell stories to gather and find human connection. We come to the opera table, listeners and singers, players and artists, to unearth a shred of something beautiful. To make art, to share art, to build meaningful relationships. Welcome to our weird little corner of the universe. Please stay a while.

—Claire Choquette



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## ARTISTIC BIOS

Born in Australia and raised in an immigrant family, **Melissa Dunphy** herself immigrated to the United States in 2003 and has since become an award-winning and acclaimed composer specializing in vocal, political, and theatrical music. She first came to national attention when her large-scale work the *Gonzales Cantata* was featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *National Review*, and on *Fox News* and *The Rachel Maddow Show*, where host Rachel Maddow described it as “the coolest thing you’ve ever seen on this show.”. Other notable works include the song cycle *Tesla’s Pigeon*, which won first place in the NATS Art Song Composition Award, and choral work *What do you think I fought for at Omaha Beach?* which won the Simon Carrington Chamber Singers Competition and has been performed nationally by ensembles including Chanticleer and Cantus.

Dunphy is the recipient of a 2020 Opera America Discovery Grant for *Alice Tierney*, an opera commissioned by Oberlin Conservatory which premiered in 2023 at Oberlin and Opera Columbus. She has been composer-in-residence for the Immaculata Symphony Orchestra, Volti, and the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus, and her commissions include works for the BBC Singers, VOCES8, Mendelssohn Chorus, and the Kennett Symphony. Dunphy is also a Barrymore Award-nominated theater composer and is Director of Music Composition for the O’Neill National Puppetry Conference.

Dunphy has a Ph.D. in composition from the University of Pennsylvania and a B.M. from West Chester University and is on faculty at Rutgers University. She is president of the board of directors for Wildflower Composers and serves on the board of Lyric Fest. She lives in Philadelphia with her husband, Matt; the Dunphys are currently the owners and developers of the Hannah Callowhill Stage, a new performance venue in Old City Philadelphia which they hope to open in 2022, and co-hosts of the popular podcast *The Boghouse* about their adventures in Philadelphia colonial archaeology.

Award-winning stage director **Claire Choquette** is an artistic force of nature, whose concept for Richard Strauss' *Salome* won Opera America's Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer prize for an arresting, cult-centric production. Recent directing credits include *L'incoronazione di Poppea* at Red River Lyric Opera and Handel's *Rodelinda* at American Baroque Opera Company in Dallas.

Upcoming credits include Mark Adamo's *Little Women* at the Harrower Summer Opera Workshop and *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Painted Sky Opera. As the assistant director at The Dallas Opera Outreach, Claire worked on productions of *The Elixir of Love* and *The Billy Goats Gruff*; she recently finished a residency at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis where she served as the Apprentice Assistant Stage Director for productions of *Tosca* and *Susannah*. Choquette was the resident assistant director at Painted Sky Opera for its 2021–2022 season, working on productions of *Pagliacci*, *Carmen*, and *Scalia/Ginsburg*.

**Allison Voth** is an Associate Professor of Music at Boston University and Principal Coach at BU's Opera Institute. A well-known coach with a specialty in diction, she has worked with such companies and festivals as Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Boston, Chautauqua Opera, Opera North, Opera Unlimited, The Florence Voice Seminar, and the Athens Music Festival. Also a recognized supertitlist, her titles have been used nationwide, including at Washington Opera and the Chicago Symphony, and, internationally, at the Barbican Festival in London. As a specialist in the music of Paul Bowles, in 1992, she produced and performed in a multi-media performance piece entitled *Paul Bowles: One Man, Two Voices* at Merkin Hall in New York, and in 1995, she premiered a set of piano preludes in the EOS Ensemble's Bowles Festival. Ms. Voth is also the Music Director of the Cantata Singers' Chamber Series and can be heard on CRI recordings.

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## **BOSTON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS**

Established in 1954, Boston University College of Fine Arts (CFA) is a community of artist-scholars and scholar-artists who are passionate about the fine and performing arts, committed to diversity and inclusion, and determined to improve the lives of others through art. With programs in music, theatre, and visual arts, CFA prepares students for a meaningful creative life by developing their intellectual capacity to create art, shift perspective, and think broadly. CFA offers a wide array of precollege, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs, as well as a range of online degrees and certificates. Learn more at [bu.edu/cfa](http://bu.edu/cfa).

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## **BOSTON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS SCHOOL OF MUSIC: OPERA INSTITUTE**

The Opera Institute at CFA School of Music is an intensive, highly selective two-year performance-based training program for emerging operatic artists. A professional faculty and renowned guest artists provide personal support and training in all areas pertinent to a career in opera, including voice, acting, languages, and movement styles. Additionally, the Opera Institute also selects undergraduate and graduate singers from the School of Music who demonstrate true operatic potential and have mastered an intermediate integration of acting, vocal, and movement skills for the Opera Theater, Opera Workshop, and Opera Project programs.

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## **BOSTON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS SCHOOL OF THEATRE**

The School of Theatre at the College of Fine Arts at Boston University is a leading conservatory for the study of acting, stage management, design, production, and all aspects of the theatre profession. These programs of study are enriched by the School's access to the greater liberal arts programs at Boston University. The School of Theatre values the notion of "the new conservatory" and seeks to provide students with opportunities for artistic growth through a rigorous curriculum, professional connections, and an emphasis on collaboration and new work.

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## **COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS ADMINISTRATION**

Harvey Young, Dean

Gregory Melchor-Barz, Director, School of Music

Susan Mickey, Director, School of Theatre

Dana Clancy, Director, School of Visual Arts

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