

*LA MAMA E.T.C.*

&

*GAMELAN SON OF LION*

present

**KARNA:  
A SHADOW PUPPET OPERA**

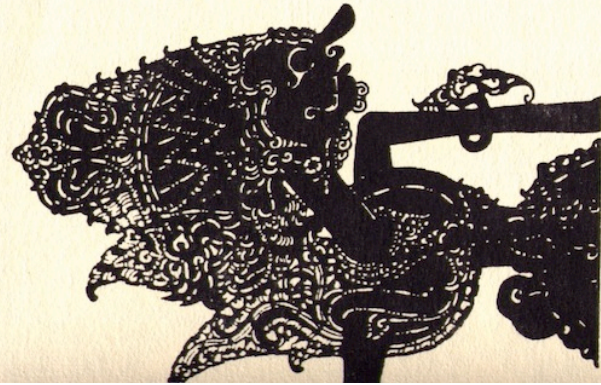
Music & Libretto **BARBARA BENARY**

Dalang (Puppeteer) **BARBARA POLLITT**

Indonesian Theatre Consultant **JODY DIAMOND**

Production Manager **ROBERT LACONI**

Directed by **BARBARA BENARY**



La Mama E. T. C. and Gamelan Son of Lion present  
**KARNA: a shadow puppet opera**  
by **Barbara Benary**

enacted with wayang kulit puppets by Barbara Pollitt  
sung in English by soprano Danielle Woerner,  
baritone Jody Kruskal and company  
Javanese percussion by Gamelan Son of Lion

**Thurs. - Sun. February 3-6 and 10-13, 7:30 pm**  
**La Mama Theatre Annex, 74A E. 4th St., NY**  
**Box Office (212) 475-7710 — Tickets \$15**

This production is made possible by funding from The National Endowment for the Arts, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the New York State Council on the Arts and Meet the Composer.



**CAST**  
(In alphabetical order)

Dennis Delgado	Narrator, Royal Herald/Historian, Arjuna, Dusasana, and Indra
Jody Kruskal	Karna, Krishna, Yudishthira
Robert Laconi	Ensemble
David Olsen	Adiratha, Duryodhana, Bhima, and Surya
Lyra Silverstein	Assistant Dalang
Danielle Woerner	Radha and Kuntidevi

**GAMELAN SON OF LION**

Barbara Benary  
David Demnitz  
Darryl Gregory

Jody Diamond  
Daniel Goode

Gamelan Son of Lion ensemble has been actively presenting American new music for Indonesian instruments in the greater New York area for seventeen years. It is a composers' collective dedicated to developing and promoting new music of all contemporary types; its repertoire includes over one hundred new works by over thirty composers, and is still growing.

**ABOUT THE STORY**

KARNA is based on material from the ancient Indian epic *Mahabharata*, which has travelled to many parts of the world along with Hindu trade and culture. This epic forms the basis for much of the dramatic arts of Indonesia and has even made its way into the English speaking world. In a 1987 theatrical production by director Peter Brook, it is proposed that the *Mahabharata* is a universal story, the story of man. In a broad sense I do not agree; I find it to be a particularly Hindu story whose overall structure makes most sense in light of a Hindu view of the world cycling toward destruction.

However, in another sense the *Mahabharata* is universal in that it contains a myriad of individual stories of characters with which we can identify and sympathize. This opera is based on excerpts centering on the life of a single character in the epic. The hero is Karna, a self-made warrior who, though a brother of the epic's heroes, ends up fighting with the enemy in the great clan war that is central to the story, and risking his life to prove himself in combat against his brother. It is also the story of a mother forced to abandon her child at birth and who must now come forth to try to prevent fratricide.

Barbara Benary

**LIBRETTO SYNOPSIS**

**Act I: HOPES**

It is a distant land and distant time during the reign of the Kuru warrior-kings.

Karna, son of a low-caste charioteer, is meditation through the sunrise, praying to the sun god, Surya. His parents, the chariot driver Adiratha and his wife Radha, speak with their son. He reveals that he wishes to take part in a tournament of arms being held for high-born princes, and in particular to compete against the favorite, Prince Arjuna. Karna's parents do not understand his motives, but give him their blessings to participate.

**Act II: THE TOURNAMENT**

The princes compete at various arms. Karna enters as a stranger, duplicates Arjuna's feats and challenges him.

The princes are in fact two rival branches of the Kuru family. The enemy branch, the Pandavas, question the propriety of Arjuna competing with a stranger and ask Karna to name his parentage. He refuses. Duryodhana, the prince who is leader of the Kaurava branch, at once espouses Karna's cause and names him a king, wishing to see Arjuna humiliated. Adiratha, Karna's father the charioteer, appears. Knowing him to be of lowly parentage, the Pandava brothers refuse the challenge. However, Karna promises lifetime loyalty to his benefactor, Duryodhana.

**Act III: THIRTEEN YEARS**

It is thirteen years later. The clowns, a family of royal servants, are trying to recall what happened next. They call upon the Royal Historian, who sings of how the Pandavas gambled away their kingdom to the Kauravas and had to live in exile. Their exile now over, they have come to reclaim their lands.

Krishna, an honored king (also a god incarnate), comes to Duryodhana to negotiate the return of the Pandava lands. Duryodhana flatly refuses any settlement. Karna knows his friend's decision to be unjust but reaffirms his loyalty.



War is imminent. Krishna is approached by Kuntidevi, a widowed queen and mother of the Pandava brothers. She seeks his advice on how to save her sons from fighting with Karna. Krishna advises her to reveal a secret and sends her to Karna. Dusasana then appears, the hotheaded brother of Duryodhana. He attacks Krishna, who reveals himself as a supernatural and defeats Dusasana with his chakra weapon.

#### Act IV: SUPERNATURALS

Kunti finds Karna meditating. She tells him the story of his birth. He is a foundling. She is his true mother who abandoned him at birth because she was young and unmarried. All of her sons are of supernatural parentage; Karna's true father is the sun god Surya and he is by rights the oldest Pandava brother. She asks him not to make war on his brothers, but to join them. He refuses, holding loyalty above all things.

Surya visits Karna in a dream and warns him that another supernatural, Arjuna's father Indra, will seek to cheat him of his armor, which is a magic protection. Soon after Indra appears disguised as a holy beggar and demands Karna's magic armor as a boon. Karna agrees but trades it for a celestial weapon with which to kill Arjuna.

#### Act V: KURUSHETA - THE BATTLEFIELD

The battle between the Kaurava and Pandava armies has been going on for a number of days and various Kaurava general have been killed. Karna is now in command. The Pandava brothers discuss strategy and decide to send their demon ally, Gatotgacha, against Duryodana, seeking to bypass Karna whom they know now to be their brother. They dispatch the clown family to fetch the demon Gatotgacha out of the forest.

Gatotgacha flies to aid his family. He attacks Duryodana and is defeating him. To save his friend, Karna uses, and loses, the magic weapon from Indra. Now Karna faces Arjuna in a duel. Krishna is Arjuna's charioteer. Karna elects his own father to be his charioteer. Karna's chariot mires in the mud. While Karna is dismounted and trying to free the wheel, Krishna advises Arjuna to kill him even though it is contrary to the warriors' code of honor. Arjuna comes to his own moral decision; he uses his magic arrow and kills Karna.

A temporary truce is called and the Kauravas and Pandavas together take Karna's body from the battlefield.

#### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**BARBARA BENARY (Composer, Director):** Barbara is a composer, ethnomusicologist, and performer of many musical styles and instruments. A violinist by background, she holds a doctorate in ethnomusicology from Wesleyan University, Ct. She is Artistic Director and co-founder of Gamelan Son of Lion, a new music repertory ensemble. Her scores have been performed by a number of dance and theatre companies including LaMama E.T.C., New York Shakespeare Festival, Balinese-American Dance Theatre, and Hudson Vagabond Puppet Theatre.

**DAVID DEMNITZ (Gamelan):** David has been a member of Gamelan Son of Lion for more than 10 years. He has composed many works which have been performed by the Ensemble, and he has enjoyed the support and collective spirit that membership in the composer's collective affords its members. In addition to performing and composing music for Gamelan Son of Lion, David is employed as a music instructor at a residential treatment center in Westchester County. In this teaching context, insights and procedures discovered while composing for the gamelan are put to use in devising group activities for the students.

**JODY DIAMOND (Gamelan):** Jody is a composer, musician, publisher and scholar. She has been involved with gamelan since 1970, and was a Fulbright Senior Scholar to Indonesia. She is the director of the American Gamelan Institute in New Hampshire, and the editor of *Balungan*, a periodical on Indonesian arts and their international counterparts. She presently teaches at Goddard College in Vermont, and curates the New Music Indonesia series on the Lyricord label in New York City.

**DANIEL GOODE (Gamelan):** Daniel was one of founders of Gamelan Son of Lion and has composed and recorded many pieces for the ensemble. Most recent is a series with street-bought and mail-order puppets called *Dans Music*, and *Lethal Aid(e)* for gamelan, slides, and narrator, a 1991 theater work about the notorious Oliver North. Goode's repertoire includes his recent CD, *Clarinet Songs*, and works in many forms and media. He teaches electronic/computer music at Rutgers Univ.

**DARRYL GREGORY (Gamelan):** Mr. Gregory received his bachelors degree in music education from Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio and a masters in music from the University of Akron in Ohio. He is primarily a trombonist/euphoniumist, but he also composes and arranges music for brass ensembles and public school bands, orchestras, jazz bands and choirs. He is a founder and partner of FTW Publishing, a music publishing consortium of brass performers that also compose and arrange for brass ensembles. Mr. Gregory has been a member of Gamelan Son of Lion since 1992 and has been a contributing composer. In addition, Mr. Gregory teaches public school instrumental music in the New York City Schools.

**JODY KRUSKAL (Baritone):** Jody is a multi-instrumentalist, including voice, concertina, winds, and percussion, and has composed for theatre and dance. He performs for children and plays with the trash band Music for Homemade Instruments and the contra dance band Grand Picnic. Composing credits include *The Mettawee River Company/Ralph Lee (Time out of time, Barnacle Bill, Ringdove, Wildman)*; *The Dance Center of Cambridge/Laura Gates Carlson (Dances People Play, Dr. Zoom)*; *Spoke the Hub Dancing/Elise Long (Garden Cities of Tomorrow, Winnie's Sister Rose)*. Jody's next engagement is as the director, composer, and builder of the Public Works Orchestra, appearing at BAM March 4 and 5 in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.



**ROBERT LACONI (Ensemble, Kenong, Production Manager):** Robert returns to LaMama where he first worked in 1978. As a member of the CETA Company he appeared in *A Book of Etiquette, cummings & goings,* and *Gulliver's Travels,* directed by John Vacarro. For the later he created the sea animal costumes for the elaborate underwater ballet. Robert has worked on many other LaMama shows doing props, set, costumes and electrics, including performing in Penny Arcade's *Based on a True Story.* Other credits include Basil in Odyssey Theater's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Associate Producer for *The Island of Dr. Moreau,* both with music by Barbara Benary. Robert recently produced a benefit for the Jackson Heights Beautification Group, *Broadway Hits the Heights* with Nancy LaMott and some of New York's best known cabaret and theater performers. Film performance credits include *The Last Temptation of Christ, Goodfella's, Annie,* and *Night of the Zombies.*

**DAVID OLSEN (Bass Baritone):** David recently moved to New York from Seattle, where he earned a Bachelor of Music degree from Western Washington University. After graduating he premiered the role of Iktome in *Coyote's Tail* by Karen Thomas, a children's opera based on Native American legends. He is currently enrolled in the Masters program at Mannes College of Music, where he will perform the role of Simone in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* later this month.

**BARBARA POLLITT (Dalang/Puppeteer):** Barbara's mask and puppet design work has been celebrated most recently on Broadway in *Jelly's Last Jam,* and is featured in a major mask exhibition at the Rockland Center for the Arts. Other mask design works with George C. Wolfe include *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Drama Desk nomination for outstanding design), *Spunk,* and *Angels in America II.* She also collaborated with her husband, R.I.P Hayman, developing his landmark work "On the Way..." an installation recreating the near death experience, recently featured at the Tuning of the World Conference at the Banff Center for the Arts. She enjoys her fourth year as 'dalang' with Son of Lion, doing innovative collaborative shadow theatre for western audiences.

**LYRA SILVERSTEIN (Assistant Dalang/Puppeteer):** Lyra, daughter of Barbara Benary, attends North Rockland High School where she is a mallet percussionist in the Red Raiders Marching Band and the Jazz Ensemble. She is currently a member of the National Honor Society and plans to study the liberal arts, psychology and science in college.

**DANIELLE WOERNER (Soprano):** Danielle performs a wide variety of solo, operatic, musical theater and chamber repertoire from the 17th through 20th centuries, and has premiered works by John Cage, Philip Glass, Otto Luening and many others. Recent performances include concerts with composer/pianists Daron Hagen and Robert Starer and the Da Capo Chamber Players, and incidental music by Baikida Carroll for the Asolo Theatre Company's *King Lear.* She has recorded for Telarc and Classic Masters, and sung leading roles with the Amato, Brooklyn Lyric and Delaware Valley Opera Companies and Shandaken Theatrical Society. A member of New York Conservatory for the Arts Repertory Company and an Artist in Residence at Holy Cross Church in Kingston, N.Y., Ms. Woerner also teaches voice at Bard College and in her studios in Manhattan and Saugerties, N.Y.

## ABOUT WAYANG KULIT SHADOW PUPPET THEATRE

The flat leather puppets, made of water buffalo hide and horn, provide a traditional art form and mode of entertainment in Indonesia that has not lost its appeal even in the age of television. The plays have ceremonial and religious significance; they are a means of contact with ancestor's spirits, and of establishing an atmosphere of serenity and balance.

A traditional Javanese wayang kulit performance takes place at night and lasts until sunrise. The entire script is chanted and sung by the dalang, a master puppeteer who also manipulates all the puppets in the show. The audience moves freely as they wish during the long development of the play, moving to the outskirts of the performance area to smoke, eat or stretch their legs. Children fall asleep and awaken for the exciting or humorous scenes. The audience watches from both sides of the screen.

All these traditions have been somewhat compressed and adapted for this version of the story of KARNA. Artistically the work combines elements of traditional wayang kulit with the western tradition of opera and oratorio.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

Music for KARNA combines elements of traditional Javanese kariwitan (traditional court music) with various western compositional and harmonic ideas, as well as elements from a number of other world musics.

Accompaniment for the vocalists is provided by the Javanese percussion ensemble known collectively as gamelan. (Each individual instrument has its own name.) A traditional gamelan ensemble consists primarily of metallophones with gongs, drums and occasional flutes and strings. The instruments played by Gamelan Son of Lion include a mixture of Indonesian made instruments (bronze gongs and drums) and American made, village-style keyboard instruments constructed by the composer from hot-rolled steel and food cans.

The instruments are tuned to the two scale-systems of Java: the seven tone pelog (brown and red cases) and the pentatonic slendro (red and white cases). In KARNA the two tunings are used in combination. Additional sound textures are provided by the kenong ('56 Oldsmobile hubcaps) and angklung (tuned bamboo rattles).

## SPECIAL THANKS

Gamelan Son of Lion wishes to thank the following people for their generous support of this production through providing shadow puppets, musical instruments, rehearsal space, and contributions: Deena Burton, Skip LaPlante, Jillian and Peter Griggs, Islene Pinder, Kenneth Maue, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Demnitz, Daniel Goode and Ann Snitow, Virginia Snitow, and Blanche Gross.



## **KARNA FUNDING CREDITS**

The writing and development of **KARNA: A SHADOW PUPPET OPERA** was made possible by a grant from the Opera/Musical Theatre program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Additional funding for this production has been provided by public funds from New York State Council on the Arts, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, and Meet the Composer.

Meet the Composer funding provided with support from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, NYSCA, Morgan Guaranty Trust Co., Chase Manhattan Bank, Con Edison, Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Greenwall Foundation, Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc., and Philip Morris Companies Inc.

## **CREDITS**

<b>Puppet Screen construction</b>	<b>Paul Newman</b>
<b>Artwork</b>	<b>Tjokordo Gde Arsa Artha</b>
<b>Technical Director</b>	<b>Howard Thies</b>
<b>Sound</b>	<b>Tim Schellenbaum</b>
<b>Lights</b>	<b>Jim Peterson</b>
<b>Construction</b>	<b>David Adams Mark Tambella</b>

**Dennis Delgado** is a tenor who just recently graduated with a B.M. in Vocal Performance from Ithaca College. He is currently working towards a Masters in Music in Vocal Performance at Mannes College of Music under Thomas Cultice.