

# The Kitchen

## THE KITCHEN PRESENTS THE REVIVAL OF ROBERT ASHLEY'S OPERA *IMPROVEMENT (DON LEAVES LINDA)*, FEBRUARY 7–16

Music and Libretto by **Robert Ashley**

Music Direction by **Tom Hamilton**

Light and Stage Design by **David Moodey**

Performed by **Gelsey Bell, Brian McCorkle, Paul Pinto, Amirtha Kidambi, Dave Ruder** and **Aliza Simons**

Sound design and live mix by **Tom Hamilton**

Produced by **Mimi Johnson**

**February 7–9 and 13–16 at 8pm**

**The Kitchen** (512 West 19th Street, NYC)

**Tickets:** \$25 general (\$20 members)

thekitchen.org; 212.255.5793 x11

**The Kitchen** is pleased to present the late composer **Robert Ashley**'s newly reconstructed 1985 opera *Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)*.

Written in 1985 and first performed in 1991, *Improvement* follows the adventures of its protagonist Linda, whose travels and romances can be read as attempts at assimilation and cultural cross-pollination, with varying degrees of success and rejection. The metaphor stretches in time from 1492—the beginning of a European consciousness of America and the expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from Spain—to the late 1940s on the West Coast (representing the future of the USA). Densely layered streams of text, lush live vocals, and a minutely structured electronic orchestra combine to present Ashley's portrait of the American psyche.

*“With his relatively minimal means, Mr. Ashley sets out to explore huge ideas. Improvement rolls along like a shaggy-dog story, continually shifting sound and perspective; as its fractured story considers love and loss, its tropes consider memory and dream and conjecture, public authority and private experience, materialism and spirituality. Like Mr. Ashley's other operas, Improvement reminds listeners that the mind offers a far more expansive stage than any theater.”* —*Jon Pareles, NY Times, 1991*

*Improvement* is performed by **Gelsey Bell, Brian McCorkle, Paul Pinto, Amirtha Kidambi, Dave Ruder** and **Aliza Simons**, with a light and stage design by **David Moodey**, and music direction and sound design by **Tom Hamilton**.

*Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)* takes place February 7-9 and February 12-16 at 8pm at The Kitchen, 512 W 19th St, New York. Tickets (\$25 General / \$20 Members), are available online at thekitchen.org; by phone at 212.255.5793 x11; and in person at The Kitchen, Tuesdays–Saturdays, 2:00–6:00pm.

## **About Robert Ashley**

Robert Ashley (1930-2014) is particularly known for his work in new forms of opera. In Ann Arbor in the 1960s, Ashley organized the ONCE Festival and directed the legendary ONCE Group, with whom he developed his first operas. Throughout the 1970s, he directed the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College and toured with the Sonic Arts Union. He produced and directed *Music with Roots in the Aether*, a 14-hour television opera/documentary about the work and ideas of seven American composers. His opera for television, *Perfect Lives*, is widely considered the precursor of “music-television.” Stage versions of *Perfect Lives*, *Atalanta (Acts of God)*, *Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)*, *Foreign Experiences*, *eL/Aficionado* and *Now Eleanor’s Idea* toured throughout the US and Canada, Europe and Asia during the 1980s and 90s. *Dust*, followed by *Celestial Excursions* and *The Old Man Lives in Concrete* toured from 1999-2012. He finished his last two operas in 2013, *Crash* and *Quicksand*. *Crash* was presented as part of the 2014 Whitney Biennial. The Kitchen presented *Quicksand* in early 2016.

## **Funding Credits**

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## **About The Kitchen**

The Kitchen is one of New York City’s oldest nonprofit spaces, showing innovative work by emerging and established artists across disciplines. Our programs range from dance, music, performance, and theater, to video, film, and art, in addition to literary events, artists’ talks, and lecture series. Since its inception, The Kitchen has been a powerful force in shaping the cultural landscape of this country, and has helped launch the careers of many artists who have gone on to worldwide prominence.

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