

## RINDE ECKERT

RINDE ECKERT is a writer, composer, librettist, musician, performer and director. His Opera / New Music Theatre productions have toured throughout America and to major theater festivals in Europe and Asia. With a virtuosic command of gesture, language, and song, the total theatre artist moves beyond the boundaries of what a 'play,' a 'dance piece,' an 'opera' or 'musical' might be, in the service of grappling with complex issues. Eckert describes many of his characters as "little men with big ideas whose consequences of their hubris are often disastrous." Sometimes tragic and austere, sometimes broadly comedic, entirely grounded by presence, his work is alchemical: moving from rumination and distillation to hard-won illumination, or its lack.

In April 2012 The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation named Rinde Eckert as one of 21 inaugural Doris Duke Artists. Each performing artist in the first class will receive an unrestricted, multi-year cash grant of \$225,000. Rinde was the 2009 recipient of The Alpert Award in the Arts for his contributions to Theatre and was the finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Drama.

Rinde Eckert began his career as a writer/performer in the 1980's, writing librettos for Paul Dresher (*Pioneer, Power Failure, Slow Fire, Ravenshead*). He subsequently composed dance scores for choreographers Sarah Shelton Mann and Margaret Jenkins, including the evening-length *Woman, Window, Square* for The Margaret Jenkins Dance Company. In 1992 Rinde began composing and performing his own music/theater pieces with *The Gardening of Thomas D*, an homage to Dante which toured the United States and to France. His staged works for solo performer include *An Idiot Divine* -two one-act plays, *Romeo Sierra Tango and Quit This House. Shoot the Moving Things and Four Songs Lost in a Wall* are written for radio.

Theatrical writing credits and awards include *Highway Ulysses* and *Four Songs Lost in a Wall* (The American Academy of Arts and Letters 2005 Marc Blitzstein Award); *Horizon* (2007-2008 Drama Desk Nominations: Best Play, Best Director; Lucille Lortel Award: "Unique Theatrical Experience"); *Orpheus X* (2007 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama); *And God Created Great Whales* (OBIE Award: Best Performance, Drama Desk Nomination: "Unique Theatrical Experience"). Three of Rinde Eckert's plays - *And God Created Great Whales, Horizon* and *Orpheus X* - have had successful off-Broadway runs.

Eckert's theatrical work has been produced in New York City by The Foundry Theatre, Culture Project, Theater for a New Audience and the New York Theatre Workshop. Outside of New York, American Repertory Theatre, Center Stage in Baltimore, Dobama Theatre Company, REDCAT at the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater in Los Angeles, and Berkeley Repertory Theater have produced his work, which has been directed by Robert Woodruff, David Schweizer, Richard ET White, Tony Taccone and Ellen McLaughlin. Eckert has directed his own and others' plays and operas for The Asia Society, Juggernaut Theater, Opera Piccola and the Paul Dresher Ensemble.

New music writing and directing projects include the critically acclaimed *Sandhills Reunion* CD (music by Jerry Granelli, text by Eckert); *The Schick Machine* with virtuoso percussionist Steven Schick in a solo-theater work composed/produced by Paul Dresher; *Imaginary City* with So Percussion; *Sound Stage* for the ensemble Zeitgeist; and Steven Mackey's oratorio *Dream House*. Conducted by Gil Rose with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the recording received three 2010 Grammy Nominations: Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance and Best Engineered Album, Classical. Eckert also wrote the text and performed in the multi-media production *Slide* with composer/guitarist Mackey and the new music ensemble eighth blackbird, which toured to major university campuses. Cedille Records renamed the project *Lonely Motel*, which won the 2011 Grammy Award for Best Small Ensemble Performance. *Gurs Zyklus*, a new music/performance/multi-media installation and collaboration with sound sculptor Trimpin debuted at Stanford University and will be at On the Boards in Seattle in May 2012. Eckert and Mackey are also members of BIG FARM, the 4-person 'prog-rock' super group with drummer Jason Treuting (So Percussion) and bassist Mark Haanstra. Rinde Eckert's own uniquely eclectic music is released on Germany's Intuition label and through Songline/Tonefield Productions.

Following his success teaching a creativity course at Princeton University, Rinde began a 6-year residency in Spring 2009. He was the 2008 Granada Artist-in-Residence at the University of California at Davis Department of Theater and Dance where he wrote and directed *Fate and Spinoza*, and was in partnership with the University of Iowa to create, write, direct and perform in *Eye Piece*, a play exploring the loss of vision and involving 30 theater students. Rinde is currently in the midst of a multi-year project with Wesleyan University's Center for the Arts to write and direct a new work for theatre students which debuts in Fall 2012, and has a July 2012 Creative Residency at Wesleyan's Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance. Rinde Eckert lives in New York with his wife, Ellen McLaughlin, the playwright and actress.