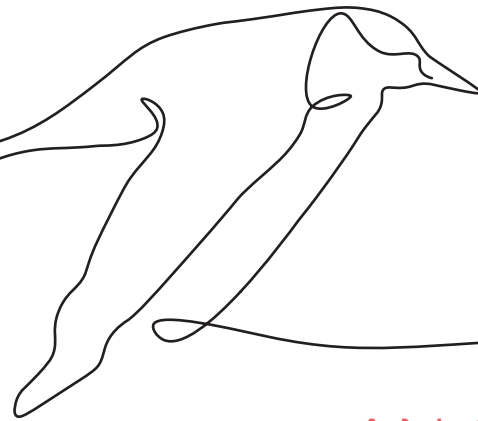

RYAN MORITZ

Important Bird Opera



Acknowledgments

This production is made possible by the Artist-in-Residence Program of the New York City Audubon Society, and the Trust for Governors Island.

Aerial global footage courtesy of NASA.

Graphic design by Martin Schapiro.

Special thanks to Danielle Sherman, Rachel Fischhoff, Rashida Richardson, Sughra Raza, and Jaffer Kolb.

AN OPERA
IN THREE
ACTS

Libretto by Anjuli Raza Kolb

Governors Island
Nolan Park House #17

Saturday, August 24, 2019
8:00pm



in order of vocal appearance

Laysan albatross
Phoebastria immutabilis

Cerulean warbler
Setophaga cerulea

Wood thrush
Hylocichla mustelina

Scarlet tanager
Piranga olivacea

Greater yellowlegs
Tringa melanoleuca

Pectoral sandpiper
Calidris melanotos

Arctic tern
Sterna paradisaea

Herring gull
Larus argentatus

Great white egret
Ardea alba

Snowy egret
Egretta thula

Sandhill crane
Antigone canadensis

Eastern screech owl
Otus asio

Veery
Catharus fuscescens

Red-winged blackbird
Agelaius phoeniceus

Double-crested cormorant
Phalacrocorax auritus

Roseate spoonbill
Platalea ajaja

Synopsis

Filmed and recorded across the hemisphere, Important Bird Opera tells the story of Unflocked Heart, taking its starting point from Sufi poet Farid ud-Din Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*. The story follows what we would consider a typical migratory path, exploring how climate change and other anthropocentric activities have fundamentally altered the natural world, restructuring its biorhythms and latent organizations into a new and largely unknowable order.

Act I

Southward. Wisdom the albatross, and oldest known wild bird, incubates her 39th egg. Our guide at the dawning of a new era marked by shifting climate and man-made catastrophe, she ponders past and future. How do we survive? Her egg hatches and they soon launch into their annual migration under the light of the full moon. Across the continent, a fledgling lesser goldfinch is rescued and transported comfortably to safety. Pelagic migrants fly thousands of miles over open water, driven by a compulsion whose source is deeply instinctual.

Act II

Hiatus. The birds arrive at their non-breeding grounds to find increasingly disturbed habitats. After a long migration, the sandhill crane lands in an unfamiliar and icy refuge, hollering to the sky in frustration. A one-eyed screech owl decides to stay, but is underwhelmed by the scene at home. Others murmur and protest. Sensing discontent, Wisdom summons the flock to address their dilemma.

Act III

Northward. The season changes and the northern migration softly begins. Danger looms, as unexpected weather events pose the risk of fallout and even death. Waves and waves of birds on the move reseed and resow and repopulate the planet. Confronted by a nuclear landscape the red-winged blackbird finds spring. The chaotic flock, utopian in their labors, return to their hatching grounds where they discover, in preening, that their species' future is hidden in their feathers, their movement, their flocking.
