

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CALLING, an opera recounting a downtown family's experience of September 11, 2001 and beyond, opens at La MaMa, NYC, September 12-28**

#### **A collaboration between writer Wickham Boyle and composer Doug Geers**

New York, NY; July 29, 2008 — The famed experimental theater La MaMa ETC kicks off its 47th season with the first full showing of *Calling: An Opera of Forgiveness*, conceived and directed by **Wickham Boyle** from her book, *A Mother's Essays from Ground Zero*, with an electro-acoustic score by award-winning composer **Douglas Geers**. Running for three weeks, September 12-28, *Calling* follows the up-close experience of one TriBeCa family on September 11, 2001, and the month immediately following it. The work features a set by designer/architect **Marty Kapell**, music direction by **Edith Hirshtal**, choreography by **Edisa Weeks**, and lighting design by **Burke Brown**. The multiracial cast includes soprano **Nicole Tori** (mother), bass-baritone **Roland Burks** (father), soprano **Nique Haggerty** (daughter) and boy soprano **Jesse Murray** (son). The live chamber ensemble, composed of **Jay Hassler** (clarinet), **Edith Hirshtal** (piano), **Chihiro Shibayama** (percussion), **Maja Cerar** (violin), **William Martina** (cello) and **Douglas Geers** (computers), will be conducted by **Hiroya Miura**.

“There isn’t a more iconic, dramatic moment in our modern history than September 11th,” says Boyle who, last year, began collaborating with Geers to transform her book of highly personal and moving essays into the operatic medium. Told from the point of view of a mother (a longtime downtown resident), *Calling* captures the reactions and reflections of one family witnessing the attack on the World Trade Center at close range, and the path they take to move from chaos to recovery and hope. The opera’s overture begins with the back and forth “calling” of three distinct voices – the family (including children and friends), the Workers (the rescuers and those in the Towers) and the Antagonists (unseen) – each relying on rhythm and pattern to create a sense of urgency. As the musical drama progresses, dissonance moves to harmony.

In *Calling*, acoustic instruments, cinematic sound design (buzzing, chirping, droning, whirring and clanking), and electronic processing (including the use of Nintendo Wii remotes) combine to create a vibrant textural flow that evokes bristling urban actions, feelings of fear and loss, and more contemplative states. Geers states: “The characters’ voices flutter through this mix as if jazz soloists through fast chord changes – repeating motives, reacting to the instrumental material, and seeking tonal anchors amid the shifting harmonic ground.”

Over the last eighteen months, segments of *Calling* have been workshopped at the Spark Festival in Minneapolis, MN (February 2008), Princeton University, NJ (May 2008), the Sonic Divergence festival at Northwestern University, IL (April 2008), and Cornelia Street Café in NYC (June and November 2007). La MaMa’s presentation marks the first time the work is shown in its entirety to the public.

## **CALLING**

**“An Opera of Forgiveness”**

**By Wickham Boyle and Douglas Geers**

(75 minutes – No intermission)

## **PERFORMANCE INFO**

Premiere: Friday, September 12 at 8 p.m.

Run: September 12-28, 2008

Thursday-Sunday: 8 p.m.

Sunday: 2:30 p.m.

## **LOCATION**

La MaMa E.T.C., First Floor Theater, 74 East 4th Street, New York

## **TICKETS**

Tickets: \$25/\$20 (students, seniors)

Box Office: 212-475-7710

Online tickets: [www.lamama.org](http://www.lamama.org)

## **CREDITS**

**Writer/Director:** Wickham Boyle

**Composer:** Douglas Geers

**Music Director:** Edith Hirshtal

**Choreographer:** Edisa Weeks

**Conductor:** Hiroya Miura

**Set Design:** Marty Kapell

**Lighting:** Burke Brown

**Assistant Conductor:** Carl Bettendorf

### **Principal characters:**

**Mother:** Nicole Tori, soprano

**Father:** Roland Burks, bass-baritone

**Son:** Jesse Murray, boy soprano

**Daughter:** Nique Haggerty, soprano

### **Secondary Characters:**

Gretchen Garvin, Gabriel Murray, Luke Murray, Madison Pappas, Daria Parada, James Rollins, Troy Valjean Rucker, and Kamala Sankaram

### **Ensemble:**

Jay Hassler, clarinet

Edith Hirshtal, piano

Chihiro Shibayama, percussion  
Maja Cerar, violin  
William Martina, cello  
Douglas Geers, computers

## INFO

[www.callingtheopera.com](http://www.callingtheopera.com)

### **ABOUT THE CREATORS OF *CALLING*:**

**Wickham Boyle (Concept, Libretto, Direction)** began her career at La MaMa ETC. After numerous theatrical diversions working at Lincoln Center, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and extensive international touring, she returned in 1983 to be executive director, where she learned experimental producing at the side of founder Ellen Stewart. Boyle commissioned work from Carter Burwell, Tom Judson, Bob McGrath, Bill T. Jones, The Blue Man Group, and the Urban Bush Women, among others. She has a BA in Anthropology from NYU and an MBA from Yale. Boyle has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a fellowship from the Japan Society and the Cuban /American Writers Guild. She is the founder of CODE magazine and a former editor of THRIVEnyc. She contributes to National Geographic Traveler, Budget Travel, Uptown, Gotham, The New York Times, and New York Magazine. Her book, *A Mother's Essays From Ground Zero*, was a fundraiser for the downtown schools attended by her two children. (<<http://www.wickiworld.com>>/ <<http://www.midlifemambo.blogspot.com>>)

**Burke Brown (Lighting Designer)** has created design for *The Brothers Size* (NYSF-Public Theater, NYC; The Studio Theatre, DC; The Abbey Theater, Dublin); *Going Down Swingin'* (NY Musical Theater Festival); John Selya's *La Voix* (Joyce Soho); Aszure Barton's *A Traveling Show* (Baryshnikov Arts Center); *The Song for New York: What Women Do While Men Sit Knitting* (Mabou Mines, Associate Designer); and *Lulu* (Yale Rep), among others. Brown is the 2008 Artist in Residence for Lighting Design for Ars Nova. He received his BA from Guilford College and MFA from Yale School of Drama, and is a member of Wingspace. (<<http://www.wingspace.com>>)

American born bass-baritone **Roland Burks (the Father)** has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe, with such companies as Houston Grand Opera, Tri-Cities Opera, Connecticut Opera, The Phoenix Symphony, Teatro Real (Madrid, Spain), Ernen Festival of Tomorrow, (Ernen, Switzerland), Bregenz Festival (Bregenz, Austria), and International Opera Theater in Umbria, Italy. He is the recipient of numerous vocal awards, including top honors in the Midwest region of the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions.

**Douglas Geers (Composer)** works extensively with technology in composition, performance, and multimedia collaborations. He has won numerous grants and awards, including a 2007 McKnight Composer Fellowship, a Fulbright Scholarship, two Composers Commissioning Project prize from the American Composers Forum, the Roth-Thomson award for "Impressive project for musical composition," and others from sources including the *Experimental studio der Heinrich-Strobel-Stiftung des Südwestrundfunks e.v.* (Germany), the *Zürich Hochschule für Musik und Theater* (Switzerland), Meet the Composer, ASCAP, NYSCA, the Ditson Fund, Columbia University, the Argosy Foundation, and the Mellon Foundation. Geers is currently

Associate Professor of Music at the University of Minnesota's School of Music and Director of the studios for Sound, Technology, and Research (**STRUM**). He is also the founder and director of the annual **Spark Festival of Electronic Music and Arts**, and a member of the electroacoustic improvisation group *Sønreel*. (<<http://www.dgeers.com>>)

A native of Sendai, Japan, **Hiroya Miura (Conductor)**, has been active as a composer, conductor, and performer in the U.S. and Canada. Feeling equally as an insider and outsider to Japanese court music and European modernist music, Miura has composed works for Speculum Musicae, New York New Music Ensemble, American Composers Orchestra, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, and members of Reigakusha (*Gagaku* ensemble based in Tokyo), as well as performed in venues such as Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, Annenberg Center, and Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery. He is a founding member of the electronic improvisation unit, NoOneReceiving, whose debut album from the *Grain of Sound* has won critical acclaim in Europe and the United States. Miura has received commissioning grants and fellowships from the Mellon, Jerome, Whiting, and Rohm Foundations, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and the American Composers Forum. He holds D.M.A. degree from Columbia University, and he is Assistant Professor of Music at Bates College, and directs the College Orchestra.

Austrian born **Edith Hirshtal (Music Director and Pianist)** has been heard in concert halls throughout the United States, including The Philadelphia Academy of Music and Lincoln Center in New York City. She has appeared with principal members of The Philadelphia Orchestra, the New York Metropolitan Opera Company, the Philadelphia Opera Company, the Sequoia Quartet and with San Francisco's Women's Philharmonic, under the baton of JoAnn Fallea. Hirshtal was a prizewinner in the William Kappel International Piano Competition, was awarded the Galica Prize by the Paderewski Foundation of New York City, and was a semi finalist in The Young Concert Artists' International Auditions. She is professor emeritus of The University of California, Long Beach. (<<http://www.edithhirshtal.com>>)

Prior to his training as an architect, **Marty Kapell (Designer)** worked extensively in theater, dance and opera in a variety of capacities including set designer, lighting design, director and stage manger. He was the Artistic Director of the Second Company of the Williamstown Theater Festival for several seasons and worked as set designer under Wilford Leach for the ETC Company of La MaMa. In dance he was the Production Stage Manger for Twyla Tharp's company and his opera experience includes directing *La Dafne* for the New York Pro Musica Antiqua. Marty is currently Senior Partner of WASA/Studio A, a multi-discipline architectural design firm.

Boy soprano **Jesse Burnside Murray**, age 11 (**the Son**), is a cello student of Professor Vladimir Panteleyev at the Special Music School in New York. In 2008, Jesse was awarded a cash prize at the International Russian Rotary Children Music Competition in Moscow, and a 2nd Place at the International Competition Violoncello in Liezen Austria. In 2007, he won 1st Place at the Wagner College Young Musician Competition in New York and performed in Lucca Italy at the Ducal Palace in the International Academy of Music Gala. In 2007 Jesse also performed the Vivaldi Concert for Cello as the soloist with the Chernigov Philharmonic in the Ukraine. Jesse has been a member of the Metropolitan Children's Chorus since the age of six. In 2006 and

2007 he was the Second Spirit in the English version of The Magic Flute and has performed in *Hansel and Gretel*, *Carmen*, *Tosca*, and *La Bohème*.

Soprano **Nicole Tori (the Mother)** is an accomplished singer of opera, oratorio and musical theater. Her credits include Musetta in *La Bohème* (New York Opera Forum), Oscar in *Un Ballo in Maschera* (NYOF), Despina in *Così fan Tutte* (Mannes), Najade in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Dell'Arte Opera Ensemble), and Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music* (Millbrook Playhouse). International credits include *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Urbania, Italy), and the Asian tour of *The Sound of Music*. Nicole performed as a finalist in the Classical Productions Vocal Competition at Weill Recital Hall (Carnegie Hall) and studied voice performance/opera at Wheaton College (IL) and New England Conservatory of Music.

**Edisa Weeks (Choreographer)** is the Director and Choreographer for DELIRIOUS DANCES. Her work, which merges theater and dance, has been performed in a variety of venues including swimming pools, storefront windows, senior centers and various living rooms, as well as at Chashama Theater, Emory University, Jacob's Pillow, Works & Process at the Guggenheim Museum, The Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts, The National Black Arts Festival, and Summerstage's Dance Festival, and internationally in Canada, England, Germany, Italy, Japan and Spain. Weeks has received a New York Foundation for the Arts Choreographic Fellowship, and Brooklyn Art Council grants. Raised in Uganda, Papua New Guinea and Brooklyn, NY, she holds an MFA in choreography from NYU and a BA from Brown University, and currently teaches at Princeton University.

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