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Elizabeth Falk Auteur Director



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BIOGRAPHY

Auteur director Elizabeth Falk has directed 50 productions of opera, musical theatre, classical and contemporary drama, at Carnegie Hall, Off-Broadway New York, Shakespeare's Globe London and Kennedy Center, with her Russian dramatic and operatic debuts made in 2003: St. Petersburg, *Hamlet On Trial*, and 2004: Opera Yakutsk, *Don Giovanni*, set in a Hollywood movie studio, her sixth collaboration with her husband, conductor Martin Piecuch.

Elizabeth was the first woman ever to direct at **Shakespeare's Globe London**: In 1995 she led *Artists' Choices: Scenes from Henry V, Othello and Hamlet*. The Globe's invitation was won by her 80-minute, 10-actor distillation of *Henry V* at The Players, NYC, featuring Metropolitan Opera's Richard Weitach, Elizabeth's colleague in 13 productions, as Falstaff and playing music of Walton. At the Globe's behest, she then created *Hamlet On Trial*, her courtroom adaptation of *Hamlet*, starring Stephen Lang. She then directed *H.O.T.* for the UK/AZ Festival, Phoenix, 1997, and Carpenter Center Long Beach in 2001, with Gov. George Deukmejian as The Judge and Richard Carpenter in his Shakespearian debut. The 4th *H.O.T.* occurred in St. Petersburg in 2003, after six weeks coaching the Russian actors in Shakespearean English. The 5th will open at Sejong Center, Seoul, in 2008.

Elizabeth Falk's 2000 debut at **Carnegie Hall** was with the distinguished **Orpheus Chamber Orchestra** when they made their first foray into opera: *Il Signor Bruschino*, starring "the thinking person's diva"*, Lauren Flanigan (**The New York Times*). Elizabeth's eighth Rossini production was *Il Cambiale di Matrimonio* with Garden State Opera in April this year. The others include her 1988-1992 New York Town Hall New Critical Edition premiere series which has become the stuff of New York opera lore: *La Gazza Ladra*, *La Donna del Lago*, and *Il Viaggio a Reims*, which was invited cast-intact to open the 1988 Newport Music Festival.

Elizabeth's 1996 **Kennedy Center** debut was *Lan Ying*, a Chinese opera, her first collaboration with Mro. Piecuch, pronounced Piet-sook, whom she married in 2001. In 2002 they made their Snug Harbor Staten Island debuts with *Waking in New York*, an opera based on the poetry of Allan Ginsberg. In 2003 they made their Hillwood, Washington, D.C. debuts with Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat*, their fifth collaboration. Critic Tim Page of *The Washington Post* wrote "Stage Director Elizabeth Falk made effective use of the mansion's grounds and hideaways" and "Piecuch led the Ensemble of the U.S. Congressional Philharmonic with wit and authority."

In 2000 she made her **NYC Off-Broadway** debut, directing the contemporary opera *Mandrake the Magician* at Rosetta LeNoire's **AMAS Repertory Theatre**. She directed two productions of *Lost in the Stars* by Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson, the second the capping event of NYC's Black History Month 1997. Weill Foundation president Dr Kim Kowalke deemed it "The best production of any Weill I have seen anywhere".

For The Players, New York, Elizabeth created and directs the unique series *The Words & The Music* which juxtaposes opera with its literary sources. To date there have been nine parts: *Otello Meets Othello*, 1991 (based on works of Verdi, Rossini and Shakespeare), *Hail Macbeth!/ Salve Macbetto!*, 1992 (Shakespeare, Verdi) *Rigoletto, Triboulet & Bertuccio*, 1992 (Verdi, Victor Hugo and Taylor), *Romeo Loves Juliet*, 1993 (Gounod, Bellini, Bernstein, Prokofiev, Shakespeare), *Camille, La Traviata*, 1993 (Verdi, Dumas fils), *Madame/ Madama Butterfly*, 1994 (Puccini, Belasco and Long) *Tosca/La Tosca*, 1995 (Puccini, Sardou), *Don Carlo/ Don Carlos**, 1997 (Verdi, Schiller) and *Il Barbiere/ The Barber***, 1998 (Rossini, Beaumarchais). The series enjoyed the narrative skills of Werner Klemperer (d. 2000) whom Elizabeth directed in 11 productions. (**DC/DC* was also performed at the Philadelphia Arts Bank; ***IB/TB* was commissioned by Opera Idaho.) Part 10, *Hamlet On Hamlet*, commissioned by Seoul National Symphony, will draw from Shakespeare, Thomas, Reutter, Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky.

Opera work includes *A Forty-Minute Carmen* and *A Forty-Minute La Traviata* for Opera Mondays, **World Trade Center, NY**, 1994; *Aida* and *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Verdi), *I Pagliacci* (Leoncavallo), and *Amelia Goes to the Ball* (Menotti) for **Brooklyn Lyric Opera** 1991-94; contemporary plays directed include (1999) *No Time for Comedy* by S. N. Behrman and (2000) *The General from America* by Richard Nelson, for the NYC Public Library Theatre. Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with New Artists' Coalition, 1987; an earlier *L'Histoire du Soldat* with the New England Conservatory and *Jose Ferrer*; and *Helen Hayes, The Painting, The Unveiling*, 1989, the first show directed by a woman in The Players' 102 years: scenes from *Victoria Regina*, *Dear Brutus* and, *Carmen*, a tribute including *Jose Ferrer* and *Tony Bennett*; Elizabeth was the last director to work with the splendid *Helen Hayes*, who was 89.

In 2005 she made her Korean directorial debut in Seoul, with leading opera singers Vittoria Lee and Brian Ho in concert with the *Seoul National Symphony Orchestra*, Dong Jin Chiang, Music Director.

In June 2007 Elizabeth will direct a musical adaptation of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (Paul Dick, composer) an Equity Showcase production in New York City's Theatre Five. Among other future projects: Elizabeth, who is part-Native American, is the director of record of the Cherokee opera *Mountain Windsong*, based on the *Trail of Tears* story of Cherokee Nation. As a result of that and her invitation to attend the first ever Indigenous Peoples in the Arts conference in Albuquerque in June 2006, she is also the director of record of an all Aboriginal production of *Porgy and Bess*, bound for Opera Perth (Australia) in 2007-08.

Elizabeth Falk

On September 29, 2001 at NYC's Society for Ethical Culture, Elizabeth directed *A Puccini Ring Cycle*, consisting of *Gianni Schicchi*, a staged *Messa di Gloria* with the *Schicchi* characters carrying over into a "rehearsal" of the *Mass*, then her onstage wedding with the production's conductor, Martin Piecuch.

Other luminaries Elizabeth has directed include opera singers Richard Cassilly, Nedda Casei, Patricia Craig, Paul Groves, Heidi Grant Murphy, Jan Opalach, Dagmar Schellenberger, Melanie Sonnenberg and Robert White, and actors Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Rip Torn, Billy Connally, Earle Hyman, Arthur French, Michael Allinson, Gawn Grainger, Robert Lansing and James MacArthur.

In 1997 and 2004 Elizabeth gave master classes, "Acting in Opera" and "Ensemble Acting in Opera" at AIMS in Graz, Austria. She is a Marquis biographee in Who's Who of American Women since 1989 as well as Who's Who in the World, Who's Who in Entertainment and 20+ other volumes. She has presented awards to Marilyn Horne and Robert Merrill.

In 1991 she was the first woman elected to the Board of The Players and served 3 terms (9 years) under presidents **Jose Ferrer**, **Robert Lansing**, **Lynn Redgrave** and **Michael Allinson**. She was the first female officer of The Players, and was elected 5 times [92-96] President of the Hampton-Booth Theatre Library at The Players. She has served on the boards of New Dramatists NY, Shakespeare's Globe USA, and was president of the board of U.S. Congressional Philharmonic Society, Washington DC. She was born Elizabeth Moxley into a Memphis family of impresarii and performers, and is a third generation person of theatre. She was married 22 years to Lee Falk, playwright, producer, stage director and creator/writer of the cartoon adventure strips *The Phantom* and *Mandrake the Magician*, until his death 13 March 1999. She married conductor Martin Piecuch on 29 September 2001 they way they met: on stage.

Her husband Martin Piecuch is Permanent Guest Conductor of the Moscow Philharmonic, and made his debut in 2005 on the podia of the St. Petersburg (Russia) Philharmonic and the Seoul National Symphony Orchestra. He conducts opera and symphony with orchestras all over Russia, Europe and the Far East. Elizabeth and Martin enjoy working together, which is how they met, on the stage of Kennedy Center, and both continue to enjoy working with other conductors and directors as well.