

|Soulpepper|

{her
words}
FESTIVAL

WILDWOMAN

BY KAT SANDLER



Illustrations: Gracia Lam Design: lightupthesky.ca

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Welcome to Act III of our season! We're thrilled to be kicking off our Her Words festival with Kat Sandler's new play *WILDWOMAN*. One of the reasons we began our Six Women Writing commissioning program is that we wanted to give women creators a larger stage for their work, to give them the opportunity to write that large, bold and audacious play that could fill our mainstages. Playwright Kat Sandler picked up this challenge with her typical gusto and humour and delivered a play that we're excited to share with you.

If you don't know Kat Sandler, she's an award-winning screenwriter, playwright, director and the Artistic Director of Theatre Brouhaha. She has staged seventeen of her original plays in the last eight years – an incredible feat for any playwright. If you're already a fan of Kat Sandler's work, you know that her plays are fast and full of humour. In *WILDWOMAN*, she takes a complex look at power and gender, this time through the life of Catherine de Medici. She uses the amazing story of Catherine's marriage to King Henry II of France and gives it a contemporary feel. What's most amazing are some of the outrageous but true facets of their story that Kat's play maintains – you'll be asking yourself, did that really happen? And most of the time, the answer is yes!

The production has a stacked cast with some new faces to Soulpepper audiences including Rosemary Dunsmore, Rose Napoli and Gabriella Sundar Singh. Tony Ofori returns to us following his Dora-nominated performance in *Pipeline* (2022). Dan Mousseau also returns to our stage – you saw him in *The Seagull* earlier this year and he is also a Soulpepper Academy graduate. All led by the multi-talented Kat Sandler who also directs the production.

We hope this is only your first visit to our Her Words festival – next up is Sandra Caldwell's *The Guide to Being Fabulous*, an amazing story of self-discovery and Raha Javanfar's *Sympathy for the Devil*, a concert that examines the history of music and its preoccupation with the Devil. Alongside these productions, Her Words features panels, conversations, workshop presentations and a few parties. We hope to see you there.

GIDEON ARTHURS

Executive Director,
Soulpepper Theatre Company

WEYNI MENGESHA

Artistic Director,
Soulpepper Theatre Company

Okay, so...this is a true story. Mostly.

And it was supposed to be about a wildman, a legendary, half-man, half-animal creature covered entirely in hair, said to become ferocious at night and steal and eat children alive, and whose marriage was the (alleged) inspiration for Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's original fairy tale, *Beauty and the Beast*.

But Pedro González was a very real man, living in the 16th century with a rare condition called "hypertrichosis" (latin for "too much hair"), presented as a caged oddity to Henry II of France for his collection of exotic pets. As a hilarious experiment, Pedro was given a latin name (Petrus Gonsalvus), an education and a position at court and then married off to Queen Catherine de Medici's most beautiful lady-in-waiting to see what sort of furry children the union might produce. The couple bore seven children, who went on to be bought and traded by nobles like collectibles. You can't make this shit up.

As I dug into Petrus' story, I kept getting distracted by three fascinating women inhabiting it; Catherine de Medici, the Queen of France, Lady Diane de Portiers, the King's much older mistress, and Kitt, Petrus' courtier wife. These women were all considered "wild" in very different ways, but all of them were fighting for power, legacy and their very lives in a time when a woman's worth was measured entirely by her dowry, her wifely subservience and her ability to bear children.

I found myself most drawn to Catherine de Medici, perhaps best known (if you know her at all) as an evil Machiavellian schemer, who poisoned her enemies (allegedly), and resorted to witchcraft and soothsayers in her desperate attempts to provide the kingdom with an heir. But she's mostly remembered for murdering thousands of Protestants at the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572. Allegedly.

We're not trying to absolve Catherine of her crimes (or her wildness) but we do want to contextualize and challenge the perception of her as a "villain". Can we enjoy a tale about a monstrous female antihero the same way we enjoy stories about monstrous male antiheroes i.e. Dexter, the Sopranos, or Macbeth? Do we become a monster due to circumstances, or was the monster always in there, waiting to be released? And what happens when we finally let it out?

WILDWOMAN has become a story about women pushing against the status quo to be seen not just as wives and wombs, but as professional leaders who can enact change. There is a world that is still alarmingly like our own. It's been half a millennium since these (mostly) true events, but in the aftermath of #metoo, and the overturning of Roe v. Wade, in an age where women are so tantalizingly close to ultimate power (just one weak presidential heartbeat away...), but also constantly attacked for daring to want more, it's clear that almost 500 years later we still have a long way to go.

I am eternally grateful to the wildpeople of our production, from Weyni, Luke and the entire administration at Soulpepper, to every member of the insanely hard-working production departments, to the brilliant cast, and the incredible production team. These beautiful beasts have put so much of themselves - their bravery, patience, kindness, collaboration and terrible puns - into building this epic, strange and wild world for you. To everyone who has read, touched or massaged the script at every stage, thank you for helping to bring this bad girl to life. We've had so much fun creating our monster and we can't wait for you to meet her.

Kat Sandler

Writer & Director

Background Notes

For writer-director Kat Sandler, theatre is, or should be, an unruly place. Pro tip: lean forward. This story gallops. This history speaks in modern day language studded with juicy references that range from Beauty and the Beast, to 90's hip hop, to Disney.

Sandler's starting point was the audacity of the "bad girl", someone who is not content with the role they have been assigned. Someone who wants – and, critically, is capable of – more. Can an audience, Sandler wondered, enjoy watching a bad girl the way we enjoy watching a bad boy? That question animated both the writing and rehearsing. Sandler directs her own work to shepherd her vision, but she's not precious about it. Her rehearsal room is a raucous, collaborative space where everyone co-creates the world of the play.

The amazing truth is that 99.9% of *WILDWOMAN* is historically accurate. There was a real St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in the 1572, which unleashed a wave; a Catholic mob violence against the Huguenots (French Calvinist Protestants). The court depicted in this play existed, this world existed. Perhaps it has been waiting for Sandler and her co-conspirators to show it off in all its hilarious, weirdly resonant uniqueness.

Welcome to the first play of our 'Her Words' Festival. It's never felt this good to be bad.

Playwright Bio

Kat Sandler has been a compelling voice in our theatre for more than a decade. Her many credits include: a Dora Award for Mustard, a nomination for Bang Bang, and the singular feat of having written two linked plays, *The Party* and *The Candidate*, that were produced by the Citadel Theatre simultaneously in different spaces with actors running between theatres. She writes for film and television and is an in-demand podcast creator and director. She lives in Toronto with Joe Pesci, her dog, and she can hip thrust 225 pounds.

Background Notes by Paula Wing

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Cast

Rosemary Dunsmore
Didi

Rose Napoli
Catherine

Gabriella Sundar Singh
Kitty

Dan Mousseau
Pete

Tony Ofori
Henry

Creative Team

Kat Sandler
Writer & Director

Kimberly Purtell
Lighting Designer

Rachel Moore
Script Coordinator

Luke Reece
Associate Director

Maddie Bautista
Sound Design & Composition

Tamara Protic
Stage Manager

Nick Blais
Set Designer

Anita Nittoly
Fight & Intimacy Director

Seren Brooke Lannon
Assistant Stage Manager

Michelle Tracey
Costume Designer

Angel Everett
Assistant Set Designer

Production

Chris Blanchenet
Scenic Painter

Erin Halls
Stitcher

Ethan Robinson
Lighting Operator

Paul Boddum
Head Scenic

Geoff Hughes
Cutter

Andres Castillo-Smith
Audio Operator

Greg Chambers
1st Props Builder/Buyer

Christopher Jacobs
Dresser

Bill Stahl
1st Carpenter

Allan Cooke
Prosthetics Artist

Ellie Koffman
Head of Wardrobe

Celina Westlake
Second Stitcher

Jacqueline Robertson-Cull
Head of Wigs

Dalton Villeneuve-Marini
Deck Hand

Emma Zulkoskey
Breakdown Artist

Andy DeVries
Head Carpenter

Lisa Nighswander
Head of Props

Stephanie Dilnot
Dresser

Kalina Popova
Assistant Head of Wardrobe

WILDWOMAN is a commission of Soulpepper's Six Women Writing Program supported by: BMO, Kevin & Roger Garland and Women Centre Stage. *WILDWOMAN* is staged by arrangement with Emma Laird, GGA, www.ggagency.ca.

Thank you to the following artists who contributed to the development of *WILDWOMAN*: Kaleb Alexander, Claire Armstrong, Christopher Allen, Nadine Bhabha, Evan Buliung, Jaelynn Brooks, Cory Christopher, Derrick Chua, Kimberly Colburn, Nell Corrigan, Kristin Deacon, Caitlin Driscoll, James Daly, Shakura Dickson, Mackenzie Donaldson, Jake Epstein, Tim Fort, Allegra Fulton, Alexis Gordon, Caitie Graham, Richard Greenblatt, Mel Hague, Scott Hammell, Jill Harper, Jessica Harrison, Emily Harrisson, Jon Heppner, Daren A. Herbert, Lindsay Hunter, Graham Isador, Emma Laird, Ericka Leobrera, Kat Letwin, Ann MacNaughton, Sheila McCarthy, Megan MccCarthy, Tom McGee, Megan Miles, Rachel Moore, Dan Mousseau, Colleen Murphy, Nancy Palk, Tamara Protic, Aimee Roy, Alex Sandler, Jerry Sandler, Paolo Santalucia, Gabriella Singh Sundar, Pamela Sinha, Kristen Thomson, Caroline Toal, Timothy Walker, Hilary Wirachowsky, Lindsay Wu. **Thank You** as well to the Canadian Opera Company Props Department.

WILDWOMAN

is generously supported by:

**DIANE BLAKE +
STEPHEN SMITH**

Running Time:
2 hours 30 minutes
20 minute intermission



MADDIE BAUTISTA is a Bi, Filipina sound designer who calls Tkaronto's West End home. SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN. FOR SOULPEPPER: Associate Sound Designer on Fool For Love (2019). OTHER THEATRE: The First Stone (New Harlem Productions and GCTC); Kim's Convenience (A Thousand Island's Playhouse); Les Belles Soeurs, I Am William (Stratford). ORIGINAL WORK: Love You Wrong Time (Bad Muse Collective with Nightwood); 4inXchange (xLq). OTHER: She is a 5-time Dora Mavor Moore Award nominated artist for Love You Wrong Time (New Play, Sound Design, Ensemble, Production) and Eraser (Sound Design 2019).



NICK BLAIS SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN. FOR SOULPEPPER: The Ex-Boyfriend Yard Sale (2022) (Nevermind the Noise/Outside the March/Red Light District), Lessons in Temperament (2021) (Outside the March). OTHER THEATRE: Trojan Girls, The Flick, Jerusalem, Terminus (Outside the March); Antipodes, Marjorie Prime (Coal Mine); Sweeney Todd, I Claudia (TIFT); Into the Woods (YES Theatre); Human Animals, Dissidents (ARC); Glass Menagerie (Grand); Bang Bang (Factory); Vespers (Royal Winnipeg Ballet); Don Giovanni, L'Elisir D'Amore, Alcina (Opera Nuova); West Side Story (Citadel); Brantwood (Sheridan) Nick Blais designs across Canada in all manner of discipline and venue. As Head of Design for Toronto's leading immersive theatre company, Outside the March, Nick specializes in creating thematic, impactful designs and transforming unconventional spaces into immersive, dramatic environments. Nick has received Dora Mavor Moore Awards in Toronto for both set and lighting design, nominated for the Virginia Myrtle Cooper award in costume design, and various other awards and nominations across the country. Nblaisdesign.com



ROSEMARY DUNSMORE was born in Edmonton and raised in various towns in southern Ontario. SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN (Debut). OTHER THEATRE: Public Enemy, Tartuffe (Canadian Stage), A Little Night Music, Bakkhai, Front Page (Stratford Festival), King Charles III (Studio 180), Tom at the Farm (Buddies in Bad Times). RECENT FILM & TV: Three Pines, To Catch a Killer, Chucky the series, Fellow Travelers, Street Legal reboot, Orphan Black, The Story of Love, Love's Sweet Recipe, Catering Christmas, Scaredy Cats. Still remembered as Katherine Brooke in Anne of Green Gables and as Mom P.I. She voices animation characters on Paw Patrol and Unicorn Academy. OTHER: She is the recipient of numerous acting awards for her stage and film career across Canada. She has directed frequently for the stage. She regularly taught acting at major schools across the country. She is happy traveling now and trying to learn the Spanish language.



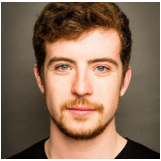
ANGEL EVERETT is a Canadian based set and props designer is grateful for the opportunity to work with Soulpepper on this exciting new piece. Previous work includes assistant video designer on More Entertainments Rock of Ages, Set, Props, and Costume Designer for language of birds and Alice in Wonderland for the CCOC, Props Fabricator for 7 Cirque Du Soleil shows, set dresser and props for Gen V, Designated Survivor, and Star Trek Discovery.



SEREN BROOKE LANNON currently resides in Toronto, ON. SOULPEPPER 2023: Billie, Sarah, and Ella: Revolutionary Women in Jazz, WILDWOMAN, The Secret Chord: A Leonard Cohen Experience, Sympathy for the Devil, On A Night Like This. FOR SOULPEPPER: A Christmas Carol (2017), La Bete (2018), Little Menace: Pinter Plays, The Black Drum (2019), Where The Blood Mixes (2022). OTHER THEATRE: Every Brilliant Thing (Thousands Islands Playhouse), Girl From the North Country (Mirvish), Uncovered: The Music of Abba (Musical Stage Company), Bar Mitzvah Boy, The Times They are Changin', 25 Questions for a Jewish Mother (Harold Green Jewish Theatre), Bang Bang (Factory Theatre). FILM AND TELEVISION: Y: The Last Man.



RACHEL MOORE is a theatre creator raised in Limehouse, Ontario. SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN. OTHER THEATRE: Barrie, Europa (Simcoe County Theatre Festival), Green Skies (Theatre by the Bay), Senior Stories (ECT Theatre), The Learned Ladies (Young Centre for The Performing Arts/GBTs), The Wolves (All The Hats). OTHER: Rachel is a writer, classically trained actor, and assistant director. Colin Mochrie Improvisation Award from Humber College (2012), Indie Producers Co-op at Theatre by the Bay (2018), 'The Artist Next Door' grant recipient (2020).



DAN MOUSSEAU SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN, The Seagull. FOR SOULPEPPER: It's a Wonderful Life (2016), Innocence Lost (2018). OTHER THEATRE: Prodigal (Howland/Crow's), Three Sisters (Howland), A Christmas Carol (Three Ships Collective/ Soupcan Theatre), Perfect Wedding (Thousand Islands). FILM/TV: Frankie Drake Mysteries, Workin' Moms (CBC), Tempted By Danger (Lifetime). OTHER: Dan would like to thank his family and friends and his beloved dog, Merlin.



ROSE NAPOLI SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN (Debut). SELECTED THEATRE: Much Ado About Nothing (Canadian Stage), Grace (Nightwood), Romeo & Juliet (Citadel), Taming of the Shrew (SLSF), The Incredible Speediness of Jamie Cavanaugh (Dora nomination, Outstanding Performance). FILM & TELEVISION: Rose is a television writer who has recently worked on shows for CBC, Bell/Crave, and CityTV. She is currently developing her own shows with Cameron Pictures, CBC Gem, and Circle Blue Entertainment. OTHER: Rose is a Dora nominated playwright. She will be starring in Nightwood's production of her play, Mad Madge, at the Theatre Centre in April.



ANITA NITTOLY SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN. Other Selected Fight Director & Sexual Choreographer Credits: Fall on Your Knees (Canadian Stage); Prodigal (Crow's Theatre); Trojan Girls and The Outhouse of Atreus (Outside The March/ Factory Theatre); Our Place (Cahoots/TPM); The Last Wife, The 39 Steps, Successions (Centaur Theatre); Coaching: Stage Combat Instructor, Fight Director, and Sexual Choreographer (National Theatre School). Selected Stunt Performer/Stunt Actor credits: SEE, Star Trek: Discovery, Pretty Hard Cases, Titans, The Boys, Rabbit Hole, What We Do in the Shadows, various Ubisoft motion capture productions.



TONY OFORI was born in Toronto, ON. SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN. FOR SOULPEPPER: Pipeline (2022 Dora Nomination – Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role). OTHER THEATRE: Fall On Your Knees (NAC/Vita Brevis/Canadian Stage/Neptune/Grand), Bunny, Copy That (Tarragon Theatre), Actually (Obsidian Theatre), Serving Elizabeth (Western Canada Theatre). FILM & TELEVISION: Supergirl, A Royal Queens Christmas, Amazing Grace, The Boys, Coroner, Murdoch Mysteries, Star Trek. Currently, Tony can be seen on Apple TV’s season 3 of Daytime Emmy winning show Ghostwriter as Malcolm Turner. OTHER: Tony is a Humber College and York University Alumni. Want to know what’s next for Tony? Check him out at www.tonyofori.com



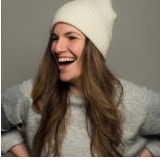
TAMARA PROTIC SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN. FOR SOULPEPPER: Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan (w/ Bad Hats Theatre). OTHER THEATRE: The Waltz, among men, Lady Sunrise (Factory Theatre); In the Abyss (Political Movement); Knives in Hens (Coal Mine Theatre); The Cave (The Cave Collective); Philosopher’s Wife (Paradigm Productions); Prairie Nurse (Factory Theatre/Thousand Islands Playhouse); Poison (Coal Mine Theatre); Salt-Water Moon (Factory Theatre, WhyNot Theatre, Mirvish); S H E E T S (Veritas Theatre); Late Night (ZoomerMedia, Theatre Brouhaha); Faust (Theatre by the Bay); Byhalia, Mississipi (Cue6 Productions).



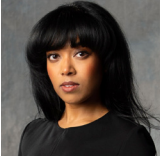
KIMBERLY PURCELL was born and raised in Thornhill, ON. SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN. FOR SOULPEPPER: Pipeline; Queen Goneril; King Lear; ‘da Kink in My Hair. For SOULPEPPER: (selected) A Streetcar Named Desire; Sisters; The Goat or Who Is Sylvia; The Last Wife; The Virgin Trial; Mother’s Daughter; Crash; Twelve Angry Men; Happy Place. OTHER THEATRE: Mirvish Productions, Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, Canadian Stage Company, Soulpepper Theatre, Arena Stage, DC, National Arts Centre and the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Pacific Opera Victoria, Opera Philadelphia, Edmonton Opera, Theatre Calgary, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Citadel Theatre, Place des Arts, among others. Other: Recipient of three Dora Mavor Moore Awards, the Pauline McGibbon Award, a Montreal English Theatre Award, a Toronto Theatre Critics Award, an Ottawa Critics Circle Award and an Elizabeth Sterling Award. Kimberly is the Vice President of the Associated Designers of Canada.



LUKE REECE is an award-winning Toronto-based playwright, poet and producer, currently the Associate Artistic Director of Soulpepper Theatre. SOULPEPPER 2023: Associate Director: WILDWOMAN. OTHER SOULPEPPER: Associate Artist: Bad Parent, Assistant Director: Pipeline, Producer: Oratorio: a Theatrical Mixtape (with Obsidian), Dramaturg/Adapter: Six Characters in Search of an Author, Writer: 1851: Spirit and Voice (with Myseum). OTHER THEATRE: Writer/Director: The Wonderful (Caravan Theatre), Writer/Performer: The Toronto Pigeons (Factory Theatre. Upcoming: Writer/Performer: As I Must Live It (Theatre Passe Muraille). FILM & TELEVISION: Writer: Notice (Obsidian & CBC Arts). Writer/Performer: Nobody Nose (Bad Hats Theatre). OTHER: Luke is one of Toronto’s most decorated slam poets, and has represented the country internationally. He helped to establish the Black Shoulders Legacy Award, providing financial support for Black theatre artists developing their craft.



KAT SANDLER was born and raised in Toronto, ON. SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN (Debut). OTHER THEATRE: Yaga (Tarragon Theatre); The Party / The Candidate (Citadel Theatre); BANG BANG (Factory Theatre) and Mustard (Tarragon Theatre; Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding New Play). FILM & TELEVISION: Kim's Convenience (CBC), Hello Charlie (Shaftesbury Productions). OTHER: Kat has also written and directed multiple podcasts such as The Artists (Factory Theatre), Blue Rare (PlayMe/CBC), and How to Build A Fire (Koffler Centre for the Arts; winner of the 2018 Best Fiction Podcast at the Austin Film Festival).



GABRIELLA SUNDAR SINGH was born and raised in Toronto, ON. FOR SOULPEPPER: WILDWOMAN (Debut). OTHER THEATRE: The Importance of Being Earnest, Chitra, The Russian Play (Shaw Festival); Sisters (Factory Theatre); Orestes (Tarragon Theatre). FILM & TELEVISION: Kim's Convenience, One Small Visit, Taken, Designated Survivor. OTHER: Gabriella received her B.A.Hons. from the University of Guelph, completed post-graduate studies at Centennial College in Children's Media, graduated from the Acting program at the National Theatre School of Canada, and recently completed her MA with the CDTPS at the University of Toronto.



MICHELLE TRACEY was raised in Oakville, ON but now calls Toronto home. SOULPEPPER 2023: WILDWOMAN. FOR SOULPEPPER: Wedding at Aulis (2019); Sisters (2018), Waiting for Godot (2017), Soulpepper Academy (2016-2018). OTHER THEATRE: Every Little Nookie, Nathan the Wise (The Stratford Festival); Indecent (Studio 180/Mirvish); Behind the Moon, This Was the World, Much Ado About Nothing (Tarragon Theatre). OTHER: Co-founder of Triga Creative.



IMAGE: The real portrait of Petrus Gonsalvus and his wife.

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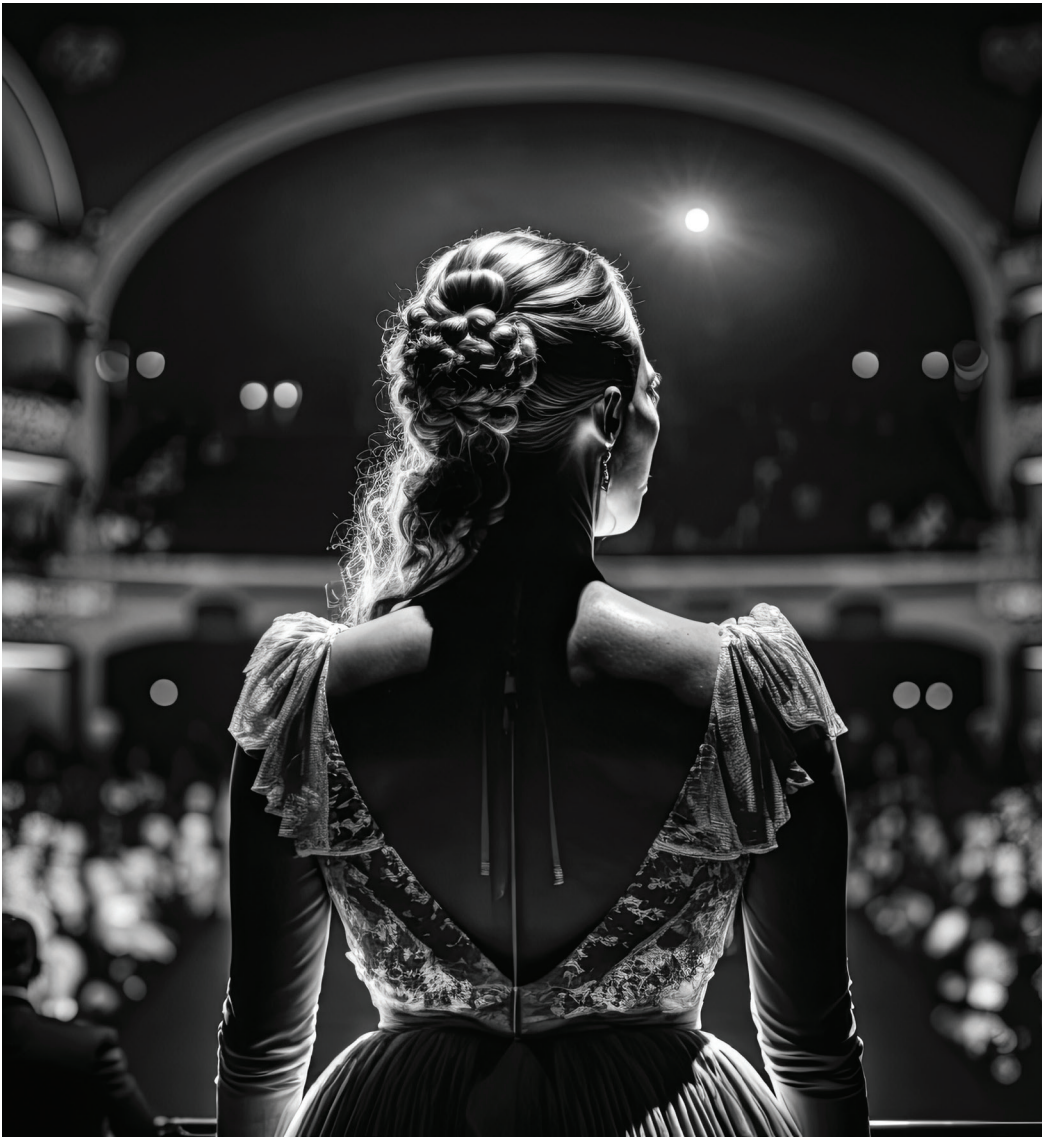
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