

CENTRAL PARK

based on an original idea by Manuela Hoelterhoff
The Festival of Regrets –

Cast

Mother (mezzo-soprano)
Greta (soprano)
Wesley (tenor)
Melina (mezzo-soprano)
Frank (baritone)
Jessica (soprano)
Rabbi (spoken)
Rower 1 (mezzo-soprano)
Rower 2 (baritone)

THE FESTIVAL OF REGRETS

Music by Deborah Drattell (debut artist)
Libretto by Wendy Wasserstein (debut artist)

It is twilight on an autumn evening at Bethesda Fountain in New York's Central Park. Mrs. Springer, a woman "of a certain age," arrives with her 40-year-old daughter Greta. Nearby, Wesley, an intellectual teen-ager, strikes up a conversation with Melanie, a young Greek-American girl from Astoria. Mrs. Springer recognizes Wesley as the son of Millie Millstein, a wealthy, successful acquaintance. A rabbi arrives to lead his congregation in the ceremony of Tashlich, a Jewish New Year ritual in which people cast breadcrumbs into the water in a symbolic effort to expiate their sins and regrets. Greta, to her horror, recognizes among the congregation her ex-husband Frank and his 20-year-old girlfriend Jessica. The rabbi summons his group to gather around the fountain. Wesley tries to persuade Melanie to stay for the ceremony, but she declines. Wesley then recognizes and greets Jessica. As the rabbi begins the ceremony of Tashlich, Mrs. Springer, Greta, Wesley, Jessica, and Frank all privately voice their regrets. When Frank approaches Greta and Mrs. Springer, Wesley seizes the chance to court Jessica. The ceremony ends, and the rabbi and his congregation begin to disperse. Greta and Frank are left alone to reconcile.

STRAWBERRY FIELDS

- Cast

The Old Lady (mezzo-soprano)
Workman (baritone)
Nurse (alto/contralto)
The Student (tenor)
The Panhandler (baritone)
The Daughter (soprano)
The Son (baritone)
Girl (soprano)
Boy (tenor)
Strawberry Fields
Music by Michael Torke (debut artist)
Libretto by A. R. Gurney (debut artist)

On a warm autumn afternoon in Central Park's Strawberry Fields, Adeline, a well-to-do elderly woman, joins Joe, a young graduate student, on a park bench. It becomes clear that she's a bit dotty as she imagines that she is attending an opera matinee. Adeline's son, Walker, arrives to spirit her off to a nursing home outside the city, but she refuses to leave the "opera." Walker summons his sister by cell phone, and asks Joe to keep an eye on Adeline while he goes to seek help. Left alone with Joe, Adeline mistakes him for her late husband and begins to plan a musical vacation for them. As passers-by saunter through the park, Adeline imagines that they are part of the "opera" she's witnessing. A group of young people then gather around the "Imagine" mosaic to remember John Lennon, and Adeline and Joe reflect upon the affinities between Lennon and Giuseppe Verdi. Walker returns with a nurse and a wheelchair and urges Adeline to cooperate, but she prefers to stay with Joe, whom she still mistakes for her husband. As a chorus of onlookers encourages Adeline to remain, Susan, her daughter, arrives to help Walker with their defiant mother. Walker, Susan, Joe, and the Nurse all voice their private feelings, as the onlookers unite in praise of the lovely setting and the power of music. As dusk falls, and the "opera" builds, Adeline falls silent. Her children are unable to rouse her at the end: she has taken a trip of her own.

THE FOOD OF LOVE

- Cast

Woman (soprano)

Policeman (baritone)

Au Pair (mezzo-soprano)

Little Girl

Hot Dog Vendor (tenor)

Zoo Keeper (baritone)

Painter (baritone)

Woman with Reflector

Elderly Man

Frisbee 1 (baritone/bass)

Frisbee 2 (tenor)

Man with Reflector (tenor)

Man with Cell Phone

Rich Lady (soprano)

Elderly Woman (mezzo-soprano)

The Food of Love

Music by Robert Beaser (debut artist)

Libretto by Terrence McNally (debut artist)

It is fall, just after dawn. A woman sits on a park bench singing a lullaby to the infant in her arms. A policeman orders her to leave: the zoo is not open. The woman tells him she can no longer care for her little boy. Will the policeman take him? The woman promises her child that before this day is over, he will be well fed. The zoo begins to fill with visitors: an au pair with a little girl in tow, a painter, a couple who have come to sun themselves, a real estate agent with his cell phone, the zookeeper, and finally an elderly couple who are moved by the woman's story but powerless to help. The policeman returns and tells the woman she is disturbing people who have come to the park to enjoy themselves and forget their own troubles. Dusk is approaching and soon it is night. Again the woman is alone with her child. Comfort and succor come, just as she said it would. It is a miracle.