

**The Annenberg Center Presents the World Premiere of
Nikki Appino's *The White Lama: The Improbable Legacy of Theos Bernard***

March 13-14 performances close three-week #GLASSFEST

(Philadelphia – February 17, 2020) — The [Annenberg Center](#) presents the world premiere of acclaimed multi-disciplinary theatre artist and filmmaker **Nikki Appino's**, ***The White Lama: The Improbable Legacy of Theos Bernard***, **March 13 and 14**, closing its three-week #GLASSFEST. Major support for *The White Lama* has been provided to Nikki Appino by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. *The White Lama* is co-commissioned by the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts and The Days and Nights Festival.

Theos Bernard was one of the first westerners to study at the secretive monasteries of Tibet. A national celebrity for his exploits at the time, he faded into obscurity after his mysterious disappearance in India, but not before he inspired a generation of spiritual seekers in the 50's, 60's and beyond. Conceived by **Nikki Appino**, ***The White Lama: The Improbable Legacy of Theos Bernard*** is about the seeker in all of us. Part biography, part invocation, this experimental work blends music, projected imagery and prose performed by **Kevin Joyce**, designed by **Jorge Cousineau**, with a score co-composed by **Philip Glass** and **Tenzin Choegyal**, and performed live by **Ted Baker**, **Choegyal**, and **Glass**.

"I believe Theos Bernard and I are fellow travelers, flawed but passionate in our pursuit of truth and substance in the world," says Appino. "I was inspired by his story because he represents our best intention to evolve. It's a great gift to work with this amazing group of collaborators and to premiere the work in Philadelphia."

Nikki Appino (Director)

For three decades, Appino, theatre artist and filmmaker, has refined and personalized her career as a director, writer and producer for stage and screen. Her most recent project, *Club Diamond* (created with Saori Tsukada), was selected for the Sundance TheatreMakers Residency and its Theatre Lab at MassMoCA. *Club Diamond* premiered at the 2017 Under the Radar Festival at the Public Theater in New York City and is currently touring the United States. Her work has been recognized through commissions and grants, including The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, the Flintridge Foundation, Paul Allen Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts/TCG Directing Fellowship.

Ted Baker (Piano)

From Philadelphia, Baker holds degrees in piano performance and jazz composition from Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Baker began with The Philip Glass Ensemble in 1986. He toured and recorded with Steely Dan, including on the *Two Against Nature* album, winner of the 2000 Grammy® Award for Album of the Year. A member of the original team for The Who's *Tommy* at La Jolla Playhouse (1991), he also played with the production on Broadway and on international tours. Additional Broadway work includes *Hair*, *Smokey Joe's Café*, *Grease* and *The Lion King* as well as music director/pianist for Pete Townshend's *The Boy Who Heard Music*. Baker has also performed with Randy Newman, Peter Gallagher, Simon and Garfunkel, Madeleine

Peyroux, Eartha Kitt, Lee Ritenour, Grover Washington Jr, Petula Clark, Larry Carlton & John Pizzarelli, Birdland All-Stars and Lisa Loeb.

Tenzin Choegyal (Dranyen, Flute, Gongs, Singing Bowls and Vocals, Composer)

Choegyal is a Tibetan artist, composer, activist and cultural ambassador. A son of Tibetan nomads, he proudly continues the unbroken nomadic lineage, which is central to his musical repertoire. He is a master of traditional Tibetan instruments and is well-known for his extraordinary vocal ability. Since arriving in Australia in 1997, Choegyal has made his mark on the world music scene, touring widely in Japan, India, Europe and USA, and he has released eight albums, including *Songs from the Bardo* with Laurie Anderson, and collaborated on film scores including *The Last Dalai Lama?* with Philip Glass.

Jorge Cousineau (Set and Production Designer)

Jorge Cousineau is a designer of sets, lights, sound and projections for dance and theater. Over the last twenty years his designs have been seen and heard internationally, regionally, and all over his home base, Philadelphia. Together with his wife Niki Cousineau and Scott McPheeters he co-directs their company subcircle. Jorge is a recipient of two Independence Foundation Fellowship grants, a Lucille Lortel Award in New York City, and several Philadelphia Barrymore Awards. He was awarded the F. Otto Haas Award for Emerging Theater Artist and is a recipient of the Pew Fellowship in the Arts.

Philip Glass (Piano and Composer)

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Glass is a graduate of the University of Chicago and The Juilliard School. By 1974, Glass had created a large collection of music for The Philip Glass Ensemble. The period culminated in his landmark opera, *Einstein on the Beach*. Since *Einstein*, Glass' repertoire has grown to include music for opera, dance, theatre, orchestra and film. His scores have received Academy Award nominations (*Kundun*, *The Hours*, *Notes on a Scandal*) and a Golden Globe (*The Truman Show*). Glass received the U.S. National Medal of the Arts from President Barack Obama in 2016 and the 41st Kennedy Center Honors in December 2018.

Kevin Joyce (Narrator/Theos Bernard)

Joyce is an actor, producer and musician based on Vashon Island, WA. He has trained with the Commediants (Barcelona), improviser Ruth Zaporah and musician Meredith Monk. Original work includes his solo *A Pale and Lovely Place*, the musical *Rain City Rollers* (with Nikki Appino and David Russell), and 14 shows as a co-founder of UMO Ensemble. Joyce has directed and performed with the circus/cabaret *Teatro Zinzanni* since 2001. With his wife Martha Enson, Joyce runs EnJoy Productions, creating theatre, music, comedy and live spectacles for public, private and civic events throughout the U.S. and abroad.

#GLASSFEST

The world premiere of *The White Lama: The Improbable Legacy of Theos Bernard* is part of the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts' three-week #GLASSFEST, February 21 – March 14, which also features The Crossing choir performing Knee Plays, works by Philip Glass and David Byrne; the Philadelphia premiere of the five-hour entirety of Glass' groundbreaking *Music in Twelve Parts*, performed by The Philip Glass Ensemble; and Glass Reflections performed by pianist Jenny Lin. Visit AnnenbergCenter.org for more information.

[Click here for further bios.](#)

[Click here for photographs of the making of *The White Lama: The Improbable Legacy of Theos Bernard*.](#)

[Click here for an interview with Nikki Appino about the making of *The White Lama: The Improbable Legacy of Theos Bernard*.](#)

About the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts serves as a major cultural destination and crossroads connecting Penn and the greater Philadelphia region through innovative human expression in theatre, music, dance, and film, serving an annual audience of over 80,000. The Annenberg Center also serves as a key resource for the arts at Penn, connecting master artists with Penn students in support of and as an enhancement to the arts curriculum. Student performing arts groups are also key users of the Annenberg Center's multiple performance and rehearsal spaces, while also staffing many operational roles throughout the academic year. In reflection of Penn's core values as a world-respected academic institution, the Annenberg Center emphasizes artistic and intellectual excellence, diversity, and rigor in its presentations; prioritizes broad inclusiveness in the artists, audiences, and groups it serves; manages outstanding performance, conference, and meeting facilities; and stresses comprehensive event planning, production support, and customer service. The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is a major provider of performing arts access for school children and actively engages a broad range of primary, secondary, and post-secondary student audiences and inclusive constituencies from the campus, community, and greater Philadelphia region. Visit AnnenbergCenter.org.

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