

Radio Free Stein presents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....

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# He Said It

and

# White Wines

Two Plays by Gertrude Stein

## He Said It

\*Sarah May Redmond.....Speaker  
\*Leanna Brodie.....Hearer  
Dave Chokroun.....Narrator (on piano)

Scenario based on Gertrude Stein's  
play-text: Adam Frank and Ada  
Smailbegovic  
Music: Dave Chokroun

\*Stage Manager: Adam Henderson  
\*Director: James Fagan Tait  
Producer: Adam Frank

The performance is approximately one hour. There is no intermission.  
The use of photography and sound recording during the performance is strictly prohibited.

## White Wines

\*Jenny Andersen.....Therese  
Mia Harris.....Sylvia  
Camille Hesketh.....Jane  
Kristin Hoff.....Harriet  
Katie Rife.....T. (on percussion)

Musical direction: Marguerite  
Witvoet  
Libretto based on Gertrude Stein's  
play-text: Adam Frank  
Music: Dorothy Chang

Dave Chokroun is a composer, improviser, and multimedia artist. He has been featured at the Art Gallery of Calgary, Casse-Tête, FUSE, LIVE Biennale, neither/nor, Open Space, Powell Street Festival, Vancouver Jazz Festival, and Western Front. He holds an MFA from Simon Fraser University.

## White Wines - Dorothy Chang

When Adam and I began our collaboration to adapt Gertrude Stein's *White Wines* as a radio play, we had no precise concept of what we hoped to create, other than an exploration of various ways in which words and music might intersect within the context of Stein's work. We did have a list of what it would not be: not opera, not singspiel, not musical theatre, not a song cycle and not a theatrical play with incidental music. Through many hours of discussion, sharing of sketches and workshops with the talented group premiering the semi-staged version tonight, we collaboratively developed a work that borrows elements from all of the above genres.

The treatment of the text includes natural speech, contrapuntal layers of speech, rhythmic speech, recitative, chanting and song. Being a play, the intelligibility of the text was of paramount importance, thus the delivery of the words is mostly straightforward even when sung. The percussionist, serving as the fifth character, is given material that contributes to the conversation in both spoken and musical form. To reflect a sense of yesteryear (*White Wines* was written in 1913), the musical language is largely modal and the textures transparent. It is my hope that the music helps to provide further definition to our adaptation of Stein's play, and that it underscores the charm, wit, drama and poetic introspection in her work.

Described as "evocative and kaleidoscopic" (Seattle Times), the music of composer Dorothy Chang is rooted in the Western art music tradition but often but often reflects the eclectic mix of musical influences from her youth, ranging from popular and folk music to traditional Chinese music. Her catalogue includes works for solo, chamber and large ensembles as well as collaborations involving theatre, dance and video. Currently, Dorothy is a Professor of Music at the University of British Columbia. She is delighted to be involved in *White Wines*, her second Radio Free Stein collaboration with Adam Frank. [www.dorothychang.com](http://www.dorothychang.com)

## NOTES ON THE PLAYS.....

Tonight's concert staging of two plays by Gertrude Stein is based on recordings completed last year for the Radio Free Stein project. You can hear these recordings at [www.radiofreestein.com](http://www.radiofreestein.com).

He Said It. Monologue (1915), one of Stein's early conversation plays, offers an immediate problem. The subtitle Monologue implies that it should be voiced by one person, but the play is clearly written as a dialogue. In our interpretation, the play is about two women (Speaker and Hearer) who recall and recreate a man's monologue. The piano gives us a musical rendering of this monologue, with the pianist-Narrator commenting on the women's attempts at recreation. Along the way, Speaker and Hearer subvocalize, qualifying or contradicting what they say. The play's genre is distressed comedy.

Stein wrote White Wines (1913), one of her first plays, not long after her brother Leo moved out of their shared apartment in Paris, leaving Alice Toklas as Gertrude's primary partner and support. The play text indicates that it is for five women in three acts. In our understanding, the play is about a drunken dinner and its aftermath. It takes us through the process of finding a new domestic space of (sexual, emotional, and architectural) containment for the work of composition.

## NOTES ON THE MUSIC.....

### He Said It - Dave Chokroun

People are pretty much always talking. A lot of the talking happens in rooms. Sometimes the rooms have a piano in them. This was more common in Stein's time than it is today. Almost everyone could play a bit of piano then. Playing the piano is a lot like talking in that you don't have to think about it much while you're doing it. The piano is just another person in the room, "beginning again and again and again explaining."

## SOME BACKGROUND.....

In a 1934 NBC radio interview Gertrude Stein responded to the accusation that her writing was unintelligible this way:

Look here. Being intelligible is not what it seems. You mean by understanding that you can talk about it in the way that you have the habit of talking, putting it in other words. But I mean by understanding enjoyment. If you enjoy it, you understand it. And lots of people have enjoyed it so lots of people have understood it.

As anyone who has read Stein's famously experimental work knows, understanding (in the usual sense) does not come easily. Her plays are challenging: they do not distinguish dialogue from stage direction, they have no clear act/scene structure, and it's not clear how many parts or voices there are.

Radio Free Stein approaches Stein's plays as material to be staged sonically. Composers (from John Cage on) and directors (such as Lawrence Kornfeld, Anne Bogart, and Robert Wilson) have created musical and theatrical settings for Stein's texts. Radio Free Stein takes up this tradition, but uses staging and recording as tools for understanding. The project's guiding question is: What can we think and say about a Stein play after undergoing the recording process that we couldn't say before? Moving from workshop, to libretto, to musical composition, to recording and performance, to critical writing, we always keep in mind Stein's words: If you enjoy it, you understand it.

So, of course, we hope you enjoy the show.

## HE SAID IT

### MONOLOGUE

Spoken.

In English.

Always spoken.

Between them.

Why do you say yesterday especially.

Why do you say by special appointment is it a mistake is it a great mistake. This I know. What are and beside all there is a desire for white handkerchiefs.

You shall have it.

This is what we give. We give it with a hat. Dear me. A great many people are precious. Are they. I do not ask the question.

This is my fright.

Oh dear Oh dear I thought the fire was out.

I consider it very healthy to eat sugared figs not pressed figs I do not care for pressed figs.

I consider it necessary to eat sugared prunes and an apple. I have felt it to be the only advice I could give. It has been successful. I really feel great satisfaction in the results. No one can say that short hair is unbecoming.

What are the obligations of maternity. Reading and sleeping. Also copying. Yes thank you.

Are you pleased.

I am not pleased.

I am delighted.

It has been a very fruitful evening.

It is not very likely she was pleased.

Pleasures of the chase. Do you like flags. I believe in painting them. I also inquire as to their origin. Are they simple in color or have they various designs.

## WHITE WINES

### THREE ACTS

1. All together.
2. Witnesses.
3. House to house.  
(5 women)

*All together.*

Cunning very cunning and cheap, at that rate a sale is a place to use type writing. Shall we go home.

Cunning, cunning, quite cunning, a block a strange block is filled with choking.

Not too cunning, not cunning enough for wit and a stroke and careless laughter, not cunning enough.

A pet, a winter pet and a summer pet and any kind of a pet, a whole waste of pets and no more hardly more than ever.

A touching spoon a real touching spoon is golden and show in that color. A really touching spoon is splendid, is splendid, and dark and is so nearly just right that there is no excuse.

The best way is to wave an arm, the best way is to show more used to it than could be expected.

Comfort a sudden way to go home, comfort that and the best way is known.

*All together.*

Hold hard in a decision about eyes. Hold the tongue in a sober value as to bunches. See the indication in all kinds of rigorous landscapes. Spell out what is to be expected.

Show much blame in order and all in there, show much blame when there is a breath in a flannel. Show the tongue strongly in eating. Puzzle anybody.