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**SOBE ARTS (MYSTERY PARK ARTS COMPANY, INC.)**

A 501 (c) (3) NOT-FOR-PROFIT ARTS PERFORMANCE AND EDUCATION ORGANIZATION

## TESLA

A multimedia opera by Carson Kievman  
Libretto by Thomas Babe and Carson Kievman  
(with Mark David Needle)

A multimedia opera about the exceptional life, explorations and brilliant inventions of Nikola Tesla.



### SUMMARY

**Act 1 (Scene 1–5)** goes from the immigrant arrival in New York City to the meeting, and later competition, with Edison over the future of electrical power.

In **Act 2 (Scene 6–8)** the competition reaches new heights of intensity, from Edison's stunning showmanship to Tesla's electrifying response at the 1892 world's fair.

In **Act 3 (Scenes 9–13)**, at the height of his fame, a still unsatisfied Tesla pursues a more grand vision to liberate nature's energy, but ends up destitute and alone with only his dreams.

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### ABOUT “TESLA”

"Tesla" was an immigrant whose transformative ideas challenged the staid society, inherited wealth, and power structure of the Gilded Age. It brings to life the revolutionary race with Thomas Edison to fuel a new era of electricity, and the portentous aftermath: from the peak of worldly renown, Nikola Tesla pursues relentless dreams of tapping natural forces that could further liberate mankind, but instead lead to his earthly demise. A true visionary, Tesla gave away a vast number of patents that were fossil fuel-consuming, and pursued the Tesla Coil to connect humanity to the very wheelwork of nature and allow the extraction of free and non-polluting energy for all. A peer of Mark Twain, Thomas Edison, George Westinghouse and J.P. Morgan (all characters in the opera) he nonetheless died a pauper, crushed by the greed and hunger for power of his contemporaries.

Tesla's radical visions of scientific potential and capitalist reform, which led to his rise as well as his downfall, resonate even more powerfully in the 21st century.

### THE STORY OF TESLA

The opera is narrated by Mark Twain who reveals that Tesla was responsible for developing one of the single greatest inventions of all time, AC electrical current. Tesla's legendary battles with Thomas Edison and their connections with George Westinghouse, JP Morgan, and Charles Steinmetz are weaved through a libretto written by the late playwright, Thomas Babe, and composer, Carson Kievman.

Nikola Tesla, a Serbo-Croatian immigrant, arrived in New York City in 1884. He immediately went to work for Thomas Edison who had invented the light bulb and was developing direct current (DC) to power his light in a partnership with J.P. Morgan. Tesla, however, was experimenting with AC (alternating current) which ultimately became the source of electricity for the world. Tesla left Edison's employment and was shortly thereafter approached by George Westinghouse to monetize AC power. Feeling threatened by Tesla and Westinghouse, Edison and J.P. Morgan electrocuted a dog and elephant in the streets of New York City using AC power. They called Tesla a 'madman' and demonstrated to the public that AC power was unsafe to use in their home.

### FREE ENERGY FOR ALL

Conflicted by realizing that his many inventions were fossil fuel consuming, Tesla predicted that his inventions would unsustainably consume the earth's resources.



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Tesla, a true visionary, gave away a vast number of patents and went to work on a device that would connect humanity to the very wheelwork of nature and allow the extraction of free energy for all.

He moved to Colorado Springs in 1899 to work on the Tesla coil, a self-perpetuating dynamo that could produce free and safe non-polluting energy. At his lab, Tesla proved that the earth was a conductor of energy and he produced artificial lightning that could discharge millions of volts of energy. High energy explosions mortified the community nearby who ultimately tore down his lab and sold the materials scrap in order to cover Tesla's debts. He then moved back to New York City where he lived quietly until he died of heart failure alone in the New Yorker Hotel, on 7 January 1943. Later that year the US Supreme Court upheld Tesla's patent number 645576 in a ruling that served as the basis for patented radio technology in the United States. For the next 70 years Tesla remained almost entirely forgotten.

### **THE TRAGEDY**

The drama of Tesla is that of a "clash of titans" with legendary battles over the fortunes that were subsequently made by the major investors in electricity. Tragically, greed and power buried Nikola Tesla in the chronicles of history by destroying his reputation.

It has often been said that a true genius is never recognized in his lifetime. Ironically, Tesla's prophetic work framed the worlds portrayed in science fiction and also formed the foundation for modern-day wireless energy transfer, wireless communications, laser beams, neon and fluorescent lighting, radio transmission, remote control and robotics.

### **OPERA DESIGN**

Nikola Tesla's life story will be told with music, carefully mapped digital animations, mechanical stage devices, and poetic storytelling via an exquisitely crafted libretto. The production will employ 9 vocalists, a 6 member chorus, a 25 piece chamber orchestra, stage and music directors, costume, staging and lighting designers, projection & creative animation designers, stage manager and crew.

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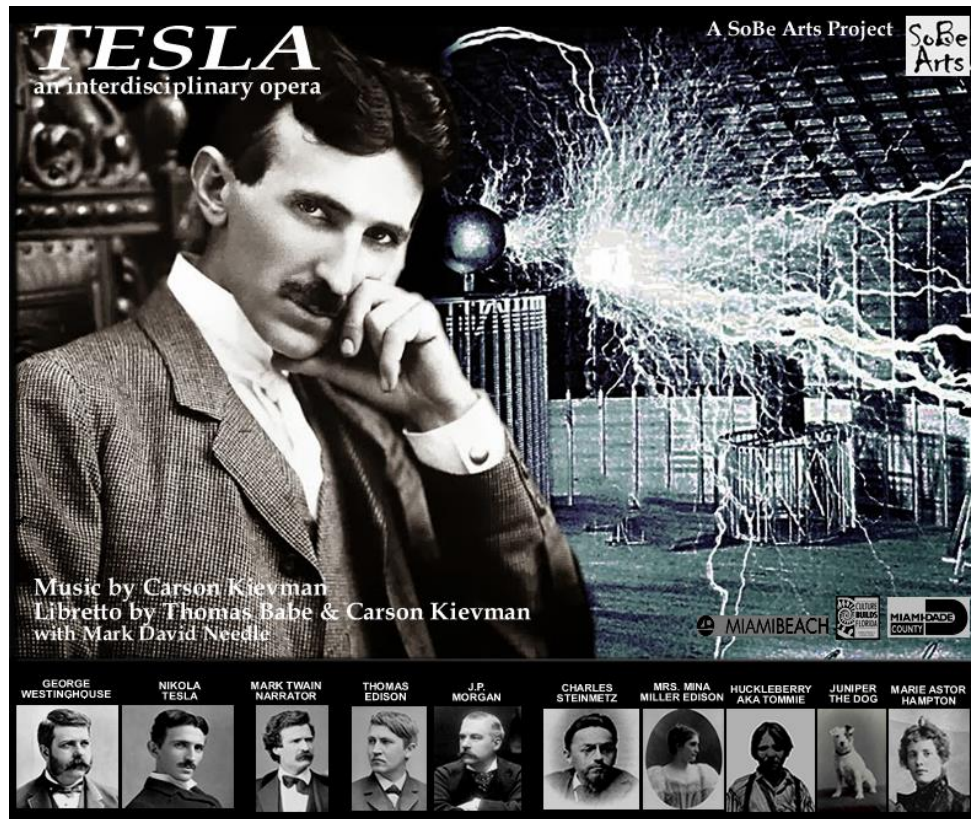
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### PROJECT HISTORY & INSPIRATION FOR TESLA

'Tesla' was conceived in 1986 at the Eugene O'Neil Music Theater Conference. Tom Babe and Carson Kievan co-wrote the libretto in the 1990s and two scenes were previewed at the New York City Opera Vox Festival in 2004. The Libretto was slightly revised and the score was completed in April 2016.

### NOTES FROM THE COMPOSER

"Beginning with my earliest compositions, I felt that music must be personal to be meaningful. Reviewing the Tanglewood premiere of my early work, *"Wake Up, It's Time To Go To Bed!"* Richard Dyer, of the Boston Globe, summarized what I was hoping to achieve *"Great art is supposed to be therapeutic for those who make it and for those who respond to it."*

While the inspiration for my work is still grounded in personal experience, in recent years I have endeavored to bring my listeners and myself closer to the luminosity of life's intangibles and fragile balance of nature. Tesla, the opera, is my expression of the steep challenge to connect otherworldly music with

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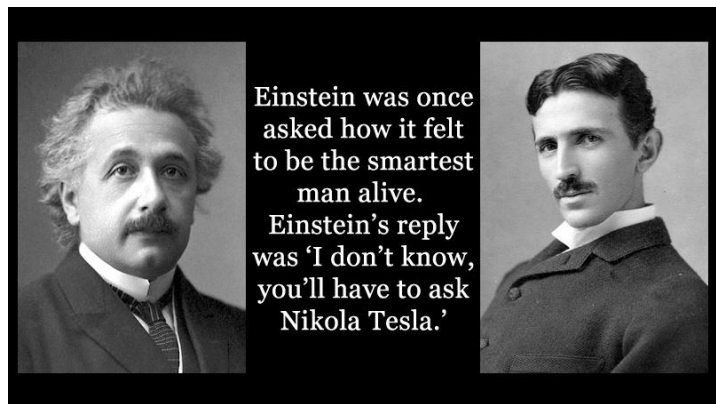
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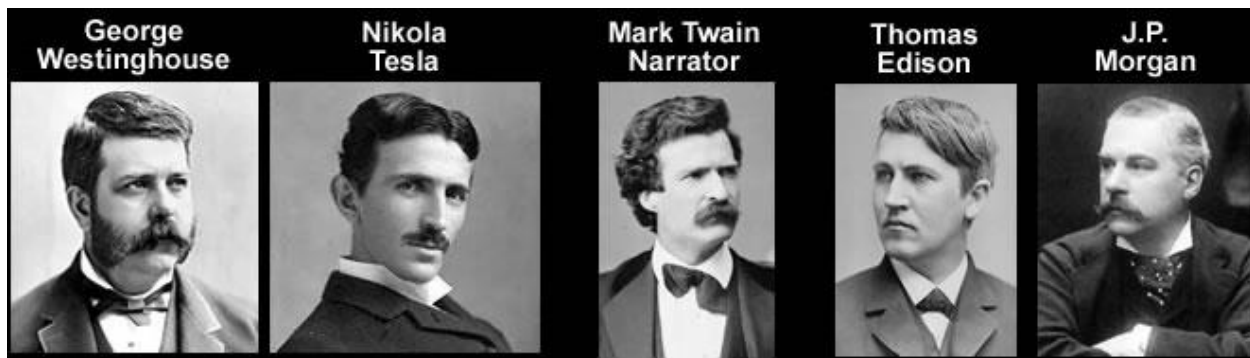
environmental fragility. I see Tesla as the logical next step in my personal history of re-imagining opera via experimentation with form, character, content and current technology.

I have written 7 full-length multimedia operas and twenty-three other multimedia musical works that have premiered in a variety of venues. Sustainability, degradation, extraction of resources, and the consequences of conflict to entire cultures are all themes that I have explored through music and multimedia productions.

I am increasingly drawn to the parallels between humanity, culture and environmental sustainability. It is this conflict that is at the heart of my motivation to tell the tragic and inspirational real-life story of Nikola Tesla, one vastly more captivating than that of any epic protagonist.



Interestingly, today, people may have heard his name, but except for a few references in films, the general public think Tesla is an electric car company or a rock & roll band. I hope this work will bring to focus Tesla as one of the 20th century's greatest geniuses, and will contribute to raising the awareness of the dangers of living unsustainably, as Tesla predicted over a century ago.”



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*"I have been familiar with Mr. Kievman's work since 1978, when I produced his brilliantly innovative musical work for the theater, WAKE UP, IT'S TIME TO GO TO BED! I feel that Mr. Kievman ranks among the foremost modern composers in his understanding of both the components of musical composition and in the particular demands of a theatrical music work. Mr. Kievman has the somewhat rare ability to translate the dramatic and emotional contexts of his works to his audience in a powerful and profound way musically. This strong combination of Mr. Kievman's innovative technical abilities as a composer with his powerful emotional and dramatic sense make him an artist very worthy of consideration"* **Joseph Papp, producer** (December 22, 1986)

"Carson Kievman is a composer of extremely original music, which is rare" **Oliver Messiaen, composer**