

# KEY WEST FLORIDA WEEKLY®

IN THE KNOW. IN THE NOW.

Inspired by Kitsakos's own rattling experience with a dog walker "An Incident in Sutton Square" made its debut. It focuses on a young man (tenor Daniel Curran) who suffers from OCD and the grief triggered by the loss of his canine companion. Curran provides a smart introduction to opera with his belting notes and ease of traversing the stage. This is a character who appears to be losing control portrayed by a tenor who is doing anything but. The unrestrained mutterings of "1, 2, 3, 4, 5" and compulsive counting build to a phonetic race through New York City. Bodegas, dog walkers, East 58th Street, terrier mixes and beagles punctuate the monologue.

The theatrical and deliberately odd-metered music by composer Martin Hennessy lightens Curran's breaking the fourth wall and his grappling with the tragedy of it all. You eagerly watch him, not knowing if his character is on the brink of a breakdown or breakthrough, as he furiously moves through the set, a lonely apartment that's probably the result of rent control or a successful actuarial career. The audience stays with the robe-clad character, equal parts captivated and surprised that such a powerful voice rips through Curran's willowy, floppy-haired frame. And at the end, when his character realizes that he is figuratively on a leash, you could tell the audience had bought into this new format.

Kitsakos and Hennessy teamed up again for "The Woman in Penthouse A" Mrs. Bakshlevi (soprano Vira Slywotzky) settles into her opulent living room to regale an unseen reporter with her life's story. Increasingly, it morphs into a defense of her current predicament and an apparent web of lies. It's worth noting that costumer Carmen Rodriguez constructed ensembles that were believable and rich without distracting from the monologues. The more you digest the shimmering Mrs. Bakshlevi's reasoning – "What are lies, really, but our versions?" – the more you can place her out of her Penthouse and into the house next door to you or behind a desk on network television.

Mrs. Bakshlevi is a symptom of the fake news era and Kitsakos' likely incredulity at the ease of lying in 2020. And just as we have inundated our brains with fake news and information we're not sure we want to fact check, you guiltily care less and less and settle in for the ride. That happens here. You forget about the off-stage reporter. You forget if this is even all true. You take Mrs. Bakshlevi's words increasingly as a fantastical tale and less of a genuine biography. It's harder to care about validity as long as you're entertained, right? It is funny. Where the other dialogues focus on death and assisted suicide, "Penthouse A" encourages you to laugh at the absurdity of it all. Complete with references to a husband that makes his fortune from fake Viagra and a last-ditch attempt to retroactively make the conversation off-record.

Single Occupancies is exciting and inventive enough to join the latest swirl of artistic forces that will fan ruffle enough conventions along the way. Single Occupancies is opera and it isn't. Its fluidity gives it an out to continue evolving."

— Kevin Assam, Florida Weekly Correspondent