

The Pescadero Opera Society presents

# Marnie



Music by Nico Muhly  
Libretto by Nicholas Wright

Based on the book by Winston Graham  
and the movie by Alfred Hitchcock

Opera in Two Acts  
Sung in English

Location: England 1959

## Characters

Marnie (mezzo-soprano).....Isabel Leonard  
Mark Rutland (baritone..... Christopher Maltman  
Terry Rutland (countertenor) .....Iestyn Davies  
Mrs. Rutland (soprano) .....Janis Kelly  
Lucy (soprano) .....Jane Bunnell  
Mr. Strutt (tenor)..... Anthony Dean Griffey  
Marnie's Mother (contralto) ..... Denyce Graves  
Laura Fleet (soprano) ..... Ashley Emerson  
Malcolm Fleet (tenor) ..... Will Liverman  
Dr. Roman (bass) .....James Courtney  
Dawn (soprano)..... Stacey Tappan  
Miss Fedder (soprano) ..... Marie Te Hapuku  
Little Boy (boy soprano).....Gabriel Gurevich  
Derek (tenor)..... Ian Koziara

Conducted by Robert Spano

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera Chorus

Première performance on November 18, 2017 at the English National Opera in London

# Synopsis

## Act I

England 1959

### The accounting firm of Crombie & Strutt

At the accounting firm of Crombie & Strutt, where Marnie works as a clerk, she meets Mark Rutland, a handsome client of Mr. Strutt's. Mark is immediately attracted to Marnie. After the office closes, Marnie steals money from the office safe and, as she escapes, she plans how she will change her identity and looks when she moves on to the next town — as she has done many times before. Marnie visits her invalid mother in Baltimore and gives her the money for a new house. Meanwhile, Mr. Strutt discovers Marnie's theft and vows to bring her to justice.

Marnie applies for a job at Halcyon Printing and is shocked when the man who interviews her is none other than Mark Rutland, whom she had met at Mr. Strutt's office. To Marnie's relief, Mark does not seem to recognize her (her appearance has been altered) and he offers her the job. She also meets Mark's brother Terry, the "wayward deputy" of the firm.



Weeks later, Terry, a notorious womanizer, invites Marnie to a poker game at his flat. At a neighborhood pub Marnie joins her coworkers and tells them about Terry's invitation. They urge her to accept. A stranger appears, claiming to have known Marnie under a different name, but she dismisses him. Marnie joins Terry and his friends for the game. Afterwards, Terry makes a pass at Marnie, but she rebuffs him and escapes.

At Mark's home, Mrs. Rutland, Mark's mother, tells Mark to shape up as managing director. Marnie arrives, Mark having invited her on the pretext of work. Marnie mentions her beloved horse, Forio, and Mark speaks of his loneliness since his wife died. A thunderstorm approaches, terrifying Marnie. Mark comforts her, then declares his romantic fascination with her and tries to kiss her. Marnie quits her job on the spot. Before leaving she breaks into the Halcyon safe, but Mark catches her in the act. He threatens to turn her in unless she agrees to marry him. Marnie has no choice but to comply.



At the home of Marnie's mother she and her neighbor Lucy have been discussing her mother's mistrust of Marnie. She receives a letter from Marnie, informing her that she'll be out of touch for a while. When Marnie was a girl, her mother told her that she was responsible for killing her baby brother. This has haunted Marnie all her life.



On their honeymoon cruise, Mark reveals to Marnie that he recognized her when she applied for the job at Halcyon and has known all along that she was a thief. Now that they are married Mark has been patiently waiting for Marnie to have sex with him, but she has always refused. In exasperation Mark tries to rape Marnie. In terror Marnie locks herself in the bathroom and slits her wrists.

## Act II

Weeks later, Marnie removes the bandages from her wrists. The scars are fading, but she feels that her wounds will never heal. She vows to remain strong and to continue to resist Mark's advances.



Marnie and Mark dress for a business dinner hosted by Mark's mother. She gives Mark information that leads him to conclude that Terry is scheming to take over the family firm. Frustrated by their sexless marriage, Mark presses Marnie to consult an analyst. In return, he promises to bring Forio to live on his property. Marnie sees the analyst for several weeks and eventually recalls a memory of a thunderstorm, a soldier, her mother, and her dead baby brother.

Mark's mother is hosting a party at the country club. Terry threatens to expose Marnie as a fraud. Mr. Strutt appears as a guest at the party. He recognizes Marnie, despite her denials. Mark agrees to meet with Strutt later to resolve the situation. Terry attacks Mark for entrapping Marnie in marriage; the brothers fight. Mrs. Rutland reveals to Mark that it was she who had been planning to take over the family business, and that Malcolm Fleet will now run it.



A fox hunt is planned. Marnie and Mark attend with Marnie riding Forio. Suddenly the horse panics and bolts. Marnie is thrown and Mark, trying to help her, is hurt. Forio is so badly injured that he has to be shot. Mark's mother visits Mark in the hospital; she expresses bewilderment at Mark's recent marriage to Marnie. Marnie arrives, the tension between her and Mark have subsided. Before Marnie leaves, she steals Mark's keys.

To her surprise, Marnie's feelings for Mark have been developing, but she feels so distraught in realizing this that she decides to leave the country to escape any further entanglements. Before leaving Marnie breaks into the company's office safe, but to her astonishment she finds herself unable to take the money. She leaves quickly.



Marnie goes to visit her mother, but when she arrives she finds that her mother had recently passed away. The mourners assemble at the cemetery. Lucy tells Marnie that it was her own mother who had accidentally killed Marnie's brother, not Marnie. Marnie pushes away her feelings of guilt. Mark appears, accompanied by Terry and the police. Mark hopes that he and Marnie might someday reconcile, but it's too soon for Marnie to promise anything. She only knows that she must now face the truth. She gives herself up to the police with the words, "I'm free."

# Nico Muhly

**Born: August 26, 1981 in Randolph, Vermont**

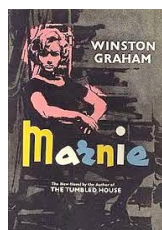


Nico Muhly is an American composer and sought-after collaborator whose influences range from American minimalism to the Anglican choral tradition. He has received commissions from The Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Tallis Scholars and St. John's College, Cambridge and others. He has written more than 100 works for the concert stage, including the opera *Marnie* (2017), which premiered at the English National Opera and was staged by the Metropolitan Opera in October 2018.

Muhly is a frequent collaborator with choreographer Benjamin Millepied and, as an arranger, has paired with Sufjan Stevens, Antony and the Johnsons and others. His work for stage and screen include music for the Broadway revival of *The Glass Menagerie* and scores for films including the Academy Award-winning *The Reader*. Born in Vermont, Muhly studied composition at the Juilliard School before working as an editor and conductor for Philip Glass. He is part of the artist-run record label Bedroom Community, which released his first two albums, *Speaks Volumes* (2006) and *Mothertongue* (2008). He lives in New York City.

## ***Marnie*: The Opera (2018)**

**Starring Isabel Leonard, Christopher Maltman; conducted by Robert Spano**



Nico Muhly's opera, *Marnie*, for the Met is based on the gripping novel by Winston Graham. The story, set in the 1950s, is about a beautiful but troubled woman who assumes multiple identities while embezzling money from her employers. This novel, though revised, was the basis for Alfred Hitchcock's 1964 psychological thriller, starring Tippi Hedren and Sean Connery, where the setting was changed from England to the United States.



Nico Muhly's adaptation of Graham's novel, with a libretto by Nicholas Wright, premiered at the London Coliseum on November 18, 2017, with Marnie sung by Sasha Cooke. The co-production with the Metropolitan Opera had its US Premiere on October 19, 2018, starring Isabel Leonard in the title role. Baritone Christopher Maltman is the man who pursues her — with disastrous results. Robert Spano conducts. Both operas were directed by Michael Mayer. The seventh and last performance of *Marnie* at the Met was transmitted in high-definition video as part of the Metropolitan Opera Live in HD series. It was a major success.