

Press Release from 2013 Production

For Immediate Release

August 30, 2013

THE KEPLER STORY

PREMIERES AT THE CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES'
MORRISON PLANETARIUM, SAN FRANCISCO

Motion Institute, in collaboration with the California Academy of Sciences, is producing *The Kepler Story*, an immersive performance work designed for planetarium domes about 17th Century mystic and astronomer Johannes Kepler. The work will premiere at the Academy's Morrison Planetarium on Sundays, October 6, 13, 20, 27 at 6:30 pm. At \$12 or \$15 each, ticket prices are structured to be affordable for all.

Stretching the boundaries of site-specific work and new technology, *The Kepler Story* tells the remarkable tale Kepler's life and groundbreaking discoveries. *The Kepler Story* is written and directed by Motion Institute's Artistic Director Nina Wise and performed by award-winning screen and stage actor Norbert Weisser (Schindler's List, Pollock, Midnight Express). The piece integrates spectacular visuals developed by the Morrison Planetarium Visualization Studio, haunting music by avant cellist Zoë Keating, and sound design by multiple Emmy Award-winner Christopher Hedge.

The narrative revolves around Kepler's unique capacity to integrate a worldview steeped in mysticism with a rigorous scientific perspective based on observation and experimentation. The story of Kepler's life, including his discovery of the three laws of planetary motion (which removed Earth once and for all from its anthropocentric position at the center of the Universe), took an even more dramatic turn when his mother was arrested for witchcraft and Kepler was forced to defend her. On the way to her trial, reading Galileo's father's book on harmony, Kepler experienced one of his greatest epiphanies—that the Universe itself is harmonious and singing. History, religion, passion, and science intersect in this remarkable individual's life.

The Morrison Planetarium Visualization Studio, headed by Ryan Wyatt, is one of the few studios in the world developing programs for full-dome theaters—especially DigitalSky-equipped domes, which make use of state-of-the-art, real-time technology to create immersive graphics tailored to individual performances. “My work in the planetarium field focuses on the creation of ‘narrative journeys,’ virtual voyages in immersive environments that place audiences at the center of the storytelling,” says Wyatt, Director of Morrison Planetarium. “Kepler's story has resonated with me since childhood. The intellectual, spiritual, and social transformations in his work connect people on a variety of levels. The full-dome medium with its immersive visuals has remarkable potential to integrate an artful approach toward the history of science with pioneering visualization.”

The Kepler Project was presented in a pilot run at Morrison Planetarium in November 2011 where it played to audiences of over a thousand Bay Area residents and visitors. Astrophysicist Jill Tarter, then Executive Director of SETI, wrote: “I was riveted! I am a scientist, working as a member of the Kepler Mission Science, so Kepler (the scientist) is someone with whom I am quite familiar. However, I was unfamiliar with Kepler the man, the victim of religious persecution, the husband, and the denizen of the late 16th and early 17th century. During the performance, with minimal stage props and glorious digital dome effects, I became intimate with that remarkable human. I feel lucky to have experienced the extraordinary power of the work firsthand.”

WHO WE ARE / KEY PROJECT PERSONNEL

Nina Wise, Artistic Director of Motion, Playwright and Director

Since earning her degree in Religious Studies and the Aesthetics of Movement, Nina Wise has devoted her career to developing theater that addresses the complex relationship between body, intellect, and spirit. Her original works, performed in prestigious venues in the US, South America, Europe and Asia have won awards for playwriting, innovative

design, and new theater including four NEA fellowships and seven Bay Area Theater Critics' Circle Awards. She is the author of *A Big New Free Happy Unusual Life* and her stories and articles have been published in numerous anthologies and journals.

Norbert Weisser, Actor

Weisser is a founding member of the Odyssey Theater and the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, where he developed the role of Trickster in Murray Mednick's epic seven-hour *The Coyote Cycle*. He has played roles in theaters throughout Europe and the US, including Broadway, where he played Rode opposite Ed Harris in Ronald Harwood's *Taking Sides* at the Brooks Atkinson Theater. Most recently he played Oskar in John O'Keefe's *Times Like These* in San Francisco, Albany, New York and Los Angeles, where he received an Ovation Award, an LA Weekly Theater Award and an LA Drama Critics Circle nomination for his performance. He is also known for his screen acting in films including *Schindler's List*, *Midnight Express* and *Pollack*.

Ralph Abraham, Science Consultant and Script Collaborator

As one of the founders of chaos theory, Ralph Abraham has been a mathematician and chaos theorist since 1958. He is currently a professor of mathematics at UC Santa Cruz, where he is the founding director of the Visual Math Institute. He has taught at UC Berkeley, Columbia and Princeton Universities, and was a visiting professor at universities and colleges in Holland, Italy, France, Spain, and Japan. He is the author of numerous math texts, including [Foundations of Mechanics](#) with Jerrold Marsden and [Dynamics, the Geometry of Behavior](#) with Christopher Shaw, and philosophical books including [Chaos, Gaia, and Eros](#). Professor Abraham lectures and leads seminars on chaos theory throughout the world.

Ryan Wyatt, Visualization Design

Ryan Wyatt, Director of Morrison Planetarium, has written and directed the Academy's three fulldome features, *Fragile Planet* (2008), *Life: A Cosmic Story* (2010), and *Earthquake: Evidence of a Restless Planet* (2012). During his tenure at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, he produced shows about cosmic collisions, the search for extraterrestrial life, and other space-related subjects for the museum's Hayden Planetarium. His hand-drawn fulldome short, "Dome Sketch," received the experimentation award at the 2005 DomeFest. Under Wyatt's passionate leadership, the new immersive theater at the Academy's Morrison Planetarium is inspiring millions of visitors to ponder their place in the Universe. Wyatt opened planetariums at the Arizona Science Center in Phoenix and the Lodestar Astronomy Center in Albuquerque.

Zoë Keating, Composer

Zoë Keating is a one-woman orchestra. She uses a cello and a foot-controlled laptop to record layer upon layer of cello, creating intricate, haunting and compelling music. Zoë is known for both her use of technology - which she uses to sample her cello onstage—and for her DIY ethic, which has resulted in the sale of over 40,000 copies of her self-released albums and a devoted social media following. Zoë's grassroots, label-less approach has garnered her much public attention and press. She has been profiled on NPR's *All Things Considered* and awarded a performing arts grant from the Creative Capital Foundation. Zoë is also a governor of the San Francisco chapter of the Recording Academy, sits on the board of CASH Music and was named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum. Her latest album, *Into the Trees* has spent 49 weeks on the Billboard classical charts, reaching #7.

The Kepler Story is produced by Motion Institute, a Bay Area nonprofit theater production company that offers audiences a singular view of current issues presented in ways that are contemporary, innovative and embedded in the narratives of their own lives.

Nina Wise (415) 459-3766 / nina@motioninstitute.com

The Kepler Story Website: www.thekeplerstory.org

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