

PROGRAM

20TH ANNUAL CSUF NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL

RE-IMAGINING
OPERA
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

WEEK 3:

BEYOND OPERA COLLECTIVE

with

JACK VAN ZANDT AND ANNE LEBARON,
composers and artistic directors

JACK VAN ZANDT

Siúil a rún

JACK VAN ZANDT AND JANE RIGLER, CO-COMPOSERS

Máire Ní Chéileachair, vocal

Jane Rigler, Flutes, electronics and multitrack voices

Jack Van Zandt, synthesizers, samplers, sound design and computer processing

Two Character Songs

(from *The New Frontier: An Atomic Age Opera*)

1. Half Life (The Ghost of Ethel Rosenberg)
2. The New Frontier (1960s Underground Shelter Saleswoman)

MUSIC BY JACK VAN ZANDT

LIBRETTO BY JILL FREEMAN

Stacey Fraser, soprano

Nadia Shpachenko, piano and keyboards

Yuri Inoo Miyoshi, percussion

John Kennedy, bass

PROGRAM

Two Arias

(from the dramatic madrigal *On the Shores of Eternity*)

1. Understanding (To Pass Away)

2. A Dance Beyond Death

JACK VAN ZANDT, TEXT BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Stacey Fraser, soprano

Jane Rigler, flutes

Jack Van Zandt, electronics and all other instruments

AETHER

JACK VAN ZANDT

Carmen Flores, viola

Tim Bassford, filmmaker

Jack Van Zandt, electronics

CSUF New Music Ensemble

INTERMISSION

ANNE LEBARON

The Guest House

(from *Radiant Depth Unfolded: Five Settings of Rumi*)

ANNE LEBARON

Chelsea Fingal DeSouza, soprano

CodyRay Cabo, baritone

Michael Lewis, pianist

Ellen Jackson, director

PROGRAM

Three Scenes **(from CRESCENT CITY, a hyperopera)**

MUSIC BY ANNE LEBARON

LIBRETTO BY DOUGLAS KEARNEY

Ashley Faatoalia, tenor

Cedric Berry, baritone

Lillian Sengpiehl, soprano

Mark Lowenstein, music director

Yuval Sharon, director

Produced by The Industry

The Princess Aria **(from THIS LINGERING LIFE)**

MUSIC BY ANNE LEBARON

LIBRETTO BY MARK CAMPBELL AND CHIORI MIYAGAWA

Alexa Anderson, soprano

Keisuke Nakagoshi, pianist

Jonathan Khuner, music director

(in collaboration with West Edge Opera)

Huxley's Last Trip **(from LSD: HUXLEY'S LAST TRIP)**

MUSIC BY ANNE LEBARON

LIBRETTO BY GERD STERN, ED ROSENFELD, AND ANNE LEBARON

Lucy Shelton, soprano

Partch Ensemble with Isaura Quartet

Chris Rountree, conductor

Brian Carbine, director

JACK VAN ZANDT

Siúil a rún

JACK VAN ZANDT AND JANE RIGLER, CO-COMPOSERS

Siúil a rún is the first in a projected series of pieces that celebrate Irish traditional ballads by presenting them in an imaginary aural context with videos containing paintings and illustrations that give a sense of the period of Irish history that each song refers to. The verses of the traditional song that inspires this work refer to a lover's enlistment in the Irish Brigade that left Ireland to serve in the French Army after the Williamite-Jacobite War ended with the Treaty of Limerick in 1691. In Ireland these soldiers of fortune were referred to as "Wild Geese" and their departure from Ireland known as the "Flight of the Wild Geese." The war that decided who became King of England and its possessions between forces loyal to the deposed heir, English Catholic James II, and those loyal to Dutch Protestant William of Orange—who was married to James's daughter Mary who became queen after the defeat of the Jacobite army—was a primary source of The Troubles in Ireland in the 20th century.

The ballad is sung by traditional Irish *Sean-nós* singer, Máire Ní Chéileachair, and the transatlantic produced track was created during the pandemic.

Siúil a rún

I wish I was on yonder hill
'Tis there I'd sit and cry my fill
'Till every tear would turn a mill
Is go dté tu, mo mhuirnín slán.

CHORUS:

Siúil, siúil, siúil a rún
Siúil go socar agus siúil go ciúin
Siúil go doras agus éalaigh liom
Is go dté tu, mo mhuirnín slán.

I'll sell my rock, I'll sell my reel
I'll even sell my spinning wheel
to buy my love a coat of steel
Is go dté tu, mo mhuirnín slán.

CHORUS

I'll dye my petticoats, I'll dye them red
and it's round the world I will beg for bread
until my parents would wish me dead.
Is go dté tu, mo mhuirín slán.

CHORUS

But now my love has gone to France,
To try his fortune to advance;
If he e'er come back, 'tis but a chance,
Is go dté tu, mo mhuirín slán.

CHORUS

Translation of Chorus:

Come, come, come, o love,
Quickly come to me, softly move;
Come to the door, and away we'll flee,
And safe for aye may my darling be!

Two Character Songs

(from *The New Frontier: An Atomic Age Opera*)

MUSIC BY JACK VAN ZANDT

LIBRETTO BY JILL FREEMAN

"The New Frontier," is an operatic music theater monodramedy that is inspired by Van Zandt's and Freeman's California school years of 1950s and 60s against the background of the threat of nuclear annihilation and how it affected our everyday lives, and those of everyone in our families and communities, as well as North American culture. The characters portrayed in the two songs here are the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg and a home fallout shelter salesperson in a version arranged for a trio of piano, vibes and bass.

The musical influences for the work are American jazz of the period, such as Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Thelonius Monk, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy; avant garde classical music of Europe and America, especially Pierre Boulez and Milton Babbitt; and 1950s and

60s popular music. Literary influences for the work come from the Beat poets, Kurt Vonnegut, Samuel Becket, the French existentialists, and the political theater of Piscator and Brecht, and 20th Century agitprop.

The complete work is written for soprano and a small jazz-type septet of tenor sax/bass clarinet, trumpet, vibraphone/marimba, drum set, bongo player, piano/keyboards and bass. The onstage band is dressed in typical beatnik costumes, all black, berets and sunglasses.

The work progresses by examining various aspects of life with “The Bomb” through a series of defined real and archetypal characters presented in each connected song: A school teacher instructing her students in “duck and cover” drills; a mad scientist giddy with excitement over the explosive properties of the hydrogen bomb; an underground shelter saleswoman; the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg; physicist Lise Meitner, etc. The soprano changes glasses, hats, wigs, etc. between each song to match character. Specially chosen Civil Defense films of the era are projected behind the action, and a period Civil Defense radio “broadcasts” information about each segment in transitional voiceovers.

I. HALF LIFE

(The Ghost of Ethel Rosenberg)

Waiting. Waiting. Waiting.
Was the hardest part.
Death was easy,
Over and done.

I looked out at the blood red sun,
Closed my eyes,
And let them take me.

Waiting. Waiting. Waiting.
Was the hardest part.
Death was easy,
Over and done.

Tell me what I did
To be taken
From my children,

Such tiny children!

Did I kill?
Did I torture?
Did I maim?

I remember nothing.

I see no gun,
no bloody knife,
I hear no screams...

I know this:
I was a good Jewish woman,
Who loved her children.

I was a mother,
And who kills a mother?
A good Jewish mother?

All I remember is the:
Waiting....,
A large clock ticking

My sons
in my heart
Like heavy weights growing

Oh God!

And if I did nothing
Who shall I haunt.

II. THE NEW FRONTIER

(1960s Underground Shelter Saleswoman)

Are you cool?
Are you hip, Clyde?
Are you jammin'
to what's happenin'
On the inside?

Is you Squaresville?
Or is you hep, Ted?
Now you can stay alive,
Not Red,
And not be Dead, Fred!

Now you can live the New Frontier,
Oooh the New Frontier
We got the goods
 you want right here,
No need to fear that New Frontier.

Oh when the bombs start fallin',
And you hear Mister Khrushchev's
callin',
No need to despair,
'Cuz you be safe right there.

Are you with it?
Are you down Shirl?
Are you glistenin'
just from listenin'
To the Man, girl?

With your family all in
Your heaven under ground.

He's talkin' 'bout the New Frontier,
Oooh the New Frontier.
We got the goods
 you want right here,
No need to fear that New Frontier.

We swear this ain't no jive,
Now you can stay alive,
And not be Red, Fred!

See you just run right down,
To heaven underground.
It's full of games and treats,
And all you need to eat.

And it's safe and sound
There in your New Frontier.

Just pack your chips and beer
For fifty seven years
In your New Frontier!

Two Arias

(from the dramatic madrigal *On the Shores of Eternity*)

MUSIC BY JACK VAN ZANDT

TEXT BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

These two arias come from a full length dramatic work that includes dancers, soloists, vocal and instrumental ensembles, electronics and digital instruments, and video. The work is based on specially chosen texts by Hindu Bengali poet Tagore that explore the twilight area between life and death.

I. THE UNDERSTANDING

When I think of ages past
That have floated down the stream
Of life and love and death,
I feel how free it makes us
To pass away

II. A DANCE BEYOND DEATH

The flow of Life

The same stream of life that runs through my veins
Runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measure.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth
In numberless blades of grass,
Breaking in waves of leaves and flowers.

The same life that rocks the cradle of birth and death
In the ocean of eternal existence.

My life is made glorious by touching this world
 And my pride is from knowing
 That the life-throb of ages dances in my blood at this moment.

AETHER

JACK VAN ZANDT

The classical fifth element of ancient Greek science (the others being Earth, Water, Fire and Air), Aether described the intangible substance that filled the void between Earth and the heavenly bodies. Among the properties it was thought to have is that it was the medium through which light traveled and which gave it luminescence. Another aspect of its nature that is appealing is that even though its existence is accepted, it is impossible to actually grab hold of it, making it just out of the reach of mortal humans. It was the substance in which the Gods lived and breathed, and so there is also a spiritual aspect to it, which carries over into the concept of it in other world cultures. This element drove scientific discovery for centuries while humans have tried to understand and explain the planets of our solar system as well as the universe. Since Classical times, knowledge of physics and mathematics has progressed by leaps and bounds, bringing the great achievements of the scientific revolution, including in more recent times, our ability to travel through space to reach distant destinations.

Van Zandt's music has been greatly influenced by physical science, astronomy and mathematics, as well as the history of science. In his etudes for solo viola, *Stoicheia*, he set out to incorporate principles of the classical elements into musical depictions of them. Describing the aether in music was the one that was most special to the composer personally because of his lifelong interest in flight and space travel, and everything to do with the study of the cosmos. In composing *Aether*, Van Zandt aimed to create a musical space and context that had the qualities of the element, including the spiritual aspect. This was accomplished by designing music that lent itself to being processed by electronic means in a live concert performance in order to place it in a multi-dimensional space.

The music for *Aether* is for a solo viola with an electronic effects chain that is designed to create a special sound world. The music track was made by violist Carmen Flores recording the viola part in her UK home studio, and then processed by the composer in his Los Angeles studio. Van Zandt and Flores gave the recording to Tim Bassford, who added the

exciting visual dimension to make *Aether* a completely new and unique audience experience.

This new recording of the piece includes an improvisation made by the California State University Fullerton New Music Ensemble.

ANNE LEBARON

The Guest House

(from *Radiant Depth Unfolded: Five Settings of Rumi*)

MUSIC BY ANNE LEBARON

LIBRETTO BY MARK CAMPBELL AD CHIORI MIYAGAWA

Radiant Depth Unfolded, commissioned by the Sorel Organization and SongFest, was completed during a residency at the Copland House.

“The Guest House” is the first of five poems I selected to set to music by Jalal al-Din Rumi. It belongs to an ocean of poetic forms and words that poured forth from the steady, mystical discourse that he held with a dervish learning community in the 13th century. Rumi’s poems resonate across cultures, across centuries, and across all those isolating man-made divisions and boundaries, speaking in their own way to each of us and urging a recognition of our common humanity.

(On May 9, 12, and 14, Aural Compass Projects will perform *The Guest House*, at venues in the vicinity of Kingston, NY: St. John’s Reformed Church, First Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Kingston, and The Episcopal Church of the Messiah.)

THE GUEST HOUSE

translated by Coleman Barks

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they’re a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture, still,
treat each guest honorably.

He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing
and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Three Scenes
(from CRESCENT CITY, a hyperopera)

MUSIC BY ANNE LEBARON

LIBRETTO BY DOUGLAS KEARNEY

Crescent City tells a kaleidoscopic tale of a fictional city barely functioning after one hurricane and now threatened by another. The supernatural figure of legendary vodou queen Marie Laveau emerges from her tomb, desperately summoning the Loa to save her city from annihilation, while marauding revelers celebrate an apocalyptic final party as the world comes to an end. The hallucinatory musical colors extend beyond conventional opera with electronica, non-traditional vocal techniques, and experimental jazz.

Jesse, a ghost cop alarmed by prophetic visions, is summoned to his grave by ghostly voices. He warns of imminent doom in “An Ill Wind Blows.” Later in the opera, the Good Man obsessively builds and rebuilds his home, destroyed by a recent hurricane. He yearns for his missing wife and children in the increasingly angry “Good Man’s Song.” Meanwhile, as his wife returns home on a bus (“Homesick Woman’s Aria”), he will soon learn from her that his children perished in the flood.

AN ILL WIND BLOWS

Jesse, the ghost cop, disturbs the water in the puddle, creating a tiny hurricane he “reads” like a magic mirror. His prophecy is terrible and ecstatic.

Jesse

An ill wind blows
and dirty water bubbles up from throats below

and flows...

PROGRAM NOTES

Brief spotlight on an open grave.

Ghost Voices Come home, Jesse.

Jesse looks out around himself. He still fingers the puddle, but now it's almost as though the messages he saw in the puddle are broadcasting directly into his mind's eye.

Jesse The water takes the road and turns to swamp,
so we don't know the road or where it stops.

Oh no!

Ghost Voices Lay down awhile, Jesse.

Jesse Crescent City bleeds before it drowns:
blood pouring through her streets in a scarlet swim.
Soon or late a mighty hammer come down.
Then the City gonna sip on one more gin.

Jesse stomps the puddle and runs toward Rubideaux.

Ghost Voices Come home, Jesse.

GOOD MAN'S SONG

We hear the faint sound of fighting as we get our first view of Good Man, boarding up the windows of his house in preparation for the coming hurricane. He lives in Crescent City's equivalent to the Ninth Ward. Good Man re-builds compulsively. He cannot stop. He has become increasingly isolated as no one returns to the neighborhood he has seen destroyed.

Good Man What is wood to water?
What would wade in the water?
Someone bring the river.

Say: what is wood to water?
Oh, what would wade in the water
Oh, someone bring the river.

What is wood to water?
Said what is wood to water?

PROGRAM NOTES

A hole left to fill,
a boat meant to fall.
A cold royal flush
and the winner took it all.

What would wade in the water?
Tell me what would wade in the water?

Children: a son and daughter,
my woman: they sweet mother—

see, my life waded in that water,
I got nothin but trouble.

What is a wader to water?
Say, what is the wader to water?
When the water's above
coming on down, ha?
When the water below
coming up, ha?
When the water's outside
knocking on your door?

When the water's outside
knocking down your door?
When the water's inside

He begins to tear everything down that he's been building.

Ain't no outside no more!
Ain't no children no more!
Ain't no woman no more!
Ain't nothin but a hole no more!

He takes a long pause as he begins to survey all the damage he has done. In the distance, we hear a resurgence of the Revelers fighting and laughing raucously, nearly demonic. This startles him and he looks at the setting sun, giving him a strange kind of resolve as he regards his unprotected home.

You wanna keep a Good Man down?
Lord you wanna keep the Good Man down?
Just bring the river to his door,
and hold him there,
oh just hold him there.

He starts over again, where we saw him first. Boarding up his windows.

HOMESICK WOMAN'S ARIA

We see video of Homesick Woman (Mrs. Goodman) returning to Crescent City via bus. As the miles between her and Crescent City decrease, it is like the road is driving itself—a blade—deeper into her heart. Her aria is memory and confession of things she has tried to forget.

Homesick Woman

“Please hold me.
Don’t let me go.”
I left him.

The water rose—
pulled me to its arms.

It took my babies—
I looked for them
searched the lakes and rivers.

I found nothing but water—oh, nothing
in this world but empty water.

How I wanted to drown;
love me o water!
I left my man
—just left him there.
O love me.

She gets off the bus, steels herself and begins the long walk toward the house.

The Princess Aria (from THIS LINGERING LIFE)

MUSIC BY ANNE LEBARON

LIBRETTO BY MARK CAMPBELL AND CHIORI MIYAGAWA

Derived from seven Japanese Noh dramas, the opera *This Lingerin* *Life* unveils an intricate network of relationships formed by souls moving between worlds of the dead and living. Their actions from this life and previous lives—their interwoven stories—form a dynamic lattice upon which the characters reveal themselves. Unfolding fluidly across centuries and geographic locations, the settings include a garden, an ocean, a river, a bridge, a bus stop, a small town. The singers, populating a total of twenty scenes, will be cast in multiple roles: Woman with Tragic Hair, Actor, Young Warrior, Monk, Backpacker, Crazy Woman, Angel, Crazy Woman's Daughter, Girl, Boy, Princess, Warrior's Mother, Young Warrior's Mother, Girl's Mother, Old Gardener, Young Gardener, Gossip, Single Mother, Little Boy, Brother of Woman with Tragic Hair. A prismatic array of spatially diffused sonic illustrations enhances the sense of timelessness. The opera addresses universal themes in specific ways that we can all relate to, fusing tragedy, humor, and love, together with human foibles. Time becomes fluid, warnings are issued, fates are fought or accepted.

West Edge Opera will produce two scenes from *This Lingerin* *Life* in a live performance on May 15 and 16 at 4:00 PM. The setting is the Bruns Amphitheater near Berkeley, CA.

The young Princess, who resides in Palm Beach, Florida, has been informed that the Old Gardener who works on her estate has become infatuated with her. She finds this news to be hilarious until she realizes that her reputation could be ruined if her 'followers' found out. (Later in the scene, she resolves to play a mean trick on the Old Gardener, resulting in a suicide and a lifelong haunting.)

PRINCESS:

I heard that old gardener
Is in love with me.
Hilarious.
Absolutely,
Hilarious.
Hilarious,
Absolutely, amazingly, tragically,
Hilarious.
That poor old fool.

Going crazy.
 Over me.
 Over me.
 Me!
 Dreaming,
 Mooning,
 Probably jacking off—ew!—
 Over me.
 Over me.
 Hilarious.
 And yet...
 What if people find out.
 What if people find out.
 They'll laugh at me.
 Laugh!
 That this poor, old gardener—
 So not hot—
 Would be in love with me.
 Not so hilarious,
 Not so hilarious.,
 It must end.
 After all, I must consider
 My reputation!
 My status!
 My followers!
 And he must be put in his place.
 Hilariously,
 Hilariously,
 Put in his place.

[Lights dim on Princess. Up on the garden. Old Gardener is raking the sand garden. Young Gardener enters.]

Huxley's Last Trip (from LSD: HUXLEY'S LAST TRIP)

MUSIC BY ANNE LEBARON

LIBRETTO BY GERD STERN, ED ROSENFELD, AND ANNE LEBARON

LSD: Huxley's Last Trip charts the powerful historical ramifications—cultural, political, and spiritual—set into motion by Albert Hofmann's

PROGRAM NOTES

discovery of lysergic acid diethylamide in 1943. The development of the opera has been supported in part by a grant from Opera America and by The Industry's 'First Takes,' with scenes presented in Los Angeles at REDCAT, the Schindler House, and the Wallis Annenberg Center. "The Double Helix," a new scene with characters James Watson and Francis Crick, will stream from REDCAT on June 4 and 5, on a concert with the Partch Ensemble.

On November 22, 1963, Aldous Huxley, near death, requests that his wife Laura inject him with LSD to ease his suffering. During *Huxley's Last Trip*, the last scene of the opera, news of the assassination of John F. Kennedy is broadcast into the Huxleys' home. Against this background, Laura assists her husband in finding the light that he seeks.

LAURA: What is this you scribbled?
 “Try LSD, 100 mm, intramuscularly.”
 A-ha! Let me get it for you.

[On her way to retrieve a dose of LSD from the refrigerator, Laura walks through an adjacent room. She pauses, questioning why several visiting friends have gathered around a TV set.]

LAURA: Why are they watching TV, while Aldous is dying, he's dying!

[Then she realizes why everyone is glued to the small black-and-white television. They are watching the breaking report of JFK's assassination in Dallas. She gasps, comprehending.]

LAURA: They've shot the President.
That's why they're watching.
What madness, killing a president.

[Laura hurries off to bring the LSD back to Aldous. Returning to their bedroom, she gives him the injection. Afterwards, he becomes calmer. She keeps vigil at his bedside.]

LAURA: Light and free my darling, free, my darling.
Forward and up, going willingly and consciously.
Doing this beautifully.

PROGRAM NOTES

To the light, into the light,
to the light, into the light,
to the light, complete love,
to the light, complete love.

[spoken]

The twitching stopped. The breathing became slower and slower, not the slightest indication of contraction, of struggle. This ceasing of life: not a drama at all. Like a piece of music finishing so gently in a sempre piu piano dolcemente...and at 5:20, the breathing stopped.