



BURNING BAYREUTH PRESENTS MELISSA DUNPHY'S "THE GONZALES CANTATA" AND JEFF MYERS' "THE HUNGER ART"

Directed by Timothy Nelson, hailed by the New York Times as "the Future of Opera," on April 17th, 7PM at the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson, NY.

Founded by Noah S Weber, the new music series Burning Bayreuth debuts with two contemporary operas that exemplify its mission: to produce socially relevant works in an approachable format that invites audience response. For its first performance, Burning Bayreuth presents *The Hunger Art*, a Kafka-based story that questions art's potential to engage society at large. The performance then approaches this question through the "The Gonzales Cantata," which uses opera as a vehicle to address the ambiguity of political crime in a post-Watergate era.

Under the direction of Timothy Nelson, the production will explore the loss of innocence of American culture between the end of the Second World War and Watergate through the perspective of the television. A giant television frame unifies the two productions, and the audience can watch the shifting between a media-saturated society's depiction of a man's fall, and the more human reality of that fall. It questions what artistic and ethical boundaries exist in the "post-modern" era.

About *The Hunger Art*:

With music by Jeff Myers and libretto by Royce Vavrek. In a twisted tale of art to the extreme, a couple starves themselves as the ultimate form of expressionism. As the wife becomes conflicted about her purpose and tempted by failure in the form of a rotten apple, the plot becomes intertwined with the biblical story of Adam and Eve.

About *The Gonzales Cantata*:

The *Gonzales Cantata* uses opera to confront the rampant abuses of power in the Federal Government. Every line is taken either from the Senate Judiciary Hearings or Alberto Gonzales' resignation speech, with dialogue painfully well suited to an opera buffa. Composed and compiled by Melissa Dunphy.

"Despite the inherent hilarity of an Opera about Alberto Gonzales, I spent all day obsessing about this, watching clips on line and listening to the music, and in my opinion it is both great... and moving." Rachel Maddow, MSNBC



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About Burning Bayreuth: Burning Bayreuth, founded by Noah S Weber, challenges artists to produce socially relevant works and encourage audiences to feel engaged in an immediate sense. By breaking away from concert hall conventions, it aims to create an inclusive atmosphere, where listeners are encouraged to react—laugh, cry, cough, throw things at us, we're game. Concerts are presented free of charge and request direct donations to composers following performances as an evaluative measure of appreciation.

It also believes "Second Performances" are crucial to the creative process. Both of these works received premieres, but only through repeat performances can these composers have the ability to refine and perfect their works. This concert is designed to help set a new standard for the presentation of classical performance, to showcase emerging artists, and to help pave the way for sustainable careers in music.

Composer Jeff Myers writes music for acoustic instruments and voices. Though much of his work draws on an eclectic array of musical forms, all of his music has one thing in common: expressive intensity. Many of his works draw on preexisting musical works, styles and genres, as well as visual art and natural phenomena. Filipino kulintang music, works by M.C. Escher, overtone music and more recently, folk music and geographical narratives have all been sources for inspiration. His operatic collaboration with writer and filmmaker Royce Vavrek yielded the one-act opera *The Hunger Art*, based on Kafka's *Hunger Artist* and the Adam and Eve story. Currently Myers is working on a new opera with writer Quincy Long and the American Lyric Theater based on the works of Edgar Allan Poe.



Composer Melissa Dunphy has composed in a wide range of styles and media, particularly in the realm of theatre. Her nationally acclaimed composition "The Gonzales Canata" was performed at the 2009 Philadelphia Fringe Festival, and received rave press and reviews from the Wall Street Journal, the Atlantic, Harper's Magazine, and MSNBC's Rachel Maddow. Melissa received her Bachelor of Music (summa cum laude, Pi Kappa Lambda) from West Chester University, where she was a recipient of the Harry Wilkinson Music Theory Scholarship, the Charles S. and Margherita Gangemi Memorial Scholarship for excellence in music theory and composition, and the Janice Weir Etshied '50 Scholarship for academic excellence. She is currently undertaking doctoral studies in composition at the University of Pennsylvania on a Benjamin Franklin Fellowship.

Director Timothy Nelson leads a new generation of young directors. Most recently he was honored as an awardee in the Opera Europa International Directing Prize. He is the Artistic Director of American Opera Theater, and the Canadian Operatic Arts Academy. Recently, Nelson directed "David et Jonathas" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, a cabaret version of the Peter Brook "Carmen" of which the Baltimore Sun said Nelson "out-Brooked Brook," Kurt Weill's "Songspiel" with two-time Grammy winner Sylvia McNair, and Philip Glass' "Hydrogen Jukebox" at Georgetown University as part of the 2009 presidential inauguration festivities. Upcoming projects include "The Lighthouse"

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with the National Reisopera, "The Ghosts of Versailles" with the Dutch National Opera Academy, and "Giulio Cesare" with Orchestra London. His work as a director and designer has been praised as at once "progressive" and "knowledgeable" - "propulsive" and "fluid". The New York Times calls his work "the future of opera" while the Baltimore Sun has called his productions "vivid, postmodern" with "striking stage pictures", saying his work is "fresh, inventive, invigorating".

Conductor and Artistic Director Noah S Weber has served as assistant conductor for the Center City Opera Theater, the Luzerne Music Center, the Gulf Coast Symphony and École d'Art Americaines de Fontainebleau. He has collaborated with Philippe Entremont, Allain Gaussin, and George Crumb, and his recording of Ying-Chen Kao's piece 530.623 won the 2005 International Masterworks Competition. Noah is a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory, and is pursuing a Master's Degree from Bard College with Harold Farberman.

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