

# THE SACRED IN OPERA INITIATIVE

December 2016 Newsletter



**The Sacred in Opera Initiative Newsletter**

The National Opera Association, P.O. Box 60869, Canyon, TX, 79016-0001

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JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS are welcome year round and should be sent electronically to the Editor-in- Chief, Isai Jess Muñoz ([IJMunoz@udel.edu](mailto:IJMunoz@udel.edu)). Full submission guidelines may be found online ([www.noa.org](http://www.noa.org)).

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## From the Chair of SIO

Dr. Isai Jess Muñoz



For close to a decade the Sacred in Opera Initiative has provided the NOA community with a thoughtful newsletter and convention sessions that serve to disseminate information on past and present productions, research, pedagogy, and other happenings related to the interplay between opera and the ideals of world religions. We owe much of the SIO Initiative's indelible success to its leaders such as former NOA President John Pfautz, Kurt-Alexander Zeller, Ruth Dobson, Carl Gerbrandt and many others. This edition marks the beginning of a new editorial team charged with the difficult task of filling their shoes. I am indebted to the NOA Board for entrusting me with the honor of serving as chair and senior editor of this significant initiative. I look forward to partnering with many of you, and to hear all your ideas and suggestions that might continue to support our mission.

This December issue highlights three new operas sponsored by the SIO that focus on injustices caused by systemic social issues. We first begin by giving you a glimpse into our upcoming SIO convention session in Santa Barbara which will discuss and present excerpts from composer Andrew Barnes Jamieson's avant-gospel chamber opera, *Heaven Down Here*. This work explores contemporary racial and religious conflict through the lens of the Jonestown Massacre—the greatest single loss of American civilian life in a deliberate act prior to the events of September 11, 2001. We then offer you a look back on the success of Joachim Schamberger's production of William

David Cooper's *Hagar* at the 2016 NOA National Convention in Indianapolis. *Hagar* is an opera based on the oppressed female protagonist found in Judeo-Christian, Islamic, and Baha'i traditions whose story offers an allegory on the difference between law and grace. Finally, we highlight the upcoming world premiere of *Upon This Handful of Earth* by Norway's foremost composer, Gisle Kverndokk. In honor of the publication of "Laudato Si," Pope Francis' recent encyclical about the environment, Kverndokk's opera tells the stories of people whose lives have been irrevocably altered by environmental catastrophes: Chernobyl, the tsunamis, pollution and climate change.

We hope these articles reflect our team's commitment to provide you with robust dialogue and respectful discourse that models what it means to produce sacred opera in an increasingly diverse world. As we look with despair at many of today's ongoing global calamities charged by religious conflict, the SIO Initiative will continue working in line with its mission statement and vision that welcomes all faith traditions, to create a positive awareness of religious and spiritual diversity—overcoming prejudice, violence, and misunderstanding for the betterment of society as a whole.

We invite you to make your hotel and plane reservations and register for the 2017 NOA Convention in Santa Barbara (January 4-8, 2017). This year's Sacred in Opera Session, which will take place

on Thursday, January 5 from 2:30-3:20pm alongside all other convention events focused on this year's theme, *Fostering Change: Performance and Pedagogy in Opera's New Millenium*, is bound to engage the senses in game-changing ways.

Lastly, please take a moment to read through notes on our Editorial Board. The SIO Committee has refined our language on peer reviewed article submissions. We are always interested in hearing from potential contributors, and we have drawn up a few points on why and how our web-based format might just be the best high-impact publication to showcase your ideas and work.

As you prepare to join us this coming January in Santa Barbara, take time to tell your colleagues, music directors, and all those interested in aspects of the divine, that we are here, spreading the Sacred in Opera!

Reflecting on all that good ol' opera can do in the world,

Dr. Isai Jess Muñoz  
The Sacred in Opera Initiative of the NOA  
Chair and Senior Editor  
[www.JessMunoz.com](http://www.JessMunoz.com)

# Avant-Gospel Opera *HEAVEN DOWN HERE*: Exploring Contemporary Issues on Race and Religion

Diego Villaseñor

**This coming January at the NOA Convention in Santa Barbara, THE SACRED IN OPERA INITIATIVE of NOA will discuss and present excerpts from composer Andrew Barnes Jamieson's avant-gospel chamber opera, *Heaven Down Here*, which explores contemporary racial and religious conflict through the lens of the Jonestown Massacre. In 1977 Over 1000 members, led by Pastor Jim Jones, left their San Francisco headquarters The People's Temple, for Jonestown, Guyana where most would later die in a massacre orchestrated by their leader—the greatest single loss of American civilian life in a deliberate act prior to the events of September 11, 2001. Jamieson and his creative team will discuss the philosophy behind his recent opera. The composer will also explain the full experience of the work's production process which seeks to explore the use of African American Pentecostal Hymnody and Spirituals infused with experimental harmonies and improvisation, to mirror the radical and provocative theology that the congregants of People's Temple hoped to embody.**

**Sacred in Opera:** How did your latest chamber opera, *Heaven Down Here*, come about?

**Andrew Jamieson:** *Heaven Down Here* is an avant-gospel chamber opera that had been formulating inside me for about six years. When I was twenty-one years old, I encountered the scenario of the Jonestown massacre in Guyana, in which almost a thousand people died from drinking cyanide-laced Kool-Aid under the leadership of Jim Jones. I then found out more about this whole movement and the community that it represented. It was a movement that I myself might have identified with had I been around during the sixties and seventies, and I mean that in so many ways: with the way the community identified with progressive politics, with socialism, with antiracism... and also because it was mostly a black community. Jim Jones was anglo-american, but the racial and ethnic profile of the community was highly minority based. It

also had a spiritual component that I identified with: Christian traditions informed by hues of the black church.

When first coming in contact with this piece of American history, I was a student at Northwestern University, holding freelancing jobs as a pianist for two black gospel churches in Evanston, Illinois. It is there that I became familiar with the theology and worship practices of black spirituality. Consequently, I was able to connect to the story of People's Temple in ways that compelled me to say, "This needs to be my next opera project." I let it ruminate in my mind for years. I took notes and gathered all the sources I could, and I even took a class at Northwestern called "Religion and Social Change in The Black Church." I then raised close to eight thousand dollars through Indiegogo and began designing a score that aimed to portray a "certain" perspective on the worship of The People's Temple.

Much of the music was based on pre-existing melodies that I then attempted to rework at times through polytonal means that served to depict cacophony. I then at times transformed these existing melodies into dialogue that represents the varying degrees of feelings and tensions (hope, inspiration, fear, abuse, destruction) that members of People's Temple may have experienced—all those things interacting with one another. I tried to use different musical elements from the original songs, mixing them with freely improvised dissonant playing that at times break out

it. Jim Jones also attained a leadership position among minorities, and abused it in the most horrific of ways.

**SIO:** You needed to make it conscious?

**AJ:** Yes, I wanted to explore it, I wanted to see what I would discover about it, and I learned a great deal.

**SIO:** Do you think that the approaches and technics of experimental music that you used were useful tools for expressing that drama?



**AJ:** I found them most useful in several ways. The People's Temple was a very experimental community in their identity. They were trying all these new things that really hadn't been tried before, and unfortunately some of them were pretty terrible things like sessions of so called catharsis where Jim Jones would try to get people to talk about things in a new way, with a lot of violence and abuse being perpetrated. There was experimentation in parts

into dance sequences.

**SIO:** You've mentioned your connection to music of the African Diaspora. What dramatic themes surrounding the massacre compelled you to write and to think about this subject?

**AJ:** You know, it's hard to read about what happened in the days leading up to the events at Jonestown, and not be shaken by the drama of it all: how Jim Jones prepared parishioners for this moment... when congressman Leo Ryan came and was shot... and then everyone is killed. I was drawn to the idea that this drama seemed deserving of musical and theatrical exploration. But also seeing so much of myself in the themes and thinking that it could've been me, it could've been me in Jonestown, you know? And even seeing certain parts of myself in Jim Jones as a white man who works with black spiritual communities now: navigating the power dynamic there, being aware that in a racist society, I ended up having this higher position or extra power without even trying to attain

of their ideology: men taking the last names of their wives, radical feminism, radical anti-racism which tried to turn the tables-- to give minorities power over others unlike them.

As experimental musicians, we also find ourselves challenging the establishment and the expectations that are imposed upon us by our cultures; at times we challenge them head on, we defy them. We've thrown out the formal conventions of time and key signatures, and the idea of pitch and harmony altogether. We've come up with radical solutions which turns everything upside down.

Part of what I wanted to do was to use my creative process with this piece as a meditation and as a warning on the dangers of being an experimentalist. Are there dangers in expelling all the formal conventions of a society that is imperfect and responsible for so much injustice? If society and the conventions in our culture are designed to keep

us accountable, when we ignore and resist any accountability to society, what are the risks? I think being an experimentalist has great potential but also great risk, and it's important to explore all. I think innovating and trying new ways of listening and performing is important, but we also have to be aware that there could be unintended consequences to what we're doing, and being unaccountable isn't the answer.

**SIO:** What do you think are the dangers that lurk within experimental music?

**AJ:** First of all, I think it's important to acknowledge all the ways that experimental music is really innocuous. In the context of a global concert season, the reality is that experimental music is rarely heard in major concert halls. There simply is not enough funding for it. Very few composers make their living entirely off writing solely experimental music.

You know, few people think they even like it at all. It's often considered to be very inaccessible material specifically designed to deter the masses, and to engage only the esoteric and intellectually rich. It's often considered to be music that makes you the listener slice through many layers of sounds, gestures and obscure traditions. The listener has to know all of those things in order to start, to begin to appreciate what's going on, so it's important to recognize that this process makes experimental music innocuous in a certain way.

However, I've been very interested in focusing on the work of composers of color in this country, particularly black composers. I find that many of them also aspire to this same kind of experimental aesthetic that I as a white composer identify with. Roscoe Mitchell and people from his circles in the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians) like Leo Smith, George Lewis and Antony Braxton come to mind. So we know that there's this group of black composers who are aspiring for that. A small number have found a certain kind of success but there's always, always this push back by the white establishment to keep it as so.

With so many limited resources in experimental music, I think it's easy for us in the dominant culture to kind of cling to our position and to maintain our privilege to experiment. I think that we, usually subconsciously and unintentionally, end up shutting out people who aren't part of our dominant culture. I don't think we're going to have a thousand people die at the hands of an experimental composer, but I do think that for what power there is within the community, it matters, and needs to be used responsibly by those who have it.

**SIO:** There are structures of power even in sub-communities such as these.

**AJ:** That's what I believe, yes. That's an important part of my philosophy and my politics, and my aesthetics. I think you have to be conscious, I think you have to know what the trends are, and not let them have too much influence and too much power over you. You have to always be looking out for alternatives to what is dominant. And that I think is one of the strengths of the experimental musician, that we always are looking beyond to transcend the dominant culture in general, we're always looking for alternative paths and I think that's the real strength and that's why I do what I do.

**SIO:** What was the response of the community, in the churches when the opera was performed?

**AJ:** Well, I don't think it was a very easy theatrical work for people to experience, although, many people were grateful to experience it. A few people felt the music was engaging but given the story, they were hesitant to tell me they enjoyed it... They feel a little bit uneasy and guilty about that. I'm trying to help them find a certain beauty in telling these stories that need to be told, and helping them discover truths that need to be acknowledged. To me that's beautiful, to use acknowledgement that is difficult and painful as healing.

Many attendees have had difficulty sitting through the opera, and several original cast members began to back away from participating because they found the subject matter so emotionally difficult to explore. One singer in particular told me, "this is too hard for me, I take



this really seriously and I can't, I just can't do it." So, there was a lot of that happening, and I don't think it's anybody's fault. I don't think it means that the music was not very good or that I was doing the wrong thing. I'm just aware that humans processing grief sometimes feel the need to distance themselves from whatever is triggering the pain.

**SIO:** How do you view the relationship between religion and experimental music?

**AJ:** There's a time as a young adult, I think where it's important to really evaluate, where one comes from and ask big questions and I was doing that: questioning what I believed in. I read a great deal on Messiaen and on how he expressed his faith through music. And then there's John Cage! I had started taking on Buddhist practices before I engaged a great deal with the work of John Cage, and back then, I was little unsure if the meditation that I was doing and the philosophy that I was confounding was really compatible with my work as an artist. I then came across what John Cage had written on his experiences with silence and the human experience of just letting things be-- how music can be utilized to cultivate a mindset, the same kind of mindset that Buddhist teachers aspired to. Then John Cage, his spirituality, became a very explicit influence on my music. Studying the works of Cage and Messiaen really lead me to this path that I'm still on. My interest isn't always focused on expressing my own ideas, which is something I think both Messiaen and Cage were doing and I think that their journeys are wonderful, because they were also trying to empower everyone's perspective.

But I am trying to build bridges between different communities. I come from a very progressive background which I'm still very committed to, and a lot of the churches that I collaborate with are on the cutting edge of integrating the LGBT movement, feminist movements and of course civil rights and others, into their spirituality. And you know, we're only now starting to ordain people who are gay, lesbian, transgender and many, many churches still refuse to do that.

So we have these activist communities and we have these religious communities that are often at odds with one another. I'm interested in how someone like myself who loves both communities can be that bridge. So I've started taking that process and practice of building bridges and using artistic expression to do that, to build bridges between communities of faith and communities of artists.

There's a lot of openness and we're reconstructing, we're rebuilding and recreating in the most fundamental way and that's what we have to do if we want to move forward.

In line with this idea of creating something new, I am also interested in not limiting performances to formal concert settings. I've been really drawn to audience participatory music which creates this common space and common ground reminiscent to certain worship settings.

**SIO:** I think that is very interesting, that a certain type of concert goer may find extemporaneous gestures and sounds coming from the audience new and attractive, and yet in certain communities, audience participation has been the norm for thousands of years.

**AJ:** Yes, absolutely! I have this idea that when we do crazy and "weird" things, we are actually connecting with something ethereal and something you know, really ancient. I always find myself thinking, "is this a new idea that I have or is this an old idea?"

**SIO:** Religion can be seen as a practice of growth, of expanded consciousness, of spiritual enrichment. Some may see experimental music as also a vehicle that moves on a similar path.

**AJ:** And I think that in both of them you end up revisiting traditions... some traditions are so old that they seem new. They tell me that our word 'radical' comes from the word 'root', so even in so called movements 'radical', you know, radical liberation, radical feminism and womanism and radical everything that we have. If you semantically

or linguistically go and look up what they're talking about, you'll see that they're talking about going back to the root of an issue. They're not talking about throwing everything out and trying to reinvent the wheel. They're talking about going back to what underlies the principles that we all depend on, and going back to those...getting rid of societal baggage.

**SIO:** What sources that have been most influential for your work on *Heaven Down Here*?

**AJ:** Books like Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America, Cheryl Sanders' Saints in Exile, and James and Rosamond Johnson's texts on Spirituals were highly relevant to the work... and John Cage. Rumi has been an influence and inspiration as well. The quilting/patchwork aesthetic, both from Africa and the diaspora is important to me. Regarding theology, my favorites are theologies of "liberation," or anything that articulates the faith of the oppressed or people on the margins. Christian and African American or European American theologies are the most familiar to me, but that does not mean I find them any more "correct" than less familiar theologies. Buddhist thought is another influence. For more on the composer, visit: [andrewbarnesjamieson.com](http://andrewbarnesjamieson.com)

**Diego Villaseñor** is founder of Experinautas: a blog on experimental music in all of its variations. A place for experimental musicians and curators in experimental scenes to learn and share. Through interviews, reflections, recordings and other means, it is dedicated to documenting and sharing the collective knowledge and art of experimental artists and scenes.

## A Look Back: *HAGAR* at the 2016 NOA/NATS Indianapolis Convention

John Pfautz

On behalf of the Sacred in Opera Committee for the National Opera Association, I am delighted to share on the success pertaining to this past year's SIO Plenary Session at the NOA Convention in Indianapolis. Dr. Isai Jess Muñoz, from the faculty of the University of Delaware, coordinated the performance, which showcased excerpts from a new Sacred Opera, *Hagar*, by recent winner of the Charles Ives Composition Award from the Academy of Arts and Letters, William David Cooper, commissioned by Second Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis. The performance was followed by a panel discussion with the production team discussing the commissioning and producing of *Hagar*, as an example of new operas successfully being funded and presented today by sacred spaces. The composer, stage director, producer, conductor/commissioner, and performers had much to share about how this production came to fruition owing much to the vision and support of numerous individuals and churches.



### What was the genesis of this opera?

**Dr. Michelle Louer** is the Director of Music and Fine Arts at Second Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis, a church that supports a highly refined church music program. It was Dr. Louer who contacted young composer **William David Cooper** in 2011 about a commission for an opera based on a sacred theme. It was in that year that the libretto was completed by librettist **Will Dunlap**, and much of the first act was written. However, he soon put it away, making room for the projects associated with completing his Ph.D. in Music Composition from University of California, Davis. When he returned to the score, he realized that his musical language had changed. The resulting composition shows more attachment to tonality and Cooper's effort to use tonal harmonies in new ways. He has always been heavily influenced by Wagner and his early staged works followed the style of a through-composed Wagnerian opera. But, after finding success in his opera *Cleopatra*, that met success with an aria, set number format, he

decided to stick with what works well for *Hagar*.

In talking with Michelle Louer, the two were looking to create an opera based on a female character. They found that *Hagar* has been a neglected character in operatic literature and found her story to be one of powerful redemption. It is a difficult story of suffering, but one that takes a turn when the angel approaches *Hagar* in the desert. Still the opera was awaiting the right time to be launched.

Along came **Dr. Isai Jess Muñoz**, a faculty member at the University of Delaware and now recently appointed Chair of the SIO. Jess' performance career as a tenor has seen him performing in various capacities and venues. While in NYC, Dr. Muñoz was heavily involved in church and synagogue music making, some of which led to roles in sacred operas. While in NY, he became friends with a number of NOA members including Ruth Dobson and Richard Poppino. While still a doctoral student at Stony Brook University at CCM, Jess researched the

oral traditions of traditional hymnody of Latin American Hymnody and like, H. T. Burleigh and others, who brought the African-American Spiritual to classically trained artists the vocal solo repertoire, Dr. Muñoz hopes to produce a volume of this Latin American hymnody for soloists.

Jess has long been interested in sacred music drama and the NOA. Not many years ago, he became familiar with the late Carl Gerbrandt's book: Sacred Music Drama: The Producer's Guide. Meanwhile, Ruth Dobson contacted Jess to see if he would be interested in producing a performance for the SIO session of the upcoming NOA convention. Knowing the reputation of Dr. Michelle Louer and the Second Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis, their discussion soon led to William David Cooper's *Hagar*, commissioned by 2nd Presbyterian, and awaiting the right time for the first performance.

Thus far, they had a new sacred opera by a young star composer, commissioned by one of the most prestigious church music programs in the Midwest, and a young and enthusiastic producer. They turned to Joachim Schamberger, a highly sought after opera director on the faculty at DePauw University. Schamberger is making his mark with the excitingly creative use of digital projections in his set design. You can find out more of Joachim's achievements online, including two recent productions at Lincoln Center.

**What else was needed?** A suitable venue. The ideal location became available. Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Indianapolis seats about 400 people, has two organs and a small balcony. Though there are some acoustic and visual challenges, the production team agreed that working to overcome those obstacles would be a good learning experience for the production team, as well as all of us who are interested in producing sacred music drama in houses of worship.

**Who performed the role of *Hagar*?** To maintain the strength of this production team, internationally acclaimed American soprano Jane Dutton brought her passion and energy to creating this role. Ms. Dutton's Wagnerian repertoire as well as performing works from Baroque to newly composed, as well as her sensitive theatrical sense made her the perfect choice for *Hagar's* debut.

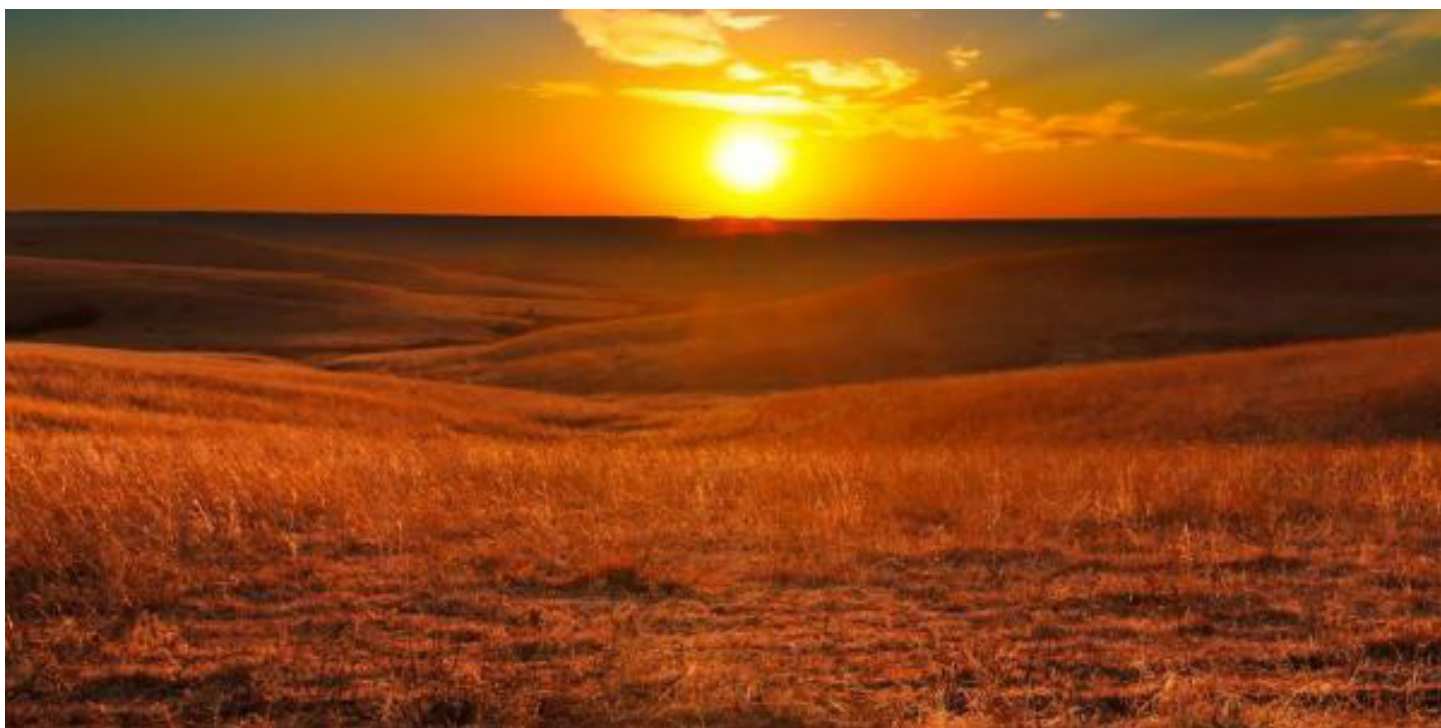
This 50 minute performance was actually Act I of a larger opera that focused on *Hagar* and her son Ishmael, whose second act is yet to be composed. In this act, Sarah presents *Hagar* to Abraham, since Sarah is unable to provide Abraham a child. The act includes *Hagar's* pregnancy, her change and how the community reacts to the change in her. The first act has much to do with the interaction between Sarah, a mezzo, Abraham, a bass-baritone, and *Hagar*, soprano. There are two choruses in the first act: Abraham's warriors singing of their conquests, and Sarah's handmaidens, including *Hagar*. There are 3 scenes in the first act. The first two are divided by a blackout and short break, while the second and third are separated by an instrumental interlude (indicating *Hagar's* flight from Sarah into the desert.) The original version is for full orchestra, but a revised version written for us is for percussion, harp, organ and piano, which makes both versions accessible and complete. We were pleased to have secured interest and participation from the following world-class artists:

HAGAR	JANE DUTTON, SOPRANO
SARAH	BARBARA LE MAY, MEZZO-SOPRANO
ABRAHAM	SCOTT HOGSED, BASS-BARITONE
SOLDIER I	GANSON SALMON
SOLDIER II	ROBERT GLENN HALL
WOMAN	LYNDSAY MOY, CAITLYN STEWART, KAREN PALMER
MEN	JOEY PURIFOY, JOHN BREWER, MAX MURPHY, DAN AHLGREN, SEAN MANTERFIELD, T. J. BOURNE, CALEB LEWIS
STAGE DIRECTOR	JOACHIM SCHAMBERGER
CONDUCTOR	MICHELLE L. LOUER
PRODUCER	ISAI JESS MUNOZ
COSTUME DESIGNER	DANA LEE TZVETKOV AND IU BLOOMINGTON COSTUME SHOP
CHORAL CONTRACTOR	MAX MURPHY
COMPANY MANAGER	BRIGHTON ALBRIGHT

For further information visit:

- [WilliamDavidCooper.com](http://WilliamDavidCooper.com)
- [JoachimSchamberger.com](http://JoachimSchamberger.com)

## Upcoming World Premiere: Gisle Kverndokk's *Upon This Handful of Earth*



**I**n honor of the publication of “Laudato Si,” Pope Francis’ recent encyclical about the environment, The Sacred Music in a Sacred Space Concert Series of St. Ignatius Loyola and The New York Opera Society (NYOS) have commissioned a new chamber opera from renowned Norwegian composer Gisle Kverndokk and librettist Aksel-Otto Bull based on the writings of Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Inspired by and featuring Teilhard’s “Mass on the World,” Kverndokk’s opera tells the stories of people whose lives have been irrevocably altered by environmental catastrophes: Chernobyl, the tsunamis, pollution and climate change. The work offers a hopeful, empowering meditation on the way forward from the human and environmental toll of these events.

**Friday, February 24, 2017 at 7:00pm**

**St. Ignatius Loyola, New York**

*This production has been made possible by Arts Council Norway/The Audio and Visual Fund, The Norwegian*

*Composers Fund, The Lyric Writers Fund in Norway, The Dan & Gloria Bohan Foundation and The Arthur and May Orvis Foundation.*

### About the Creative and Production Team



Gisle Kverndokk is one of Norway’s foremost composers of musical theatre. His works have been performed all over Norway, Germany as well as in Canada and the USA. His opera *Around the world in 80 days* was commissioned for the opening of the new opera house in Oslo, and premiered there in 2010. Kverndokk has written two children’s opera for New York Opera Society: *Max and Moritz* (2010) and *Supersize Girl* (2013). He also has an extensive production of symphonic works, chamber music, church music and film music, and has collaborated with all the major orchestras in Norway. He is educated at The Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo, and The Juilliard School, New York City.



Aksel-Otto Bull is a Norwegian stage director and playwright. He has directed over 60 theatre productions in theatres all over Norway. He has been artistic director of The National Theatre in Bergen, and has for many years worked at the theatre education at The Nordic Institute for Stage and

Studio and The Bårdar Academy in Oslo. He is educated at London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, LAMDA, and Drama Studio London. Bull and Kverndokk's first opera collaboration was the opera *Easter* commissioned by The Bergen National Opera. It was premiered in 2014 at Kilden, Kristiansand, directed by Aksel-Otto Bull. Their next collaboration was the musical *Ruth Maier*, commissioned by Music Theatre Forum in Oslo. It was presented at New York Theatre Barn's New Work Series 2015, in New York City.



Joachim Schamberger works internationally as a Stage Director and Video Designer. His productions have appeared in the United States, Germany, Italy, France, the Czech Republic, Brazil, Norway, Israel, Japan and China. In addition to directing and

designing, he serves as Visiting Professor of Opera at DePauw University and is frequently invited to teach at music festivals and conservatories throughout the world. Mr. Schamberger is a graduate of the Musikhochschule in Würzburg, the Merola Opera Program of the San Francisco Opera, and studied digital film production and 3-D animation at the New York Film Academy. Born in Germany, he currently lives in New York City.



Since 2011, St. Ignatius Loyola Director of Music Ministries K. Scott Warren has led a dynamic music team consisting of over 150 individuals, professional and volunteer, in providing music at approximately 400 liturgies annually. He is the principal

conductor of the 19-voice professional Choir of St. Ignatius Loyola, which sings a demanding schedule of services throughout the year, with repertoire spanning

Gregorian chant to 21st-century masterpieces. The choir, along with the Orchestra of St. Ignatius Loyola, form the backbone of the parish's critically acclaimed concert series, Sacred Music in a Sacred Space, whose recent performances have been lauded by the New York Times as "stirring...positively thrilling" and "broad, wide-ranging, and powerful." In addition to the vast choral spectrum presented at St. Ignatius, Mr. Warren presides over the four manual, 91-rank N. P. Mander Organ, the largest mechanical action organ in the New York metro area, and an instrument of international stature.



Hailed by the New York Times as "a finely polished, stylistically nimble ensemble," the Choir of St. Ignatius Loyola is comprised of New York's finest professional choral singers. The Choir's

"tremendous expressive and dynamic range" and "remarkable vocal discipline and finesse" (the New York Times) is featured in the Sacred Music in a Sacred Space concert series, now in its 27th season. Each member is a soloist in his or her own right in a variety of genres including early music, opera, oratorio and contemporary repertoire. The core group of 19 members sings a demanding schedule of weekly parish worship services in a wide range of repertoire, with particular emphasis on new works, the sacred Renaissance repertoire, and Gregorian chant. The Choir may be heard on recordings for the MSR Classics and AMDG labels. In March 2006, the Choir was invited as the headline chorus at the Southwestern American Choral Directors Association convention in St. Louis, Missouri. In April 2009, the Choir performed in the opening festival of radio station WNYC's new Jerome L. Greene Performance Space, on a concert bill with René Pape, John Zorn, Ute Lemper, and Nico Muhly.

# From the Editorial Board

## Article Submission and the Peer Review Process

Although traditional print journal and monograph publishing is still alive and well, non-traditional forms of publishing such as the Sacred in Opera Web and Blog based format can serve as wonderful supplements or alternatives to traditional scholarship. Web based publications such as ours can enable the broadest possible readership of your research outputs and become an important way to maximize the dissemination and impact of your findings. It is also important to note that the publishing process serves as a networking vehicle. In order to better serve our community members, the SIO committee continues working diligently to refine its formalized peer review process for the vetting of article submissions and materials to our newsletter. We welcome you to visit our updated submission criteria found in the SIO pages of the NOA website. We are always interested in supporting the good work you are doing in the field of Sacred in Opera. Let us hear from you.

## Change of Leadership

After many years of faithful service to the SIO, founder John Pfautz announced his decision to complete his time of active service to our Initiative. Under the recommendation of the SIO Committee, Dr. Isai Jess Muñoz was voted in by the NOA Board to serve as the new chair and senior editor of the SIO. Formerly Associate Professor at Indiana Wesleyan University, Dr. Muñoz has joined the voice and opera faculty at the University of Delaware. We wish to thank Dr. John Pfautz for his many years of contribution to the NOA, and in case any of you were wondering, he continues to mentor and applaud all of our efforts. The current list of the SIO Committee and Editorial Board includes:

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