

AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS



OPERATIC JOURNEY FOR "HEART OF DARKNESS," FROM LONDON TO BROOKLYN, AND BACK AGAIN

OPERA PREMIERING IN LONDON ON NOVEMBER 1 DEVELOPED BY
BROOKLYN'S AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS.

BROOKLYN, NY-- In Joseph Conrad's 1902 literary masterpiece *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow, a riverboat captain, voyages from London into the African Congo at the height of European colonialism. Over a hundred years later, Marlow is still travelling – including stops in New York where Orson Welles' *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* broadcast a version, and in Hollywood the story was transformed into Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 Vietnam epic *Apocalypse Now* ...then more recently to Fort Greene, Brooklyn, where for the past five years a chamber opera by composer Tarik O'Regan and librettist Tom Phillips has taken shape under the guidance of the local opera company, American Opera Projects. On November 1, *Heart of Darkness* will return to London for its world premiere at the Royal Opera House's Linbury Theatre in a co-production with London's Opera East Productions. <http://www.operaeastproductions.org/page/heart-of-darkness>

Unable to find assistance for the initial developmental stages of their work on their home isles, the London-based team of Tarik O'Regan (AOP's Composer in Residence during 2009/10 season) and Tom Phillips came to American Opera Projects (AOP), in Brooklyn, to help nurture the opera. AOP General Director Charles Jarden writes that "Tarik and Tom's inspired vision of the novella's transformation into music theater, combined with Tarik's rigorous attention to the AOP feedback mechanism—strengthening new work – was an ideal match from the beginning. AOP has gone on to commission a new opera from Tarik that we look forward to presenting in Fort Greene in 2012." As part of AOP's *First Chance* opera development pro-

MEDIA RELEASE

November 1-2, 4-5, 2011
at 7.45pm
Linbury Studio Theatre
Royal Opera House
Bow St.
WC2E 9DD
London, ENGLAND

An Opera East/ROH2 co-
production, developed by
American Opera Projects

Heart of Darkness

World premiere chamber opera
by Tarik O'Regan
Libretto by Tom Phillips
Based on the novel by Joseph
Conrad
Directed by Edward Dick
Performed by Britten Sinfonia,
conducted by Oliver Gooch

Tickets:
£25, £21, £20, £10
(standing) and £13.50
(students)
www.roh.org.uk

Complete Info:
[www.operaprojects.org/heart_of
_darkness.htm](http://www.operaprojects.org/heart_of_darkness.htm)

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www.operaprojects.org/press

gram, the staff assembled a cast of singers to participate in the first public concert reading at ART/NY's South Oxford Space in Fort Greene in June 2006. Over the next few years, additional workshops would be produced at South Oxford Space, as well as the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ and Symphony Space in Manhattan where *The New York Times* described the piece as "... a dense, dreamlike chamber opera heavily tinged with exoticism, like 'Death in Venice' on steroids." At each performance, the composer and librettist dutifully noted the audience response to the work, crafting the piece into a moody one-act that conveys all of the complex themes and characters that made Conrad's novella a must-read in English classes all over the world.



Tenor Robert Hoyt as Marlow at the Brooklyn workshops of the opera *Heart of Darkness* produced by American Opera Projects.

The positive feedback on these workshops filtered back over the Atlantic where the opera production company Opera East productions would help interest ROH2, dedicated to bringing "new and innovative work to the Royal Opera House," and to ultimately co-produce the premiere at ROH's Linbury Studio Theatre in Covent Garden, London starting November 1, 2011.

"I'm delighted that this exciting collaboration has come to fruition at the Royal Opera House," says O'Regan. "It's been a wonderful journey for Tom and myself: one that began in Brooklyn with American Opera Projects and has arrived in London with Opera East and ROH2. With much of my work on the opera undertaken in New York and with Tom based mostly in London, it's been a transatlantic creative partnership in the truest sense. Our seafaring protagonist, Marlow, would approve we hope!"

About the Artists

Tarik O'Regan (composer): Tarik O'Regan was educated at Oxford University and subsequently at Cambridge. His work has garnered two 2009 GRAMMY® nominations (including Best Classical Album) and two British Composer Awards. He has held the Fulbright Chester Schirmer Fellowship at Columbia University and a Radcliffe Institute Fellowship at Harvard. Other appointments in recent years include positions at Trinity and Corpus Christi Colleges in Cambridge, the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and

Heart of Darkness: Journey to an Opera

June 2-3, 2006

Concert reading of scenes
South Oxford Space, Brooklyn,
NY

Tarik O'Regan spoke in a panel discussion about the piece.

November 3-4, 2006

Concert reading and libretto reading of scenes
South Oxford Space, Brooklyn,
NY and Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ

Tarik O'Regan and Tom Phillips spoke in a panel discussion about the piece.

May 19, 2007

Orchestral reading of scenes
Wall to Wall Opera
Symphony Space, 2537
Broadway, New York, NY

Nov. 9 & 11, 2007

Concert reading of scenes
South Oxford Space, Brooklyn,
NY and Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ
Tarik O'Regan and Tom Phillips will speak in a panel discussion about the piece.

Aug 3 - 8, 2008

Staged concert workshop in association with OperaGenesis and the Royal Opera House
Linbury Studio Theater - Royal Opera House
Covent Garden, London, UK

April 15 & 17, 2010

Semi-staged excerpts of opera ROH2 EXPOSURE series
Linbury Studio Theater - Royal Opera House
Covent Garden, London, UK

April 22, 2010

Piano-vocal reading of opera in association with Opera East
Boas Charitable Trust concert series
22 Mansfield Street, London

May 27, 2010

Concert scenes from opera 21c Arias presented by Beth Morrison Productions
Galapagos Art Space
16 Main Street, Brooklyn, NY

November 1-5, 2011

WORLD PREMIERE in association with Opera East, OperaGenesis and the Royal Opera House
Linbury Studio Theater - Royal Opera House
Covent Garden, London, UK

Yale University.

2010 marked the premiere of O'Regan's BBC Proms commission, *Latent Manifest*, by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the broadcast of a self-penned documentary, *Composing New York*, which he presented for BBC Radio. In 2011 his new oratorio, *Acallam na Senórach*, was released to rave reviews. This marks O'Regan's third album on the Harmonia Mundi label. Tarik O'Regan's music is published exclusively by Music Sales. <http://www.tarikoregan.com/>

Tom Phillips (librettist) Tom Phillips, born 1937, is one of Britain's premier artists with an international following. He is a Royal Academician and best known for his use of text within artworks, as in his treated novel *A Humument* (Thames & Hudson 1980, revised 2005). He is a visitor at the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton on a regular basis and is also well known as a writer and composer in his own right. His own opera, *Irma*, has been frequently performed and twice recorded; he has also acted as set designer for English National Opera. www.tomphillips.co.uk

Joseph Conrad (author, *Heart of Darkness*) 1857-1924, English novelist, b. Berdichev, Russia (now Berdychiv, Ukraine), originally named Józef Teodor Konrad Walecz Korzeniowski. Born of Polish parents, he is considered one of the greatest novelists and prose stylists in English literature. His notable early works include *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), *Lord Jim* (1900), and the novellas *Youth* (1902), *Heart of Darkness* (1902), and *Typhoon* (1903). The novels *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1911), and *Chance* (1913) are regarded by many as Conrad's greatest works. Of his later works, *Victory* (1915) is the best known. Marked by a distinctive, opulent prose style, Conrad's novels combine realism and high drama. Their settings include nautical backgrounds as well as high society, and international politics. Conrad was a skilled creator of atmosphere and character; the impact of various situations was augmented by his use of symbolism. He portrayed acutely the conflict between non-western cultures and modern civilization. His characters exhibit the possibilities for isolation and moral deterioration in modern life.

ABOUT THE PRODUCER

American Opera Projects' mission is to champion innovative works of music theater, to expand the art form, and to identify, develop and present new works by emerging and established talent. AOP's First Chance series presents concert performances of new operas in an intimate format that allows for direct conversation between audience and artist. Operas to receive fully-staged premieres after passing through AOP's First Chance program include *Séance on a Wet Afternoon* (New York City Opera, Opera Santa Barbara), *Before Night Falls* (Fort Worth Opera), *The Family Room* (Opera New Jersey) and the upcoming *Heart of Darkness* (London's Royal Opera House), among many others. www.operaprojects.org

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