THE WEB OPERA

An online opera in five episodes

based on true events a few years ago

music by Michael Roth

text by Kate Gale

additional texts by Michael Roth

streaming now: https://www.thewebopera.com

EPISODE THREE

ABOUT THE WEB OPERA

With THE WEB OPERA, I've attempted to assemble a team of progressive artists to create something completely new - a unique experiment in music, film, and new opera, an episodic through-sung web series based on true events that has since been called "groundbreaking - engrossing and disturbingly real..."

THE WEB OPERA tells of a group of college freshmen and the invasion of privacy that forever changes a young man's life. THE WEB OPERA also encourages and supports, via its website, suicide prevention and the fight against cyber abuse. From the very first sound of each episode, a treatment of a Mac startup sound, THE WEB OPERA challenges the viewer by being filmed as if seen via the cameras and webcams in a laptop, iPhone, or iPad - accordingly, this story about the violation of privacy invites the viewer to watch and in doing so violate the privacy of the characters themselves and become complicit while viewing it.

> "The production is largely self-funded by Michael and was recorded and filmed in his own modest studio. Its first three episodes, which are complete and live, present a disturbingly real picture of the way bullying can damage the lives of all involved. Each episode incorporates Michael's music with a conversational libretto from Kate Gale. Visually, we as viewers become the computer screen itself, into which a number of young singers look, browse, and type (seemingly) private online correspondence to each other. The videos cleverly position us as voyeurs in a story that aims to shed light on the dangers of invading the privacy of others."
>
> - Stephanie Eslake, CUT COMMON, Tasmania

Composer Randy Newman calls THE WEB OPERA "groundbreaking ... a great 21st century opera, full of fine things and remarkably accessible. It is also an important story told very very well."

And THE WEB OPERA has a mission - inspired by the real life tragedy of Tyler Clementi, THE WEB OPERA is presented online to encourage all who view it, via the website, to support organizations working for suicide prevention and against cyber abuse. The first three episodes are online now, episodes four and five will be complete within the next year or so. To view an early demo version of Episode Four, please see https://www.thewebopera.com/episode-four-demo2

THE WEB OPERA, directed by Kate Jopson with performances by Reuben Uy, Adam Von Almen, Stephanie Cecile Yavelow, Molly Connor, Joyce Lai and Loren Battley, was filmed by DP Dana Fytelson, with dazzling visual graphics by Lisa Glenn Armstrong, Yiyi Shao, and Emmy-Award winning Christopher Gaal/Crazybridge Studios. It also features musicians Peter Sprague (guitar), Stephen Erdody (cello), Batya MacAdam-Somer, Yvette Holzwarth and Missy Lukin (violins), and Duncan Moore (percussion), with additional vocal work from an eclectic group of LA-based singers: Emily Kosloski, Jackie Lopez, Laura Vall, and Amy White. It also features extensive digital sound work and sound design, created and mixed in my home studio in LA.

As of 2022, THE WEB OPERA has been an official selection at 34 film festivals. Please see https://www.thewebopera.com/festivals for more details.

THE WEB OPERA is, finally, very personal work - it is my own expression of the troubles of a tumultuous world navigating and re-navigating itself with newer and more complex modes of communication, and how they are slowly but surely re-inventing our way of interacting with each other - and the difficult ramifications of that progress, so to speak. I hope it provokes thought, comments, and perhaps most important, in person conversations -

What follows is the score of Episode Three THE WEB OPERA -
the dramatic climax of the action in the first two episodes -
The score is submitted with this application - in addition to the video of the episode itself -

Prior to Episode Three:

Episode One -
 a college freshman (FG97 - all of the characters are referred to by their e-mail addresses)
 is installing software for his new webcam when he receives a message from his new
 roommate, Violinist98. Online, he investigates his roommate to get more information
 about him, all the while communicating about it with his friend across the hall, June99.

Episode Two -
 Violinist98 is practicing violin and then, distracted, he seeks solace online from a forum;
 eventually he receives a friend request from Bookstore90, a man he'd met the day
 before, and arranges a date with him for the next night. He informs FG97 via text that he
 needs the room.

EPISODE THREE SHOW US THE VIOLATION OF PRIVACY THAT FOLLOWS -
THE SUMMARY OF THE EPISODE BELOW CONTAINS SPOILERS -

 FG97 visits his friend June99 during Violinist98's date. Via his webcam, hoping to have a
 look at Bookstore90, whom FG97 finds suspicious, they have a quick look at the date and
 discuss this with June's roommate and two of her roommate's friends. Having looked,
 they see something they can't unsee - and FG97 informs others online about it in a tweet
 that Violinist98 reads later that evening - as he stares at the webcam.

In addition to the score for Episode Three, this pdf contains the text for all three episodes as
well as, for more information, several interviews about and reviews of the work -

> *** - Episode three is about 12 minutes long -*
> *watching and listening from the beginning*
> *for the first 10 minutes is fine -*
> *though of course listening and watching*
> *through the conclusion of the episode*
> *is fine as well - thank you*

THE WEB OPERA - Episode 3

text - Kate Gale
music - Michael Roth

Cen – ter was first pro – posed & the site was of – fi–cia – ly disclosed   Here   not   far   from Ground Ze – ro

The pre – si – dent to those who were op-posed Said our com – mit – ment to

Ooo.

Lyrics (June):
free-dom of re – li–gion is un – brea – ka – ble   All faiths are wel-come no mis – take   It's the pro-mise we   make   and es – sen–tial to

Lyrics (S/A):
Brea – ka – ble   Ooo

Lyrics (T/B):
mis – take   make

Lyrics (June): who we are   Ques – tion one: A no–ther pre – si–dent wished to make it   so   in   the

Lyrics (S/A): Who   we   are

thinking, singing to herself

June: ve – ry same spot sev–eral cen – tu–ries a – go.   Name   that Pre–si–dent."   O   K

June: In the same ci–ty "Dis–cuss his phi–lo – so–phy, And the name would be:

typing out the answer -

WASHINGTON

Lyrics (June): – A – me – ri – ca's stri – ving for U – to – pi – an ful – fil – ment Free – dom of re – li – gion, a ci – ty on a hill, That

Lyrics (June): his - to - ry was of - ten awk - ward & fre - quent - ly_____ It's o - pen

(S/A): It's_____ o - pen / (it's o - pen)

typing the word, not finishing it -

knocks on the door

♩ = *approx* 110

knocks on the door

June: "...em – ba – ras–sing." Po – li – sci and re – li – gion Soo_____ Vi – o–

Boy 1: What are you

Lyrics (June): lin boy's got a date What's he like? "Wa–shing–ton spoke e – lo – quent" So?

Lyrics (Boy 1): – Yeah I don't

Lyrics (S/A): Wa – shing ton spoke e – lo quent So don't

typing the words

Well   I   think   he   works   at   the   book   store, so he knocked on the   door   Mum-bling a

store

Door

♩=*approx* 110

Lyrics (Boy 1): bout who knows And, like he was gon-na be fed he sat down on the bed and said no-thing He just stroked his beard, And he looked at the

Lyrics (June): and said

Lyrics (SA): who knows fed L O L

Boy 1: win – dow and the blinds it was weird and I did–n't want to leave my stuff I have thou – sands of dol–lars of le gi–ti–mate I worked

S/A: Weird

T/B: Weird

June: "pla - ces of wor - ship are no dif - ferent" Yeah

Boy 1: hard put-ting to ge-ther all that com - pu-ter-shit I don't know I mean if it's sto - len. well

S/A: I mean

Lyrics visible in score:

June: Not vi – o – lin boy?

Boy 1: some – one's got – ta pay I mean ... Yeah, well

S/A: When

♩=*approx* 172

typing - "He believed in this freedom."

June: I think so — O K — Let me fi-nish this one thing — one last thing

Boy 1: i Chat? right May-be I could — Log on - to my i - Chat

(opt live voices)

(opt live voices)

Lyrics:
one sen – tence there. O

I leave the web – can on and There is no re – stric – tion on which cli – ents can con –

Lyrics:

June: K____ save____ this I - chat Ad - dress O -

Boy 1: nect to this broadcast You can re - strict ac - cess by I P___ Ad - dress And as the screen sug-gests our

Lyrics:

June: pen. To An – y – one An–y–one

Boy 1: broad – cast will be a – vail – a – ble to An – y – one right I leave the web – cam on and the mo – ni – tor

Lyrics (June): ev – ry thing's off.

Lyrics (Boy 1): off and it looks like ev – ry thing's off So for now go a – head and click O K and

June: O K can't see a – ny fa – ces I've ne–ver ac–tu–al–ly seen we should–n't I feel kin–da

Boy 1: O K I can't see their fa – ces too blur–ry So I know what you mean watch ing I

♩=*approx* 120

June: cree — py — just loo-king is loo-king is Guil — ty wrong So ne-ver hap –

Boy 1: feel real-ly un-comfor-ta-ble Just loo-king is Guil — ty And we did-n't look ve-ry long So let's not look a–ny-more

(opt live voices)

Ooo

Ooo

June: pened no-thing hap-pened But let's not look a - ny more I ne-ver saw that be - fore and I____ should get

Boy 1: ne - ver hap - pened well some-thing hap-pened But let's not look a - ny more He's not from our world he's a ran-dom

♩=*approx* 100

Lyrics in score:

June: Room mate kicked him out, Got a date Vi – o-lin boy.

Wmn solo (roommate): Vi – o-lin Boy? Good for him!

Boy 1: Got a date Vi – o-lin boy.

S A: Room – mate Kicked him out Boy

Lyrics:

June: Hey ... Its his web – cam ac–tual–ly – (ee)

Wmn solo (roommate): What __ are you loo–king at now? They're here ... What are you watch – ing

Duo: Hey We're Here We should get go – ing now.

Boy 1: Not loo–king a – ny – more It's my room – mate

S/A: What __ Ooo Ooo

June: sure that..." | We can but there was–n't much to see

Wmn solo (roommate): stopped | Why don't we | log on a – gain | much you

Duo: Pie | But 2 guys | I did – n't see that | much to see — much to see

Boy 1: Pie | much to see

June: No that would be shit — ty it was weird and that old guy with his beard is there a – ny food here I'll go

Wmn solo (roommate): Yeah it would be there a – ny food here We got shit to talk a–bout and

Duo: Yeah it would Yeah it would be there a – ny food here We got shit to talk a–bout and

Boy 1: no there a – ny food here

message on her
iPhone - reading

June
look ... Real-ly? ... You don't have to ... hey ba-by

Wmn solo (roommate)
work to do — but may be ... I should stay ... I got work to do some -

Duo
work to do — ... O K ... May be we could pick you up some – thing —

Boy 1
I should go too

June: what's go-ing on? No - thing I'm_____ wor-king My friend from a-cross the hall is here his web-cam

Wmn solo (roommate): and be-sides I want to have a look

Duo: thing thing May be we'll look when we're back with the food

Boy 1: Fris – bee golf.

S A: Fris – bee golf

T B: Fris – bee

Lyrics by voice:

June: caught his room mate with his boy friend

Wmn solo (roommate): Yeah come back with the food there a Bar – B–Que place? o – ver – priced

Duo: Yeah Ko–re – an but it's o – ver – priced But nice

Boy 1: o – ver – priced

S A / golf

Lyrics (by part):

June: No___ shit? No___ Eww___

Wmn solo (roommate): got lo - mein or fried rice Got a cou - pon for a soup___

Duo: they got-a Pan-da ex press___ there too___ got lo - mein or fried rice got a cou - pon For a

Boy 1: Just gon - na___ check my twit - ter feed.

Stage directions: *reading his response* / *texting reply* / *reading his response*

texting reply

June

Wmn solo (roommate)
lots of_____ peo–ple here_____
Bud – dha jumps o – ver the   What's it called   Bud – dha

Duo
Bud - dha jumps o - ver the wall_____
soup we can bring from the mall_____   Bud – dha jumps ov ver the wall

Boy 1

S A

T B

Vln1

Vln2

VC1

VC2

Reeds1

Reeds2

Syn

Gtr

Gtr-E

Bs

Perc1

Perc2

Perc3

Perc4

reading his response

June

Wmn solo (roommate)
jumps with a ball?

Loo — king at the web — cam?

Duo
It's a soup with a shark fin
No. A wall with a shark fin

Check it a gain is a — ny thing ve-gan
No, there's a Star-bucks & a Sub-way'n that Bud-dha jumps the

Boy 1

S A

T B

Vln1

Vln2

VC1

VC2

Reeds1

Reeds2

Syn

Gtr

Gtr-E

Bs

Perc1

Perc2

Perc3

Perc4

texting reply

June: No ... It looks like their lea–ving soon.

Wmn solo (roommate): Then Bud – dha jumps o – ver the wall will do ... wall will

Duo: wall place, Soup with the shark fin in no skin ... wall will do

S/A: wall will do

232

♩=*approx* 120

June: I'll call you____ la – ter____ La – ter La – ter You guys go I'll fi – nish this

Wmn solo (roommate): do. o–ver the wall with green____ tea____ tea____ O – K

Duo: Bud–dha jumps__ver the wall with green____ tea tea we'l be back

Boy 1: I'll call you____ la – ter

S A: Bud–dha jumps____ o–ver the wall with green____ tea tea

Lyrics (June): soon. And I'll look for some – thing here Washington was ma – king sure his

Wmn solo (roommate): O K   O K

Duo: soon

♩=*approx* 100

Lyrics (June): vi – sion for the fu–ture was clear A vi – sion like Shakes –

Lyrics (S/A): fu–ture was clear A vi – sion like Shakes –

Vi – sion from   Shakes – peare

Adagio ♩ = 65

June: Had I plan-ta-tion of this Isle — and were the king what would I do? No kind of traf-fic would

June: I ad – mit, no oc – cu – pa – tion   All men i – dle all wo – men

Wmn solo (roommate): All men i – dle and wo – men

Lyrics:

June: too— but in-no-cent pure   A–ny food here?   Thai from last night?   Sure

Wmn solo (roommate): too— but in-no-cent (and clear)   I think— so.   Want some more?   I'll get some in a min–ute

S A: (and clear)

June: All things in com-mon Na ture should pro - duce With-out sweat or en - dea - vor sword pike knife and

Wmn solo (roommate): i - chat And there they are Ha.

♩=*approx* 110

June: Ha! Of its own of its own

Wmn solo (roommate): well he is ner – dy but AT least he's ha – ving sex. Of— its own

Lyrics (June): kind. all A-bun-dance A-bun-dance To feed my in-no-cent peo-ple I would with all per-

Lyrics (Wmn solo / roommate): of its own kind A-bun-dance A-bun-dance in-no-cent peo-ple I would with all per-

Lyrics (T/B): I would with all per-

Lyrics: went to_____ June's_____ room_____ turned on the web – cam saw

Lyrics (Boy 1): my ___ room – mate ma – king out with a dude Yay L O L ___

FANFARE MAGAZINE ON
THE WEB OPERA

"Opera meets the World Wide Web: a superb piece that is very much of our time"

ROTH The Web Opera • Reuben Uy FG97; Adam Von Almen Violinist98; Stephanie Cecile Yavelow June99: Molly Connor Roommate; Loren Battley, Joyce Lai Roommate's Friends; Peter Sprague (gtr), Duncan Moore (perc), Batya MacAdam Somer, Yvette Holzwarth (vln), Stephen Erdody (vc); with Emily Kosloski, Laura Vall (additional vocs) • (39:55) www.thewebopera.com

Opera meets the World Wide Web: composer Michael Roth and librettist Kate Gale have constructed a piece that is very much of our time. Masterfully directed by Kate Jopson, THE WEB OPERA is cast in three episodes. As Director of Photography, Dana Fytelson creates miracles, while Roth's score and soundscape via Steven Cahill's sound mix sounds simply awesome through headphones (it was recorded at Spragueland, Encinitas, California, and in Santa Monica).

Allegedly based on true events, the piece explores cyberbullying and abuse within the online musical community. We, the viewers, become the computer screen into which the protagonists gaze. The screen can not only show the humans, but also the conversations that happen online as well as online search results. The opera begins amusingly enough, with actor Reuben Uy as college freshman FG97 (characters are referred to by their dehumanizing email addresses) setting up a webcam: instructions are seen on-screen as well as set to music. Anyone who has ever tried to set up a webcam will relate to the frustrations. The fact it is based on true events is important—the tragic end really happened (although the real names have been withheld, the family of the deceased was aware of the opera). A young violinist has just come out to his parents and arranged to meet a date in his dorm; unbeknownst to him, his roommate will soon stream parts of the date publIcly. Invasions of privacy are everywhere; nothing is private any more.

There is plenty of humor, and in the first scene the music is superbly bright and upbeat, the recording fabulously present, using the full available sound space. There is a sense of the musicals around this, and Uy's voice is brilliantly of the musicals. As the scene shifts, so does the music, abruptly and effectively. The second episode is more minimalist in tone: we see a violinist practicing (Adam Von Almen) and, when he goes online, we feel his loneliness palpably. Von Almen's voice is remarkable, blanched of feeling as if emotionally numb. He quotes the Bible, "suffer the little children unto me"; I wonder if the link here with Marie's Biblical quotations in WOZZECK is intended? The repetition in the music now seems less to power momentum, more to represent the humdrum, the hopelessness of the violinist's state. Roth's music has the ability to reflect light and shade (and literally too, when he sets the passage about letting the light in).

The third episode (the last we have so far, but four and five are promised) finds FG97's friend June99 (who appears to be very interested in politics). When they connect to the webcam to spy, the effect is really quite discombobulating: both FG97 and June99 (Stephanie Cecile Yavelow) are very close to the screen, as if invading our, the viewers', privacy. The progress of the opera is frozen through silence; a single violin note takes us into a slow processional as the protagonists examine their own guilt at infiltrating another human being's space. The moral standards and their contradictions are examined: "Take any pictures?" the Roommate's Friends ask, together; "No, that would be shitty" comes the response.

The moment when all five characters are all on their phones reading and responding to messages instead of interacting with each other is so typical of what the World is rapidly becoming. With Christopher Gaal's dynamic motion graphics, the moment at which FG97 sends the message with the link to the sexual voyeurism is marked by a sea-change in the musical direction. It is clear something dramatic has happened, the result of just not thinking things through; of how easy all of this spying and dissemination of information is. Watching the lines in mirror image as the violinist realizes what has been going on is surprisingly harrowing, as if his world is being inverted, too. The final repetitions of the letters "http" are curtailed by the electronic equivalent of a gong stroke, leaving Violinist99 alone against a dark background, panting, frightened. The beautiful vocals of the slow outro over which the credits are shown are initially glorious; a twist of both timbre and harmony assures us there is no happy ending in sight.

Obviously, the linguistic trappings of modern digital life are all here, from "LOL" to "azn" (="Asian"; I didn't know either). The music is often high-voltage but there are moments of ensemble beauty, too. The remaining two episodes are eagerly awaited; this is a beautifully, poignantly constructed and brilliantly realized opera. A huge bravo to all concerned, and a real sense of wonder to the technical team's wizardry. And a huge thanks, too, for bringing this vital issue to consciousness via the medium of music.

Colin Clarke

** At the end of this document, score and libretto, please see the feature article and interview with Michael Roth by Ken Meltzer

EPISODE 1

[The loud sound, the starting of a Mac aligns with the downbeat of the music, we see a close up of a young man's eyes – as the music continues for about 35 seconds or so, as the camera pulls back, it becomes clear, as his eyes begin to move, that he is looking at a webcam, holding it in his hands – then cut to POV of the computer in front of him – he is in fact reading intently what's on the screen. A young Asian-American man, FG97, who is installing the software for a new webcam, and is the type who does read instructions. On five of the 11 strong downbeats in the music, the word ACCEPT or OK in a button appears, and we see him "click" the computer to accept the software, the word disappears, then reappears etc., as he clicks again.   The music shifts, he works a bit more, reading intently – also writing (filling in some blank spaces occasionally as well) - and finally – he sings, fairly quietly]

OK

[He works some more, reads sings these instructions – to himself, privately, when appropriate he responds to them.]

Specify encoding sequence
And encoder screen.

[He does so]

Specify the port by which your audience,
Your audience will access the video stream.
OK

[He does so – and works some more.]

In the Device Option screen select your webcam
As your singular video source.

[He does so]

Now choose the Live Broadcast Video option for video

[He does so]

And Multiple Bit Rates Audio for audio.

[He does so – and works some more.]

At this point, at this point
You will see a Media Encoder screen   *(he sees this)* **– OK!**
It says by default –
Once it's installed -   *(clicks ok)*

    Like a picture in a frame
    You'll see all things so clearly - - -
    And like a moth drawn to a flame
    New clients will tune in!

There is <u>no</u> restriction any client can connect to this broadcast.
You can restrict access by IP Address
As this screen suggests,
Your broadcast will be available to anyone
Anyone who knows the endpoint.
You <u>can</u> restrict incoming clients by their IP address

[Clicks OK – understanding this – then leaning in closer, reading more carefully:]

However, doing so is an advanced configuration.
Doing so will restrict incoming clients and potential clients
So, for now, go ahead and click OK.
OK.

[He does so – and reads some more.]

Like a picture in a frame
To start the streaming process,
You need to click the start-encoding button: *(he does so)*
And so –

[He does so and sees the image from the webcam – he works, following the instructions]

Good - And now you are ready -
And now you are ready
For clients to log on and watch your live webcam broadcast.
Make sure the broadband
Router is forwarding
External IP requests
You can start encoding to
Broadcast your web camera feed
Forward your ports - and -

[Sings more passionately…]

Click the Start encoding button.

[He does so –]

And tune in to live feeds.

[He does so – and works some more.]

At this point, you can have
You can have your audience tune into the web camera broadcast.
YOUR web camera broadcast

Like a picture in a frame,
And then, after some buffering,
The client's machine should be able
To see the web camera broadcast.

MUSIC CHANGE - e-mail arrives from violinist98@yahoo.org - we see it arrive, and see the text as FG97 sings.

OK

[Reading the e-mail -]

"Hey I'm gonna be late"

[to himself] - Fuck

[continuing to read]

"Sorry, sorry, I said I'd be there at one
But I got hung up talking to my Mom."

[to himself] - Your Mom - - -

[continuing to read]

"We had shit to talk about, no big deal - LOL, LOL"

[to himself] - Why did he say that twice?

[continuing to read]

"I'll be there at eight o-clock
Sorry, it won't happen again."

[to himself] - Fuck

[continuing to read]

"See you then."

[to himself] - Fuck, that sucks.

[muttering a bit] - Why did they stick me with this guy
If he is gonna be fucking late.

[typing his reply, we see these words as he writes them]

"That's OK - No big deal
I can change my plans
CUL8tr."

[sends his reply, he looks at the e-mail address, reads it]

Violinist Ninety-Eight @ yahoo - Yahoo
Yahoo, give me a fucking break

[muttering again a bit as he begins to google the address] - Why wouldn't he have g-mail? - - OK - - --
Dude he must be so poor - poor

[more decisive] - Cut and paste – OK

[googling the e-mail address] - Violinist, Violinist -

[he sees a reference to a t.shirt.com, a T-shirt company, and decides to click on it]

T-shirt, Tshirt?

[reading the webpage]

"Tshirt dot come, we have the perfect personalized T-shirt"

[to himself] - So, violinist, what words did you choose?
… Yahoo

[reading what violinist/yahoo chose to have printed on one T-shirt – we see these words on the monitor as well]

"IF OPPOSITES ATTRACT THEN WHY IS NO ONE SITTING HERE WITH ME"

[to himself] - **Really? Second T-shirt:**

[reading what's on the second T-shirt, we see these words, as before]

"I LOVE MY MOM, DO YOU?"

[to himself] - **Woah. - On a T-shirt?!**
I love my Mom too, but not on a t-shirt

MUSIC CHANGE – IM arrives from June99 – he multitasks – responding to her and his googling continues.

[reading this as he sings]
"Hey"

[typing his reply to her as he sings]
"Hey – !"

[to himself, back to googling] - **Cut and paste, what else**

[another IM from June, reading this as he sings]

"How's the new web-cam?"

[from the violinist's e-mail address, he sees several references to porn on the google page]

Porn –
Registered at a porn site

[replying to June's IM]

"Yeah the camera's good."

[he clicks on his link on the google page as he receives another IM from June, reading this as he sings]

"Waiting for your roommate?"

[replying to June's IM]

"No, he's gonna be late."

[reading the porn site name on the google page, and clicking on it]

Justusboys …
Registered at Justus …

[another IM from June interrupts him, reading this as he sings]

"How L8t?"

[to himself, having clicked on it, waiting for the home page to appear]

What goes on at Justusboys - ?

[sees the image on the homepage, reacts]

> **Hmm –**
> **Good to know**
> **Huh! –**
> **OK**

[replying to June's IM]

> **"Tonight –**
> **Googling him now**
> **Turns out he's poor –**
> **And other shit –**
> **Poor Guy –**
> **Sad shit and porn – "**

[sends message, gets a quick response - reading as he sings]

> **"Porn? Violin Boy?"**

[replying to June's IM]

> **"Violinist @ yahoo**
> **Gay porn – "**

[sends message - another quick response from June, reading as he sings]

> **"No shit – "**

[somewhat amused, replying to June's IM]

> **"No shit, and he registered his name at some site –**
> **Good to know – "**

[sends message, MUSIC CHANGE – then this reply from June, reading as he sings]

> **"Starbucks?**
> **Want some help?**
> **I can meet you now.**
> **And more googling –"**

[pause – then replying to June's IM]

> **"Meet U downstairs in a minute**
> **Once I set up the webcam to protect the room"**

> *(to himself)* **- And send.**

[singing to himself as he picks up his webcam, looks at it for a beat, casually places it on top of his computer –]

> > *Like a picture in a frame,*
> > *And then, after some buffering,*
> > *The client's machine should be able*
> > *To see the web camera broadcast.*

[He gets up to leave and meet June, as he leaves, looks at his webcam, puts it on top of the computer, aiming it – turns off the computer

cut to the webcam pov of an empty dorm bed next to a door - -we see him enter the frame, and go out the door –

closes the door - pause

fade to black

END OF EPISODE 1

1st credit slide
the web opera
episode one

music by
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libretto by
Kate Gale
additional texts
Michael Roth

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Additional vocals:
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EPISODE 2

[A few days later – We see an object moving across the screen – a light, thin object, and gradually it is revealed as a violin bow – and occasionally we see a hand – a hand putting rosin on a bow - eventually we see a face, starting intently at the screen – and then it disappears – pov change, Violinist98 is practicing, staring at music (a pdf) in his IPad, as he plays and stops a few times, turning pages so we see a hand swiping across the camera image - finally, he stops playing – stares at the music for a bit.]

{very quietly, to himself}

No – Um - No –
I don't think so.   *Voices:*   *I don't know*
Okay.

[Plays a bit more]

I don't know,   *Voices:*   *I don't know*
I don't -   *I don't think so.*

The notes and the music escape me –
It's like I'm not here –
And I just got here

Here where if I were good enough
Then I wouldn't be here –
And I just got here –   *Voices:*   *And I just got here –*

Here where the music escapes me
Like it sees me
And it knows I'm alone
Knows I'm alone –
I don't think so, I don't - -

{he plays a bit more}

This just repeats and repeats,
I could just read this tomorrow.

[Closes the pdf – puts down the violin - stares at his desktop - He sees the forum from the website Justusboys]

Justus - - -
… And I just got - -

[Typing on the forum, singing – we see what he types]

Hey - anyone here?
Anyone here now?
Starting a new topic,
Looking for - - *(friends)*   *(typing the words, not finishing)*

[To himself]
Fuck - - that's so - -
I sound so - - *(pathetic)*
[typing some more]
High school was awful
But this is worse

Know what I mean?

[to himself, i.e. stupid question]
      Shit, know what I mean?
      That sounds like - -

[tries to delete the last line, but he can't - to himself]
      Anyone – anyone -

[sits back, to himself, not typing]
      I walk in the silence
      Of unending streets
      No beauty or music
      Or people to meet
      So I post my thoughts here, beat after beat after beat after - -

(typing again) - **Anyone here? Anyone hear?**	*Voices:* *Anyone here*
	Beat after beat

      When I practice music, the silence is black
      I think in the silence and nothing comes back
      Does that sound familiar to anyone - -

      People see me as someone who wants to be alone –
      But that's not true . . .
      Delete - - delete - - *(deleting what he just wrote)*

      I need conversation . .
      I've googled how to start a conversation

(thinks about posting it, then posts it)	*Voices:* *Just Us Boys*

      It's just that I can't –
      It's something I -
      It's something I can't - DO

      Sorry, sorry –
      (stops typing) - **Sorry, sorry – Just me –**

[to himself – typing some, singing, and getting lost in his thoughts]

      I walk the streets.
      Watch rain in my two cupped hands.
      And see a single moment
      When –

      I want to be the boy you race home to
      the boy you stop to see
      the boy in the stairwell, the boy in the hall,

      the boy in the bedroom
      the boy in - the boy

      I walk the streets.
      Watch rain in my two cupped hands.
      And see a single moment
      when somebody whispers
      You're fantastic.
      And I whisper you're fantastic too.

I walk the streets
Watch rain in my two cupped hands.
Like love and grace descending
Maybe not as my mother might plan

But when I came out
She spoke of salvation
And children saved as adults would be
Rain falling into His hands
Like leaves falling off of His tree –

So suffer the children unto me
For they may suffer no more –
To walk the streets and to be free –
And see a single moment –
Like the rain in my two cupped hands -

[an message arrives saying FRIEND REQUEST. He clicks on the message, sings:]

Okay.

"Bookstore90 has sent you a friend request.
To confirm this request, please click OK."
[trying to remember who that is] - - Bookstore, Bookstore

[He clicks OK, and a message pops onto the screen from Bookstore90, he reads/sings it:]

"Hey, thought I'd track you down
- it was great to meet you"

[Suddenly remembering who Bookstore90 is, they'd met the day before – to himself -]
Oh, good.

[typing, singing]
"Hey, great to meet U too!"

[Incoming, word by word]:
"What's … up … with … yr … roommate?"

[typing, singing]
Ha!

[Reading the next IM, & responding]
"The AZN"

[typing, singing]
Ha!
The AZN sits alone,   *Voices: AZN sits alone*
his webcam and i-Phone   *phone, He's smart*
He's smart I like that too   *like that too*

But he, unlike that witty guy
Who I happened to sit by
Yesterday – LOL   *Voices: By - - LOL*
He sits installing more apps
Or maybe building a trap   *Voices: Ooo-trap-say*
And has nothing to say
And I can't remember

saying one word to him
He sits there with the blinds down,   *Voices: Down, who*
Doing - who knows?   *And I*
And also, I can't pronounce his name
 - - LOL, LOL   *LOL*
Bit too late to ask him now

[Response coming in – he reads and sings]

"Ha! I know how you feel but no big deal
Don't let it get to you –   *Voices: Let it get to you*
Just say – Sorry, pronounce your last name
And slowly too   *too, and why*
And tell him raise the blinds   *raise the blinds*
And let the sunshine in now and then"

[typing, singing]
"I can't do that"

[Response]
"Why not?"

[typing, singing]
"He's … not like me."

[Response]
"He's got two feet.
You've got two feet.
He's got two hands.
You've got two hands."

[Pause and then typing, singing]
"What have you got?"

[Pause and we see the reply, after a beat also sung by Violinist]
"HA"

[typing, singing]
"Maybe you could write the screenplay of my life."

[Response]
"OK, I'm working tonight - -
But – I can see U –
Tomorrow night."

[Pause, we see the response in his face first, and then typing]
"Tomorrow night - Great,
I'll text our AZN that I need the room "

[Response]
"Just tell him! LOL –
 - c u tomorrow,"

[He grabs his iPhone to send the text to his roommate]
Hey. Sorry, sorry
I need the room tomorrow
I have a private meeting
7 to 11.

Voices: ***Ooo, Sorry, sorry***

[quick reply comes to him}
    "No problem –"

[sings, posts his reply]
    Thanks.

[He looks at the computer for a few seconds,   *Cut to computer POV*
shutting it down as he sings.]
    I walk the streets.
    Watch rain in
    My two cupped hands   *Voices:*   *Hands -*

[He presses the shut down command]
    And see a single moment   *Moment*

[the computer snaps/shuts down quickly, mid phrase]

END OF EPISODE 2

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the web opera
episode two

music by
Michael Roth
libretto by
Kate Gale
additional texts
Michael Roth
Alex Syiek

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director
Kate Jopson
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[The next night –a close up on a young women's eyes, pull back to reveal June99 from episode 1 alone in her room - online – studying – we see the words TAKE HOME EXAM - she sings, reading this from her computer:]

Voices:	**OK**	
June99:	*(reading)* **When an Islamic center was first proposed**	**Voices: When - Proposed**
	And the site was officially disclosed	
	Here - not far from Ground Zero	**Here – Far - Zero**
	The President - to those who were opposed -	
	Said, "Our commitment to freedom	
	Of religion is unbreakable.	**Breakable -**
	All faiths are welcome - No mistake –	**Mistake**
	It's the promise we make –	**Make**
	And essential to who we are."	
	(spoken) **- Question One –**	**Who we are -**
	(sung) **- Another president wished to make it so**	
	In the very same spot several centuries ago -	
	(spoken) **- Name that president -**	
	(sung - to herself) **- Okay – In the same city**	
	(reading) **– Discuss his philosophy - And that name would be - - -**	

[typing the answer, "Washington" – then continues typing, a slightly awkward answer - singing – more lyrical]

America's striving for Utopian fulfillment
Freedom of religion, a city on a hill –
That history was often awkward and frequently ---

[there's a knock at the door, interrupting her]

June99:	**it's open**	**Voices: It's open**

[finishing what she's typing - -]

	"- frequently"	**Voices: …frequently-**

[Looking up, she sees - we hear - FG97 entering – off camera]

June99:	**Hey -**
FG97:	**Hey –**
June99:	*(to FG97)* **--- finishing something –**
FG97:	**OK - what are you - - ?**
June99:	*[finishing the sentence]* **"- - embarrassing – "**
	(answering FG97's question) **- Poli Sci and Religion**

[FG97 just enters the frame, behind her, not seated]

Sooooo - violin boy's got a date –

FG97:	*(spoken)* **- Yeah**

June99: What's he like –? *[Singing as she types]*
"Washington spoke eloquent - -" *(spoken)* - So- - -?

FG97: I don't know – *[Boy 1 sits next to her, we see him more clearly]*

June99: *[continues-sings/types]:* "– spoke eloquently about-" - - What - - --?

FG97: He's - - -

June99: He's - -

FG97: Kinda - -

June99: What?

FG97: -- creepy –

June99: Creepy? Really?

FG97: Well - I think he works at the bookstore
So he knocked on the door
Mumbling about – who knows
And like he was gonna be fed –
He sat down on the bed.

June99 *[typing, not singing –*
we see these words]:
the importance of
religious freedom and
tolerance.

June99: And said?

FG97: And said - nothing – he just stroked his beard
And he looked at the window and the blinds
It was weird
And I didn't want to leave my stuff -
I have thousands of dollars of legitimate - - -
I worked hard putting together all that computer shit –
I don't know – I mean - if it's stolen -

(still just typing)
Regarding safety -
churches, synagogues
mosques, and other-
(singing, & typing this)
places of worship
are no different -

June99: Yeah - -

FG97:   - well - someone's gotta pay – I mean

June99: Not Violinboy - ?

FG97: Yeah, welll - -- - no but -

June99: But what does he look like –

FG97: Hard to say – But hey - ! You're on my iChat - - ?

June99: I think so.   *[gradually they change places, his hands on the keyboard, etc.]*

FG97: ---right. Maybe I could - -
Log onto my iChat
I leave the webcam on and - -

(from episode 1) - There is no restriction on which clients
Can connect to this broadcast
You can restrict access by IP Address
And as the screen suggests,
Our broadcast will be available to anyone

June99: OK, let me finish this one
thing, one last thing, one
sentence – *(typing:*
legally than the people who
worship there.)
(sung) There -
Ok - Save - - -- - this
iChat address - Open
To anyone, anyone

Right - -I leave my webcam on
And the monitor off
And it looks like everything's off   **Everything's off**
So, for now, go ahead and click OK

[she clicks on his name and OK on her Chat list]

And – bookstore bookstore - -

B*oth stare at the computer, we see their faces as they look at the image from the webcam – silence - pause*

FG97:   *[neutrally]* **Ok – I can't see their faces**

June99:   *[neutrally]* **OK - can't see any faces**

FG97:   **Too blurry - so - - -**

June99:   **I've never actually - - Seen - -**

FG97:   **I know what you mean - -**

June99:   **We shouldn't - I feel -**

FG97:   **Watching – I feel really uncomfortable**

June 99:   **- kinda creepy.**

FG97:   **- just looking is -**

June99:   **Looking is - -**

FG97:   **Guilty - -**

.

June99:   **- - wrong.**

FG97:   **And we didn't look very long**

June99:   **So –**

FG97:   **So - Let's not look - - any more.**

June 99   **Never happened – Nothing happened.**

Boy1:   **Never happened.**
              Well - Something happened

Both: **But – let's not look - - any more.**

FG97:   **He's not from our world – He's a random**

June99   **I never saw that before – and I should get busy doing something else -**

FG97:   **Yeah – you should - --**

Roommate: *[having entered - off screen]* **– Hey –**

June99:   *(looking at her)* - Oh – hey –

FG97:   *(also looking up at her)* - Oh – hey -

Roommate: The others will be here -

June99:   Soon?

Roommate: Soon –

June99:   OK –

FG97:   - OK

Roommate:	Hey - You're from across the hall – What's going on –?	Voices:	What's going on --
June99:	His roommate kicked him out – got a date-	FG97:	Got a date -
Roommate:	Violin boy?! Good for him – What are you looking at now?	FG97, June99:	Violin boy -

     Duo enters – they're planning to go pick up some food with the Roommate

Duo *[entering]:* Hey! – We're here!

Roommate: They're here

FG97:   Not looking anymore - it's my roommate -

June99:   Not looking anymore - it's his webcam actually -

     [Opening her paper on religious studies, we see that text floating on the screen]

Duo: We should get going now -

Roommate: What are you watching now?

June99, FG97: Was on, not on now –

Duo/Room: 'Cause we got shit to talk about -

Roommate: I know –

Duo/Room: What are you looking at now -?

[Much of this is simultaneous, and builds - the Duo come in and out of the screen]

June99:	We were looking at -	Duo:	Looking at his Roommate – Why?
June99, FG97:	His roommate and his boy friend	FG97: Solo1:	My Webcam. His webcam that's so- American Pie
June99:	Kinda creepy - *[typing:]* - "Washington was making sure …"	FG97:	Yeah
Roommate:	Oh my God, O my fucking God -	Solo1:	But two guys –

Room w/Solo2: You were looking – what? Then you stopped? - -

Roommate: Why don't we log on again -?

June99: "… making sure that - - "
We can but there wasn't
much to see - -

Roommate: You saw him on the webcam
With his boyfriend on the webcam
And you turned it off just now -
Wow -
Take any pictures -?

All Others: Take any pictures - ?

June99, FG97: No - - -

June99: - That would be shitty – It was weird -
And the old guy with his beard
Is there any food here--?

Others: There any food here -?

Duo/Room: We got shit to talk about and work to do -

Roommate: But maybe I should stay –

June99: Really? You don't have to -

Roommate: I got work to do –
And besides I want to have a look

June99: *[iPhone sound, sees/sings text from boyfriend]*
Hey baby –what's going on?

[answering - she texts her boy friend about what's happening]
Nothing – I'm working –
Friend from across the hall is here -
His webcam - -

All: Much to see - - -

June99: "-making sure that his
vision was"

Duo, FG97: - his boy friend

Duo: I'd like to see more

Room, Duo: Yeah, it would be -

June99: I'll go look -

Duo: OK – Maybe we could
pick you up something

FG97: I should go too -

Duo: Maybe we'll look
when we're back -
Back with the food -

FG97: Frisbee Golf

---

*NEXT SECTION STILL A TRIO – THE DUO AND THE ROOMMATE SING ABOUT FOOD,
LOOKING UP TAKE OUT MENUS IN THEIR PHONES ETC
JUNE IS SINGING/TEXTING TO HER BOY FRIEND ABOUT THE WEBCAM ETC
BOY1 CHECKS HIS TWITTER FEED AND EVENTUALLY POSTS – NOT SINGING*

Roommate Yeah come back with the food –
There a barbecue place?

Duo: Yeah Korean but it's overpriced
Solo1, Room: Overpriced?

Solo2: But nice

June99: -Caught his roommate
With his boyfriend -

(reading) No shit!
(texting) No shit -

(reading) Ew - - -

Duo: They got a Panda Express there too

Solo1, Room: Got Lo mein or Fried Rice -

Solo2: Look – I got a coupon!

All three: Got a coupon - -

Solo2: For a soup -

Duo: For a soup we could bring from the mall -

Solo2: Buddha jumps over the wall

All: Buddha jumps over the - wall

Roommate: - What's it called?
Buddha jumps with a ball?

Duo: No a wall - It's a soup with a shark fin

Roommate: Check it again, is anything vegan?

Boy1's tweet hangs on the screen for a while as the women's voices sing on, contrapuntally etc.

Duet: No there's Starbucks and a Subway
And that Buddha jumps the wall place
Soup with the shark fin in -
No skin.

Roommate: Then Buddha jumps over the wall will do –

FG97 *leaves*

All: - wall will do, wall will do –
Buddha jumps over the wall
With Green Tea – Tea

Roommate: OK

June99 goes back to work on her paper as the tweet disappears –

June99: You guys go, I'll finish this soon

Duet: We'll be back soon *[and they leave – June and her Roommate are alone]*

Roommate: OK

June99: And I'll look for something here

Roommate: OK

June99: *(back to her writing)* - Washington was making sure his vision for
The future was clear –
A vision like Shakespeare's
Cut and Paste
Vision from Shakespeare –

FG97: Just gonna check my -
twitter feed -

June99: *(texting)* Lots of
people here -

(reading) Looking at
the webcam?

*FG97 has been posting on his twitter feed –
We see him post this - not sung:*
On my way for Frisbee Golf now!

*Roommate asked for the room –
I went to June's room
Turned on my webcam
Saw him making out with a dude.
Yay - LOL
http://192.168.0.105*

June99: *(texting)* – No-
It looks like they're
leaving soon -

(w/FG97): I'll call you later –

June99: Later, later -

June99 has googled and found her way to the text of Shakespeare's THE TEMPEST
Finding what she's looking for, Gonzalo's Utopian vision speech - she cuts and pastes it – during the following she
Edits the words down as she sings – adding them to her answer to the question in the test.
During this, the Roommate takes out her iPad, and sits next to June at the computer
Staring at Shakespeare's words, June edits as she sings – interrupting herself to answer Roommate's questions etc.

June99:   **Had I plantation of this isle,**
                & were the king what would I do?
                -   - - no kind of traffic would I admit –
                No occupation;

W/Roommate: **All men idle, all - And women too, but innocent,**

June99:   **pure -**

Roommate: *(adding these words*): **and clear –**

June99:   **Any food here?**

Roommate: **I think so**

June99:   **Thai from last night?**

Roommate: **Want some more?**

June99:   **Sure.**

Roommate: **I'll get some in a minute.**

June99:   *(Back to the Shakespeare) -* **All things in common nature should produce**

                        cut to iPad POV - close up of Roommate finding her way to FG97's webcam

Roommate: **- -iChat**

June99:   **Without sweat or endeavor:**

Roommate: **And there they are.**

June99:   **Sword, pike, knife and -**

Roommate: **Ha.**

June99:   **- Gun - or –**

Roommate: **OK, OK**

June99:   **- Need of any engine would I not have**

Roommate: **- And no shirts, no shirts**

June99:   **But nature should bring forth**

Roommate: **Well he is nerdy but - At least he's having –**

June99:   **Ha -**

Roommate: Sex -

Both: *(back to the Shakespeare)*
                        - - Of its own kind all abundance
                        To feed my innocent people.
                        I would with all perfection govern, sir -
                        - - To excel the golden age.

June finishes the Shakespeare - they eat - POV change to iPad shot, looking up at Roommates' face
Her fingers come down on to the iPad, we see her fingers moving
Xfade to different fingers on the iPad as time passes – The fingers lift off of the iPad,
We see iPad shot of Violinist98's face, looking down at his iPad
He scrolls through some tweets, etc, finally landing on one, read, and finally sings:]

Violinist 98:   Went to June's room – turned on the webcam
                      Saw my roommate making out
                      with a dude – Yay! LOL
                      H T T P – H T T P

[He clicks on his iPad, the link - slowly turns and looks up towards where the light is emanating –
POV change – to Violinist98 looking at the webcam across the room –
            He stares at the webcam for the first time -
            Sitting on the bed, identical shot as the end of Episode one
            He stares at the webcam, breathing – he is staring, seemingly, at us]

Fade to Black - End of Episode Three

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the web opera
episode three

music by
Michael Roth
libretto by
Kate Gale
additional texts
Michael Roth

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director
Kate Jopson

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Cast (in order of appearance)
Stephanie Cecile Yavelow
Reuben Uy
Molly Connor
Loren Battley
Joyce Lai
Adam Von Almen

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director of photography
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motion graphics
Christopher Gaal/Crazybridge
       Studios

Additional motion graphics
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Tobi Harper/website design,
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Stay tuned for
episode four

FANFARE MAGAZINE ON THE WEB OPERA
Feature Article by Ken Meltzer – Interview with Composer Michael Roth

Composer Michael Roth's THE WEB OPERA is a fascinating and compelling lyric drama exploring the toxicity and grievous harm caused by cyberbullying. I spoke with Michael Roth about this project and its mission.

THE WEB OPERA is based upon a series of tragic, actual events. How did you and librettist Kate Gale decide to create an opera about this tragedy?

Kate Gale and I met when she was president of the American Composers Forum/LA chapter. I'd won an ACF competition for my chamber piece STREICH (for flute, violin, viola, and cello). Kate is the managing editor of Red Hen Press, a progressive poetry press in Pasadena, and a poet and librettist—unusual for the head of a composer organization—so we continued to meet to develop a project.

Whenever I've met a writer over the past 10 years or so who's wanted to collaborate on an opera or music/theater piece, anything like that, even if the idea was a good one, I've always felt obliged to say what's almost obvious: It's hard, once you get going, to know if it will ever really exist as a fully produced thing. It's a lot of work and takes a lot of money—it might become a piece that just becomes workshopped endlessly through a series of readings, and you don't know where you might be heading or if you will ever have it onstage and fully realized—or sometimes just as important, get more than one performance or production. That's not a reason to not do something, just an assessment, and so I've often suggested as an alternative that making a film, especially nowadays, is very much possible. The means of production, so to speak, are well within reach, the amount of musical creation you can do digitally is pretty great, and an enormous new music/opera house does exist that's accessible to all: the internet. No matter what happens, the result can be posted online, sounding as one wishes it to sound, looking like what you might want it to be—to exist as we wish it to exist. And it's not a show that closes on Sunday afternoon. There might not be any "box office" to speak of, but the work will be posted as long as one cares to have it there, and that is in and of itself something.

With that, sometime during our talks about possible subjects, though I don't remember who talked about it first, we became aware of Tyler Clementi's tragic story—and over time it became very clear to me this was a profound event, a crime uniquely of our time impossible to happen or even imagine a generation before—in other words, there was a time when there was no cyber abuse because there was no cyber universe to be abusive in. When I was a student, or for that matter even when my stepchildren were students, to post something meant posting on a wall with a thumbtack, perhaps. It took a lot more effort, and that it might lead to a crime was hard to imagine. Now we take it all for granted: We all, should we care to, can post anything as often as we might wish, often about nothing in particular, thinking it's worth posting for whatever reason, hoping someone will perhaps see it, even "like" it. As Kate and I discussed it, it became clear to me this was not a stage opera. To put this on stage meant, for example, solving something as simple as deciding how to show a character facing a computer—on stage, that can be very sedentary among other things, it would involve perhaps a profile, or someone peering through an empty frame of some kind. But in this story, the principal events happened online, in a computer. The more I thought about it, the more I realized this was a unique film where, if we filmed it right, the audience could witness and even unknowingly be voyeuristic, even complicit—and violate the privacy of the characters themselves as they violate privacy in turn.

Describe the collaborative process between you and Gale and director Kate Jopson in the creation of THE WEB OPERA — starting with Episode 1, establishing the rules and guidelines for the rest of the work.

The first thing to say is that in film, unlike stage, you can't just stand and sing—it's a prerequisite that a character has to be doing something. As a side note, it's a valuable thing you learn in animation, where all the action has to be drawn: Drawing something to be still in animation is usually counterintuitive, so lyrically you have to plan on action in the lyric itself, even if it's subtle, beat to beat. I've learned this working with Randy Newman (music directing THE PRINCESS & THE FROG for Disney). And the process was similar with THE WEB OPERA.

As Kate wrote drafts, she had to adjust the tendency, standard in opera librettos, to sing about how you feel and be still in that moment—for our purposes anything like that became too sedentary. We spent a lot of time making sure that some action was possible, even if that is, as becomes rather ubiquitous or iconic in THE WEB OPERA, just clicking OK. The opera is literally littered with "OKs", our effortless agreement to accept almost anything online. First for Episode 1 was finding webcam installation instructions and adapting them for our purposes, with a bit of rhythm and to some extent song structure—and largely that is the first lyric. Then it was about finding a way to get the essential elements of FG97 finding out about his roommate into one short session—inventing a googling session, and then having it interrupted by his friend June. This involved lot of talk about what he was doing online, what he was seeing, going to the homepage of the forum site, taking that apart beat by beat.

Kate Jopson is a terrific young (mainly theater) director in LA. We'd worked together at La Jolla Playhouse, where I've been a resident composer. She, along with Joanna Syiek, a young musical theater director, were great

consultants—Joanna, fresh out of UCLA, was the first person who enthusiastically helped clarify that in filming it, limiting ourselves to computer, iPad and iPhone POV shots, the voyeuristic aspect of the action would be mirrored for the audience.

One of Kate Jopson's great contributions—taking advantage of her friends who were gamers—was deciding that in fact FG97 was most interested in installing a better webcam to be a stronger presence as he played and developed games. (All or the characters are known by email addresses—rather than invent new real names, it seemed right to go that route, and as that is the first thing you see when someone sends an email. You don't necessarily know the real name; the more enterprising among readers can perhaps figure out what FG means.) All of the visible questions and answers and all that you see in the first few minutes of Episode 1 are all presented almost realistically, thanks to Kate, and drawn pretty dazzlingly by our motion graphic artist, Lisa Glenn Armstrong.

In Episode 1 we essentially condense what the actual roommate did over a few days into one afternoon—he did google Tyler before he met him to learn more about him—something of course many of us do before we meet anyone. And he did share what he discovered with friends—again, not unusual per se, though I would hasten to add, viewed objectively, this activity, something we can take for granted, is one of the odd tropes of our lives.

And Episode 2?

We had to establish this young violinist, so the idea of practicing and being distracted and stopping, not uncommon for a musician (!) seemed right. Then seeking advice from a forum, something Tyler did, but in our case having no one respond in the moment, something that could happen, seemed the main way to get to a point where he could sing in a more expansive way what turns into an introspective aria of sorts ("Rain in my two cupped hands"). We all loved the idea that his most vulnerable lonely moment would be interrupted by a friend request, seemingly from a stranger. Vulnerable or not, nothing makes you happier than a friend request—something that certainly didn't happen 20 years ago. Adam von Almen, the actor playing Violinist98, does in fact play violin, which of course was a great help, and he was actually playing the music when we filmed it, though my friend Yvette Holzwarth, the very interesting LA composer/violinist, is the actual player. It was an interesting challenge creating the opening sequence, watching him play from an iPad POV, swiping to change pages as he practiced—it involved Plexiglass on top of the camera that he actually swiped, and our motion graphics artist, Yiyi Shao, did a beautiful job visualizing this, allowing it to accumulate in a way that reinforced his loneliness. All of THE WEB OPERA was filmed in my place in Santa Monica—one and two were shot in my kitchen. We, including our Director of Photography, Dana Fytelson, liked how the blue walls took the light and how faces could pop in front of the cobalt blue. Episode 3 was shot in my bedroom, transformed into the young women's dorm room.

And Episode 3?

Episodes 1 and 2 had to establish, with some invented action and economy, the circumstances for the webcam violation of privacy to happen. We knew that FG97 had to visit his friend June, which really happened, and view Violinist98 on his date from there to see what his date (Bookstore90) looked like—that is truly why it happened as well. To give June an action, we kept her busy with homework, a term paper/take home exam—and really, when you look at it, that really is what she's doing throughout, just trying to write a paper. As we put it together, it seemed metaphorically right to have her concern herself with utopian visions, the "city on the hill" that some have called America, and finally I thought of the "utopian" speech by Gonzalo in THE TEMPEST once the characters are on the island. I had composed the score for the Stratford Festival production with Christopher Plummer as Prospero, Des McAnuff, director, and had underscored the speech wherein Gonzalo talks about creating a world wherein "I would with all perfection govern to excel the golden age." To have our main character consider this idealistic vision, beautifully phrased by Shakespeare while, with friends, even if with perhaps no malicious intent, she violated someone's privacy—it does help beg the question: Is this the world that we want, where this kind of violation is so simple to do without thinking? We also had to invent how to populate the room quickly, and that involved bringing in June's roommate with her two friends working on a project, about to get food, having "shit to talk about," who enter in time to see that something interesting seems to have just happened; all of them stare at the computer, and at us looking back at them. Then they all go about their business, and in a moment of both musical and visual counterpoint, with great work by Chris Gaal, we see and hear a text conversation with a boy friend and several iPhones scrolling around food menus, all while FG97 posts without singing a tweet about what he saw—an action that reverberates into the climax and end of the episode, when Violinist98 reads the tweet himself.

THE WEB OPERA features a compelling synthesis of computer-generated and human musical contributions. If you would, describe those various components, and how you combined them—what was your compositional process for the opera and how does it relate to your other music?

For me, the most interesting element in music that seems to be what I am drawn to first is counterpoint—broadly defined counterpoint—how elements, even disparate ones interact. Maybe I find the potential conflict in counterpoint akin to drama and accordingly my interest in theater. My music has been described as "music one could imagine Charles Ives composing had he lived long enough to encounter rock-and-roll and beat poetry." The interesting thing is, usually when you compose an opera or musical, you initially think in terms of a piano/vocal score, which tends to make you think harmonically and melodically, as someone will actually play it—but when I compose, if there's no set parameter like a piano/vocal score, I tend to start with more fundamental, almost solitary

gestures and expand on them bit by bit, combining various rhythmic gestures, rhythmic cells, and seeing where all that takes me contrapuntally—and in this case, seeing how that can turn into an accompaniment.

I started composing in July, 2014. Compositionally, the opening of Episode 1 establishes the drive and more importantly the contrapuntal use of rhythmic cells for the episode and much of the opera. A short rhythmical cell is played, established, and then displaced rhythmically and transposed as well between various instruments and instrumental groups, creating the accompaniment figure for the work—something of a ritornello. And so the accompaniment is more about contrapuntal figures working in and around each other, allowing dissonant moments to just occur, rather than be about, for example, harmony. This process is in all the episodes in some fashion.

Because it was clear this was not to be performed live, it opened up the musical palette to whatever seemed apropos for each moment. I composed it all in Finale using a fairly wide template, making contrapuntal choices in Finale for instruments and gestures, and then transferring it all as midi files into Pro Tools. I then ran the midi files with Kontakt and various soft synths, adding prepared pianos and toy pianos, a lot of esoteric digital instruments and percussion.

What I think was interesting about this process—and again, it's something hard to make happen live per se—is that if I ran a midi line through a prepared piano sound, for example, and didn't like how, say, one note sounded in a four-to-five note run, I would just eliminate that note, creating interesting, occasionally uneven, rhythmic tension too. And of course I recorded musicians as well—my friends from LA and San Diego, including guitarist [Peter Sprague]; [Stephen Erdody], the great principal cellist for John Williams; violinists [Batya MacAdam-Somer] and Missy Lukin; two members of [Quartet Nouveau] who premiered [IMAGINATION DEAD IMAGINE,] my Samuel Beckett music/ theater string quartet piece (authorized by Beckett) in LA and Prague; and a lot of background singing with a very esoteric group of women, including [Emily Kosloski] and [Jackie Lopez], two fine classically trained singing actresses in LA, and two terrific pop singers, [Amy White] and the wonderful [Laura Vall] from Barcelona, both from the really cool LA band The Controversy. I do very much love vocal harmonies; these get rather complex throughout, repeating/emphasizing lines or words in a fashion hard to recreate live, but it is great, even liberating, to work through this with double tracking and mixing.

I'll mention one small thing that musicians might find interesting, perhaps unique to the way I composed. I recorded [Duncan Moore], the very fine San Diego percussionist, playing hi-hat along with the beat as it moved around in all the 7/8 guitar licks in Episode 3, accenting as composed, etc. Because I liked the sound and timbre of the hat so much, I took that file and inserted it into Episode 1, adjusting the tempo digitally. Of course, none of the accents lined up correctly, but that to my ears sounded even better than if they had been "correct." It's a subtle thing in the end, how it finally accents slightly off, but I really like it, and I don't know, if I composed it more traditionally, if something like that "mistake" would have occurred to me. If that encourages anyone to think slightly out of the box, great.

In the context of this discussion, I'm curious as to what opera (or musical) composers, past or present, you particularly admire, and what it is you most like about them.

Well, there's a lot, too many to mention—and as I'm writing this, I'm hearing Chris Thile on LIVE FROM HERE play, and very well, a great Sheryl Crow song followed immediately by an excerpt from Alban Berg's great Violin Concerto. In that spirit, let's just say I hope I live in a world where all the music I genuinely like I do so with no prejudice—good pop music and a great 12-tone violin concerto both exist in my universe proudly side by side, at least I hope so—I wish I could encourage that in others more than I do. I was reminded by a colleague at UCSD not to forget Shakespeare—as you know I've composed music/sound for a lot of theater pieces, including about 20 of Shakespeare's, so the principal dramaturgical influence is somewhere between Shakespeare, Beckett, and Brecht. Dealing with the masque in [THE TEMPEST with Christopher Plummer] playing harpsichord may not have been music/theater per se, but it came pretty close and teaches you something about immediacy, communication, and economy at the same time that the poetry can be almost extravagant.

I grew up on The Beatles and am happy to consider "Strawberry Fields" a great watershed moment leading to SGT PEPPER and, well, the rest of the 20th century. In some ways THE WEB OPERA, as our sound mixer [Steve Cahill] said many times, does show their influence everywhere pretty profoundly, perhaps in its use of sound textures that come in and out of the music in a freewheeling way. I moved from The Beatles to Bernstein, especially of course WEST SIDE STORY — no one on Broadway has topped the "Prologue" as an idiosyncratic and very personal composition that sounds like itself and nothing else. I don't think, in spite of glimmers of great creativity, Broadway will ever welcome that kind of intensity in pure personal writing again—including of course the 12-tone fugue in "Cool." I say that regretfully, as a theater artist who tries to push the wheel down the road, and wonders where it all might go. The profound experience that set me on the course of creating theater as well as music was seeing WAITING FOR GODOT when I was 17—I was at the time not a theatergoer at all, and didn't know until that night that art could express just how strange, one might even say discordant, life is—and pushing forward, going on, was all anyone could do when, as Beckett puts it, "We're on earth, there's no cure for that."

Other important influences, some music/theater, some not: THE MOTHER OF US ALL (Thompson/Stein, utterly wise and beautiful); Conlon Nancarrow's ÉTUDES FOR PLAYER PIANO, a profound influence on my work; Stravinsky's AGON (and, well, everything else); the EROICA (always); Perotin's VIDERUNT OMNES; Elliot Carter's string quartets (I

think of my work as living comfortably between Carter and Fats Domino, as I hope my piano sonata "Fats November" demonstrates); the Golden Gate Quartet (especially "Hush"); Stevie Wonder's "Lately", and Rodgers and Hart's "You Are Too Beautiful", two spectacular love songs I wish I could written; MOSES AND AARON; 4' 33"; SONATAS AND INTERLUDES; and, well, a lot of John Cage, certainly as a sound artist in addition to a composer and thinker; Brecht/Weill's MAHAGONNY; Fiona Apple's short song for THE AFFAIR (I really do wonder, of the many great pop writers, what she would do with music/theater or opera form); many, many other things—and I get a kick out of Taylor Swift, too, no kidding.

My favorite musical theater of the past few years was by far Peter Sellars's great staging of de Lassus's LAGRIME DI SAN PIETRO with the LA Master Chorale—wonderfully musical, revolutionary, and truly spiritual, whatever that means to you. I wish every theater artist I know could have seen it; frankly, most of them didn't, which is really too bad as it is truly musical theater and utterly unique, elusive and beautiful in ways that musical theater rarely explores. Finally, I've had two great mentors: my teacher at Michigan, William Bolcom—I arranged the two-piano adaptation of his great DYNAMITE TONITE—and of course my friend and colleague Randy Newman. His iconoclastic vision is inspiring to all who wish to figure out how to say what they care to say, and his ability to know the discipline it takes to write a song—that is, any sung vocal utterance. I can't begin to define how he's been an influence on my work, other than to say I'm lucky it's true.

THE WEB OPERA strikes me as an extremely powerful work, both from a musical and visual perspective. I'm especially moved by the brilliant way in which you delineate the three principal characters who appear in these episodes. I'm curious as to how you view those characters, and what you did to communicate those views to the audience. The three singers who perform the principal roles are entirely convincing, both vocally and visually. Tell us a bit about these talented young people, about how you got them to do such good work in the 10-minute film close-up section that is the heart of each episode—the concentration it must have taken to do that work.

Thanks, and I certainly agree. As I said, this really is a small project that grew—so once I was done composing most of the first episode, the first director Joanna Syiek and I thought we should see some people and figure out how to film it. Joanna runs a small LA music/theater group, we had a day of auditions at my place (auditions included me teaching them some of the music, then recording them and filming them—there really was no short cut). Reuben Uy came in on day one, and just took to it very quickly—he's actually a very experienced stage actor with a long resume of work in the Philippines, but had just arrived in LA. This was one of his first jobs here, quite an auspicious beginning in America (!), and he's been a great spirit for the whole project throughout.

Adam von Almen came to us through similar auditions. Some have mentioned, even objected to the non legit, so to speak, voices in the opera—Adam of course can sing a great "Nessun Dorma"—no kidding—but the more we worked the more we realized how intimate it should sound, and we went for it. I love and use legit voices as much as anyone, but clearly I love any voice that is musical, and I hope the opera—and Adam's work, simple, eloquent and very intimate, filmed with a camera 6 inches in front of his face—reflects intimacy and a lack of musical prejudice.

Stephanie Cecile Yavelow, June in Episode 3, is in fact a very interesting young singer/songwriter from the Netherlands, and was a recommended by my friend the great LA jazz pianist Mike Lang. What was really striking in her case was she really just came in and sightread June's whole opening—studying, writing her term paper—it's rhythmically very complicated, especially for a singer—and she just nailed it; I didn't have to teach a note. To this day, I don't think I'll ever encounter a better sight reader, and Stephanie can really rock, too! I encourage everyone to look her work up, along with Adam and Reuben and all.

The rehearsal process for each episode took several months, not because we didn't want to do it more quickly, but because everyone involved was a freelance artist with lots of schedules to work around—just to get everyone in the same room took some doing, so usually it was a once a week thing—all in my apartment/studio in Santa Monica. Most of the music was recorded there, with the exception of working with the great guitarist Peter Sprague in his studio north of San Diego. (That was mainly to take advantage of Peter as a player and engineer, and also to take some of the pressure off of what it's like to engineer your own sessions when you're the composer.)

The advantage of the long rehearsal process was that every episode became very lived in, especially given that the center of each episode was a 10-minute take. The performances are in the best sense very naturalistic: No-one is caught "performing" per se, even if simple naturalistic behavior might be counterintuitive for opera. The film captures very small gestures, such as eyelines, how the characters look at the corner and read a message and react in the tiniest way—for example, the moment in Episode 2 when Adam says he "can't do that" (ask his roommate to raise the blinds). I love how we capture such private vulnerable behavior. And in Episode 3, I really am proud that all of the actors, including certainly Molly Connor as the roommate with her friends (Loren Battley, Joyce Lai—they are just behaving, just existing, it's very quotidian. Kate Jopson was great at reinforcing simple behavioral work.

The visual perspective and direction for THE WEB OPERA certainly accentuates the impact of the drama. The audience is constantly reminded of how pervasive, invasive, and controlling we've allowed the medium of the internet to become.

Yes! As for the visuals, I knew from the beginning motion graphics were going to play an enormous role. I'll just say I learned a lot, and the three artists—Lisa, Yiyi, and Chris—were very creative in establishing the unique visual

language of each episode. [Chris Gaal and his Crazybridge Studios](#) especially knew we had to make a violent event happen in Episode 3 in a way that is highly unusual in opera. Ordinarily a moment like the tweet being sent would be sung by the person sending it—but in reality, it of course wouldn't have been even spoken, it would have been silent. An event like a gunshot happens as FG97 types the tweet and posts it while no one knows it happens: That's the climax of the episode. I hope readers appreciate the complexity of all the menu information in the background, the texts between June and her boyfriend, and a devastating tweet that takes over the entire frame and explodes as it disappears. Chris, an activist and artist who works a lot with Virtual Reality, also interviewed us for THIS WAY OUT, his LGBT Podcast, and was great at reminding us of, as he put it, the cavalier homophobia of the characters. I also love how Chris isolated the roommate's viewing via her iPad, how the image and frame adjust with her finger as it moves around the extreme close-up of Molly's face, making her violation more vivid and, if you will, creepy.

I understand that mental health advocate Eduardo Vega has become involved with THE WEB OPERA project. Tell us how that came about, and what your collaboration with Vega has entailed.

Eduardo, truth to tell, came to our project later, once it was filmed. My friend Kelly Kasle, a young bassoonist and LA producer who has helped in post-production, thought Eduardo should see it, given the work he does in suicide prevention with his organization [Humannovations](#). He's been indispensable, leading us smartly to make our social mission more prominent and clear and the website more proactive, and putting together our resource pages. Our launch event in January 2019 featured a panel organized by Eduardo with three young people, two of whom had attempted suicide, two of whom had quit all social media. This led to a really powerful and moving post-screening discussion—the speakers talking about how the opera showed the triggers that occur online and how they can hurt the more vulnerable among us. Honestly, after that—having self-produced THE WEB OPERA predominantly with my own funds, not knowing what might happen—I truly believed that if nothing else happened but that very discussion that day, I'd done what I wanted to: to engender discussion, and make viewers more aware of how precarious a world dominated by social media can be.

Tell us about the reception THE WEB OPERA has received to date.

Bit by bit it is getting out in the world; thanks. One thing I hope is clear: this is a very small independent production. We have no company producing for us; it's kind of up to me, when I have the few hours every day or so to devote to it. We have a great fan and appreciation of it from our new friend Stephanie Eslake, editor of CutCommon, the new music journal in Tasmania—in spite of any implicit criticism of the web in the opera, that one of our biggest fans is a Tasmanian music journalist does speak to the wonder of the web too. The film festival world is entirely new to me, and so far so good—we have been designated an official selection by 14 festivals, with I suspect with a few more to come. Awards have included winning Best Music from New York's IndieBoom Fest, a Humanitarian Award from the Best Shorts Competition, being a semi-finalist/Best Web Series in Rome's Prisma Awards, and most recently honored by our premiere festival screening in LA, winning an award from the Feedback/ Experimental Dance, Music and Film Festival.

To be honest, some music critics aren't really open to THE WEB OPERA yet. Some think the young non-legit voices make it "Broadway," whatever that means—for them it's a condescending term, alas a very parochial point of view that I've spent much of my career fighting. Besides, THE WEB OPERA is not a Broadway musical; it really is a filmed, through-sung web-series, and that argument is irrelevant. One critic only watched the trailer, dismissed it as rock music, declaring that rock is only meant for dancing (!) and further stating no one should write an opera based on true contemporary political events! It's as if she were dismissing what an entire generation of composers has been brought up on and writing. And as for history—is NIXON IN CHINA irrelevant, or even all of Shakespeare's history plays? I had just finished composing the score for the LA production of [HENRY IV with Tom Hanks as Falstaff](#), and no one who saw that would dismiss its political acumen as she would have—neither about when Shakespeare wrote it, nor about who we are now. Working on great historical plays like the HENRY's and Aeschuylus' THE PERSIANS, as I've been privileged to do, reminds you it's your responsibility as a living artist to respond to the socio-political world that presents itself to you, just as they did.

Given that, most gratifying has been the occasional direct response from someone, akin to the panel discussion at the launch, who contacts me to say they appreciate the depiction of the very precarious universe we're in the middle of, one that perhaps they've been struggling with. As Brecht would say, bit by bit we "change the world, it needs it." I think the fact that you are using the same medium that led to the poor young man's death to tell his story, and to raise awareness of it and cyber-bullying, points to what a double-edged sword we are dealing with.

It's a precarious situation amplified to an awful place, as I for one can certainly draw a direct line from the very early cyber abuse moment of this tragedy to the persistent cyber abuse of our president who tweets with such cruelty, engaging in cyber-bullying unrelentingly. He tweets and posts so often simply to make himself feel good. For all the benefits one might find in social media, the world it has created encourages our narcissism. We can so easily embrace the power of that self-expression, damning the consequences, and our president leads us in that fashion—embracing the behavior of a narcissist, enabling something not uncommon among many whom we know. He, of course, has genuine power, and how (and if) we can recover from this is an unsettling mystery.

I wrote and produced THE WEB OPERA to let people know that I think our times are troubling, and we keep feeding the beast. We really have to think about the world we're creating and building on, what we are leaving for those

who follow—and how we communicate within it. If not getting a "like" on Facebook causes so much upset that you might think less of yourself when it happens, we really do need to change the world, bit by bit, daunting as that prospect might be. And if any conversations that have happened as a result of the opera, including at our launch event, helped make anyone think about how we treat each other, then perhaps I've done something worthwhile.

Where can people view THE WEB OPERA?

It's easiest to just go to thewebopera.com. Though the screenings have certainly been interesting, THE WEB OPERA was created to be seen online, and there it is—and, I encourage all to listen to it with earphones! The Soundwaves New Music series in LA is presenting a screening later this year, with others to follow as well. You can also watch it on our YouTube page—youtube.com/channel/UCOdMu4OoUaYaeTuMShqh8ww.

Tell us about the plans for additional episodes of THE WEB OPERA, and how people might support that initiative.

There are two more episodes, and as of today Episode 4 is just about complete compositionally. It will be almost entirely a cappella; I think of it as a multi-voiced motet, frankly not unlike de Lassus. Hopefully not too much of a spoiler alert here: we'll see Violinist98, knowing that he has been observed via his roommate's webcam, go back to the forum he visited in Episode 2 to seek advice. This time various people are there, and they all post back their various reactions to what happened and their suggestions as to what he should do. Via green screen and VFX we'll see the faces emerge mysteriously in the dark as ghostly images around him, as they correspond and sing. Episode 5 will take us to the conclusion, in an interesting and unique way that I'd rather not say much about for now.

Without going into too much detail, THE WEB OPERA so far has been essentially self-funded. We received a modest grant from the Santa Monica Arts Commission, for which I'm very grateful, but one reason it took a while to complete the first three episodes was because I was working on a lot of other projects at the same time in order to fund THE WEB OPERA. As I say, all of the artists involved are freelance, all with many projects going on. But fortunately everyone really believed in what we were doing, and I'm certainly grateful for that as well. With that, we'd love support to help us finish the work, thanks for asking, and anyone interested in helping us can go to this page on our website and make a tax deductible donation via Red Hen Press: thewebopera.com/episodes-four-five.

In addition to completing THE WEB OPERA, what other projects are in your future?

In addition to teaching sound design at UCSD, there are three major projects in the immediate future—one, mentioned before, is working again with Randy Newman. We've worked together often since the 1980s, including music direction for Disney's PRINCESS & THE FROG and editing five songbooks for him; in the fall I will be music directing, orchestrating and playing piano for the concert version of his FAUST at the Soraya Center, north of LA. Two other big composing projects are in process. the Jewish Arts Festival in San Diego will be presenting extended excerpts from a new piece, THE GOLEM OF LA JOLLA, written with Allan Havis, a contemporary music/theater political opera—let's just say it's very much a reflection of the rather maddening America we find ourselves in and, perhaps, about the futility of praying for a savior. That will be followed by THE NEW PLANET — a really interesting new music/theater collaboration with a terrifically innovative, beautiful writer, Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig, and directed and choreographed by Maija Garcia. It concerns rats and frogs and aliens and the creation of the new planet, and then the populating of that too. We'll be presenting the very first showing of it at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis in late July; I'm rather thrilled about that.

There's also the distinct possibility of a few more performances of my Beckett piece, IMAGINATION DEAD IMAGINE, music/theater for string quartet, recorded voices, and laptop, perhaps in San Diego and hopefully Boston—check out this page for more info: rothmusik.wixsite.com/rothmusik/beckett-premiere. Assuming all that goes fine, then comes another piano sonata, and then—thanks to perhaps some good support from things like this Fanfare interview (!)—the filming of Episode 4 of THE WEB OPERA sometime around the turn of the year.

ROTH The Web Opera ● Stephanie Cecile Yavelow (June99); Adam von Almen (Violinist98); Reuben Uy (FG97); Molly Connor (Roommate); Loren Battley, Joyce Lai (Roommate's Friends); Emily Kosloski, Laura Vall (voc); Yvette Holzwarth, Batya MacAdam Somer (vn); Stephen Erdody (vc); Peter Sprague (gtr); Duncan Moore (perc) ● MICHAEL ROTH no catalog number (Streaming video: 40:00) https://www.thewebopera.com

As American composer Michael Roth describes in the above interview, THE WEB OPERA was inspired by actual events. In September of 2010, a Rutgers University student webcast video of his roommate kissing another man. After the roommate, a gifted violinist, learned of this betrayal and invasion of his privacy, he committed suicide by jumping off the George Washington Bridge. THE WEB OPERA, a collaboration by Roth and librettist Kate Gale, is an ongoing venture encompassing five episodes. As of the writing of this review, three episodes have been completed, with the plot reaching the moment when the violinist learns of the webcast. Roth and his numerous collaborators (again, noted in our interview) have created a unique, remarkable, and moving work that wrestles with the toxic dangers posed by the confluence of (here, homophobic) bullying and internet technology. In THE WEB OPERA, the audience views the action through the perspective of a computer webcam and/or the camera of a computer, laptop, or iPhone. Throughout, we are reminded of how much humans have become dependent upon and addicted to this technology. The close-up, claustrophobic shots only serve to exacerbate this hard truth. Roth's musical score is an ingenious synthesis of styles and genres, classical and popular, featuring both computer and traditional

instruments. For certain, the influences of both the Broadway stage and popular music may be heard. But what emerges is a style all Roth's own, one that does not sound derivative. I particularly admire the way Roth delineates the three central characters (all the principals are referred to by their computer screen names); the college roommate (FG97), his friend (June99), and the violinist (Violinist98). Violinist98 (touchingly sung and acted by Adam von Almen) in particular emerges as a sympathetic, three-dimensional character. Violinist 98's beautiful Episode 2 monologue could easily hold its own on the popular or concert recital stage. The other two principal vocalist/actors, Reuben Uy and Stephanie Cecile Yavelow, are also absolutely convincing in every way. All of the singers employ a popular (rather than an operatic) method of voice production, entirely appropriate for the drama and Roth's music.

I found THE WEB OPERA to be both a compelling and fulfilling musical experience, and a thought-provoking work. I think it is a worthy and important venture, one that merits attention.

Ken Meltzer

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