

## DAILY ARTS

# This Fresh Squeeze Is All About the Opera Shorts

One Ounce Opera premieres a concert of new young composers

BY WAYNE ALAN BRENNER, 10:00AM, WED. APR. 13, 2016

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Yes, that's Austin's own One Ounce Opera. The ristretto-strength renegades who overdubbed Jackass: The Movie with opera clips. The ones whose non-ironic cover of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" can just about alter your DNA.

The ones who don't perform in posh concert halls, usually, choosing instead to rattle the rafters of bars and warehouses – and a 56th-floor penthouse club room or two – with soaring shards professionally shattered from the best of what opera (and maybe a smidge of pop music) has to offer.

They could just keep on doing that, you know? For years & years, probably. And – because anyone who's experienced their gigs have been delighted, have been pretty much enraptured and, like, *glistening*, due to the vocal beauties they've experienced – well, the group's success would continue.

But, laurels: *They're not resting on them.*

One Ounce Opera has gone and held a national talent search, seeking out short (10-20 minutes each) works of opera *in English* by new and original composers. And found a whole bunch of such composers – twentysomethings, most of them, FFS. And the One Ouncers have chosen the best compositions from among that select group. And now they're presenting a concert of the five winners: Fresh Squeezed Ounce of Opera.

That's happening this weekend, at the Museum of Human Achievement.



But we wanted to know how this national-talent-search idea got going in the first place.

So we asked **Julie Fiore**, OOO's effervescent artistic director, and here's what she said ...

**Julie Fiore:** The spark that ignited this project happened about a year ago. I met up with Austin-based composer Steven Serpa, and he shared his 15-minute opera *Thyrsis and Amaranth* with me. Days before my meeting with Steven, I had micro-operas on my mind – I'd read another blogpost about short opera becoming *en vogue*. Presenting new compositions or commissioning new works has always been a part of my master plan for OOO, and sticking with the “ounces of opera” concept, nothing seemed more fitting than a showcase of 10- to 20-minute pieces. I thought, *The shorter the works, the more OOO can stage, and the more composers we give voice to – quite literally*. So we opened up the call for composers and were thrilled – and surprised – with the quality and quantity of what came in. I knew then we were on to something.

**Brenner:** So *y'all* got submissions from all over the country?

**Fiore:** And beyond! Along with several local composers, we received submissions from as far away as Germany, with most hailing from California or Texas.

**Brenner:** Ah, and where are the winners from?

**Fiore:** Two winners, **Jeff Luna** and **Steven Serpa**, are local artists. **Liam Wade** is based in San Francisco; his librettist **John Grimmett** splits time between Houston and New York. **Tori Ovel** is a student at Butler University in Indianapolis, and **Jesse McMilin** graduated from high school a few years ago in Santa Cruz.

**Brenner:** Was there any composition that's particularly challenging to perform?

**Fiore:** Each piece was challenging in its own way: changing meters, modes, key signatures, tempi – especially when we're performing without a conductor. As for the *real* challenge? Well ... the composers will be in the audience on Saturday night. Talk about whoa! But who gets an opportunity like this very often? The OOO team wants so badly to do them proud. I have to say: After watching [the first dress rehearsal](#), I think they will be very pleased. I know I am.

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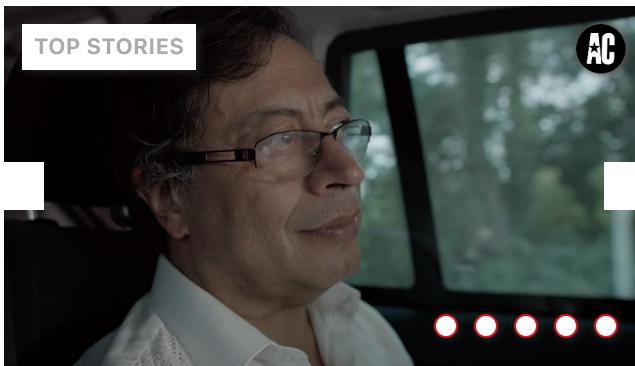
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