

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Sunday, November 12, 2017 & Saturday, November 18, 2017



PRESS RECAP

ADVANCED COVERAGE / PREVIEWS

LA Weekly: <http://www.laweekly.com/event/war-of-the-worlds-8819049>



Details

Time: 2:00 p.m. November 12
More Dates/Times

\$25-\$58, free at various air raid siren sites

<https://www.laphil.com/tickets/war-of-worlds/2017-11-12>

Location Info:

Walt Disney Concert Hall

111 S. Grand Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90012
323-850-2000
<http://www.laphil.com>

Directions

By Drew Tewksbury

There has never been a more suitable time for an apocalyptic opera. Composer Annie Gosfield's operatic adaptation of Orson Welles' infamous radio drama ***War of the Worlds*** makes its Disney Hall debut featuring narration by the *Alien* queen herself, Sigourney Weaver. The otherworldly performance — which includes L.A. Phil players and opera star Suzanna Guzmán — is the brainchild of director Yuval Sharon, who recently won an esteemed MacArthur Fellowship, aka "the Genius Grant." Sharon has been responsible for large-scale musical projects that redefine operas and performance for the 21st century. In *Hopscotch*, he coordinated a citywide performance inside a fleet of limos and at various historic places in L.A. neighborhoods. Sharon's opera *Invisible Cities* was enacted in downtown's Union Station, where performers intermixed with travelers in the railway station. Like his other works that engaged communities, *War of the Worlds* also will be broadcast for free at three WWII-era air raid sirens throughout L.A.

LA Weekly: http://www.laweekly.com/arts/best-cheap-and-free-things-to-do-in-la-nov-10-through-nov-16-8820492?utm_source=Newsletters&utm_medium=email

8 Cheap and Free Things to Do in L.A. This Week

By Drew Tewksbury November 10, 2017

Husband-wife stand-up with Moshe Kasher and Natasha Leggero, an operatic adaptation of *War of the Worlds* at an air raid siren, a daytime party at MOCA, and more to do and see in L.A. this week for 10 bucks or less.

There has never been a more suitable time for an apocalyptic opera. Composer Annie Gosfield's operatic adaptation of Orson Welles' infamous radio drama ***War of the Worlds*** makes its Disney Hall debut featuring narration by the *Alien* queen herself, Sigourney Weaver. The otherworldly performance — which includes L.A. Phil players and opera star Suzanna Guzmán — is the brainchild of director Yuval Sharon, who recently won an esteemed MacArthur Fellowship, aka "the Genius Grant." Sharon has been responsible for large-scale musical projects that redefine operas and performance for the 21st century. In *Hopscotch*, he coordinated a citywide performance inside a fleet of limos and at various historic places in L.A. neighborhoods. Sharon's opera *Invisible Cities* was enacted in downtown's Union Station, where performers intermixed with travelers in the railway station. Like his other works that engaged communities, *War of the Worlds* also will be broadcast for free at three WWII-era air raid sirens throughout L.A. *Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Sun., Nov. 12, 2 p.m.; Sat., Nov. 18, noon & 2 p.m.; \$25-\$58, free at various air raid siren sites.* laphil.com. —Drew Tewksbury

LA Weekly: <http://www.laweekly.com/arts/dia-de-los-muertos-altars-in-grand-park-are-just-one-thing-to-see-downtown-this-weekend-8816762>

There Are (at Least) 12 Reasons to Go Downtown This Weekend

Dia de los Muertos is technically over with, but in Grand Park, Day of the Dead lives on. Throughout the park, more than 50 altars honoring dead loved ones as well as commissioned works of art are still on display. Between Grand Avenue and Hill Street, Boyle Heights gallery Self Help Graphics & Art has curated a collection of altars, including a large community altar, where Angelenos can leave *ofrendas* for the dead. On the community terrace between Hill Street and North Broadway, an installation called *The Journey to Mictlán* celebrates the duality of death — that it's simultaneously an ending and a beginning. And on the event lawn North Broadway and Spring, a Oaxacan altar honors the four elements.

The "Altars + Art" exhibition just one thing to see during [Grand Ave Arts: All Access](#), a day of free performances, art and activities hosted by a dozen downtown cultural institutions up and down Grand Avenue, from Temple to Sixth Street.

Here's a quick rundown of some highlights (and a full agenda is available [here](#)):

At 11 a.m., the L.A. Phil is hosting a conversation with recent Genius Grant recipient Yuval Sharon about the forthcoming (and very cool sounding) opera based on George Orwell's *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast. They'll also have music workshops for kids and an "instrument petting zoo" at Walt Disney Concert Hall.

LA Weekly: <http://www.laweekly.com/event/war-of-the-worlds-8807384>



Christopher Rountree conducts L.A. Phil New Music Group in the world premiere of NYC composer Annie Gosfield's inventive *War of the Worlds*, an ambitious, and eerily silly, re-creation of Orson Welles' infamous radio broadcast about a Martian invasion. Sigourney Weaver narrates the multimedia presentation from The Industry and director Yuval Sharon, which takes place inside Disney Hall and at three nearby "siren locations," where the site-specific performances of several groups of chamber musicians and opera vocalists (including Suzanna Guzmán and Hila Plitmann) are beamed back and forth to each location.

Details

Time: 12:00 p.m. November 18
More Dates/Times

\$10-\$58

Location Info:

Walt Disney Concert Hall

111 S. Grand Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90012
323-850-2000

[Downtown](#)

<http://www.laphil.com>

LA Times: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-sigourney-weaver-war-worlds-20171013-story.html>

Sigourney Weaver to narrate L.A. Phil's 'War of the Worlds'; two performances added

By: Jessica Gelt /November 4, 2017



Sigourney Weaver will narrate the L.A. Phil world premiere of "War of the Worlds." (Carl Court / AFP/Getty Images)

Actress Sigourney Weaver has signed on to narrate the [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#)'s world premiere next month of Annie Gosfield's opera "War of the Worlds," with adapted text and direction by 2017 MacArthur fellow Yuval Sharon.

"War of the Worlds" uses Orson Welles' famous 1938 fake news broadcast about aliens invading Earth to examine the often-flawed dissemination of information in modern times. The show will be heard not only inside Walt Disney Concert Hall but also outside it, via three revamped World War II air raid sirens. Sounds, songs and news bulletins from performers on the streets will be broadcast inside the hall.

"I love this idea that the street and the hall are in dialogue with each other — that we're not on Bunker Hill removed from everyday life," Sharon, who holds the title artist-collaborator with the L.A. Phil, said during a recent interview.

Two bonus performances were added to the original show date of Nov. 12. Those added shows will take place on Nov. 18.

"As our current political and social situation becomes so dire and alarming, this piece feels like it's speaking to these issues in a way that, for me, feels quite electrifying," Sharon said.

San Gabriel Valley Tribune: <http://www.sgvtribune.com/2017/11/05/class-act-la-phil-goes-opera-with-an-assist-from-sigourney-weaver/>

Class Act: LA Phil goes opera with an assist from Sigourney Weaver

By Bob Thomas / November 5, 2017

November is always a busy month for classical-music lovers and this year is no exception.

The first half of the month includes the world premiere of an opera based on a familiar story, a centennial celebration, and the latest local appearance by a Chinese pianist with a distinctive name.

Although Walt Disney Concert Hall wasn't designed for opera, the Los Angeles Philharmonic has found a way to offer one or more operas during each of the past few seasons. On Nov. 12 and 18, the Phil — in conjunction with newly announced 2017 MacArthur Fellow Yuval Sharon's group The Industry and the public art organization NowArt LA — will present the world premiere of Anne Gosfield's opera, "War of the Worlds."

Although the original story was written in 1897 by science-fiction writer H.G. Wells and set in England, most Americans know the story of Martians invading Earth (if by reputation only) from the radio show written and directed by Orson Wells for his Mercury Theatre on the Air on Oct. 30, 1938. The radio broadcast is said to have caused a panic by many who heard it due to its realistic news-bulletin format.

The Phil's performances will feature actress Sigourney Weaver as the narrator and a cast of eight singers, including soprano Hilda Pitmann and mezzo-soprano Susanna Guzman. Christopher Rountree will lead the Phil's New Music Group inside Disney Hall. The performance, with special effects that include three World War II-era sirens, will be broadcast onto the streets outside of WDCH.

The Nov. 12 performance will be at 2 p.m. The Nov. 18 performances will take place at noon and 2 p.m. as part of the Phil's "Noon to Midnight" series.

Information: 323-850-2000, www.laphil.com

KUSC: <https://www.kusc.org/culture/out-and-about-blog/war-of-the-worlds/>

Walt Disney Concert Hall Prepares for Alien Invasion

Posted by Sheila Tepper · 11/7/2017 11:00:49 AM



Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Philharmonic

Composer Annie Gosfield says re-working Orson Welles' famously shocking 1938 radio drama *War of the Worlds* was "kind of a dream project." Not only is Gosfield's version an opera [being staged at Walt Disney Concert Hall](#), it'll also use three newly reactivated World War II air raid sirens on the streets of downtown LA as speakers. Performers stationed at the sirens will send live reports of the "alien invasion" back to the concert hall.



Christopher Rountree (LA Phil New Music Group Conductor for "War of the Worlds") & Annie Gosfield (Composer, "War of the Worlds") | Photo by Susie Goodman

The production gets its world premiere here in Los Angeles on November 12th—a collaboration between the [LA Phil](#), [Now Art LA](#), [The Industry](#) and The Industry's founder Yuval Sharon. Conductor Christopher Rountree will conduct the LA Phil New Music Group and a talented cast of soloists including Hila Plitmann, Suzanna Guzman, Joanna Lyn-Jacobs, Hadleigh Adams, Jon Lee Keenan, David Castillo, James Hayden and actor Hugo Armstrong.

Gosfield has LA roots. She told me she attended USC in the 1980s and was a part of the city's punk scene. I caught up with her backstage at Walt Disney Concert Hall to talk about her approach to *War of the Worlds* and how she researched what it might sound like if aliens were jamming our radio signals. Conductor Christopher Rountree joined our conversation as well and talked about the challenge of bringing all the elements of the performance—from unseen airplane pilots to off-sight performers to singers on stage contained in a plexiglass cube to the orchestra—together.

Click below to listen to Annie Gosfield and Christopher Rountree discuss *War of the Worlds*.

<https://www.kusc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Gosfield-Rountree-.mp3>

Yuval Sharon is no stranger to inventive site-specific opera productions. His experimental opera company The Industry has staged productions inside LA's Union Station and in cars roaming the streets of Downtown (the opera *Hopscotch*). He told me it was air raid sirens that inspired this whole *War of the Worlds* project.



Yuval Sharon (Concept, Direction and Text Adaptation, "*War of the Worlds*") | Photo by Susie Goodman

Click below to listen to Yuval Sharon discuss *War of the Worlds* on a KUSC Out and About: Bonus Podcast.

<https://www.kusc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Yuval-Sharon.mp3>

The world premiere of *War of the Worlds* is Sunday, November 12 at 2PM. There are additional performances November 18 at 12PM and 2PM. You can attend a performance at Walt Disney Concert Hall or at one of the three siren locations, each featuring a different character. [Click here](#) for tickets.

LA Times: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-la-phil-war-worlds-20171108-story.html>

'War of the Worlds' to invade Disney Hall and the streets of downtown L.A.

By: Jessica Gelt / November 8, 2017, 3:00AM



"War of the Worlds" director Yuval Sharon, left, composer Annie Gosfield and conductor Christopher Rountree by one of the vintage air-raid sirens to be used in the Los Angeles Philharmonic's adaptation of Orson Welles' 1938 broadcast about aliens invading Earth. (Gary Coronado / Los Angeles Times)

A wiry orange alien scuttles across a cracked parking lot near the corner of 4th and Main streets downtown. The creature towers over the acting secretary of the Interior, who stands before a microphone broadcasting a somber statement to the public.

"Citizens of the nation, I shall not try to conceal the gravity of the situation that confronts the country," she says as a two musicians saw away on a violin and an upright bass, a mustard-yellow air raid siren behind her rising above the chaotic scene.

A conductor vocalizes the sound of an alarm, and it's a wrap. This weekend rehearsal for Annie Gosfield's new opera, "War of the Worlds," is over.

The ambitious performance piece, staging its world premiere Sunday, is the [Los Angeles Philharmonic's](#) take on Orson Welles' famous 1938 fake radio news broadcast about a Martian invasion of Earth. The text has been adapted by 2017 MacArthur fellow Yuval Sharon, who also is directing.

Part of what we hope to achieve with our audience is that
they realize the value of their own critical faculties in
assessing what's true and what's fabricated

— Yuval Sharon

Sigourney Weaver stars as the emcee of a concert at Walt Disney Concert Hall that gets interrupted by news of the invasion. Refurbished World War II air raid sirens at three outdoor sites are key to the action. They will transmit the percussive sounds of the aliens along with music and reports from inside Disney Hall. Sounds and news from the siren sites will in turn be broadcast into the hall.

Crackling radio music from long-ago ballrooms influenced Gosfield's interplanetary compositions, which play with time and space via radio transmissions and the analog musicianship of the L.A. Phil.

At the core of the performance is the country's troubled relationship with truth.

"Part of what we hope to achieve with our audience is that they realize the value of their own critical faculties in assessing what's true and what's fabricated," Sharon says a few days later over coffee at the concert hall cafe with Christopher Rountree, who's conducting, and Gosfield. Sharon adds that Welles used the original "War of the Worlds" broadcast, which sowed panic in some listeners, to explore radio's potential as a tool of manipulation.

The collaborators say they found extra salience in their subject matter after allegations that a Russian disinformation campaign may have helped President Trump to victory in the 2016 election. The rise of the terms "fake news," "alternative facts" and "post-truth," as well as a feeling that the country is split when it comes to political and cultural perceptions, also feeds directly into the work, they said.

"I feel like it's mandatory for us to engage in politics," Rountree said emphatically, rattling off statistics about Russian election meddling on social media: 126 million Facebook users reached by inflammatory posts, 131,000 messages published on Twitter, more than 1,000 videos uploaded to YouTube. At the time of the election, Rountree says, people didn't have knowledge of the scale of propaganda the country was dealing with.

"Now, it's *posts*, not posters," Sharon said, comparing the way propaganda is disseminated in the modern age as opposed to before World War II. "It's just found its new medium."

Sharon and company made a calculated choice not to use a new medium for their version of "War of the Worlds," opting instead for the strikingly analog world of radio. They hope that this, along with the absurdity and levity in the script, will function as distancing devices, giving the audience space to meditate on the nature of truth and manipulation — and to arrive at the possibility of change.

"Personal expression is so important, and maybe a project like this inspires someone to voice an opinion artistically or politically that they wouldn't otherwise," said Gosfield, who lived in L.A. in the 1980s and remembers noticing the air raid sirens around town. Nearly 200 of the oxidized metal relics have been scattered about the metropolis since World War II. They are part of a skyline most passersby don't notice, but Gosfield became obsessed.

When Sharon approached her more than a year ago in his role as artist collaborator for the L.A. Phil, wanting to commission an opera using the sirens as central set pieces, she was all in. So were street artist Calder Greenwood and the public-art organization Now Art L.A., which produced wild art installations at the siren sites conjuring the destruction of the alien invasion, as well as the aliens themselves. Audience members can reserve spots at these sites free of charge and, of course, anybody who happens to be walking past during "War of the Worlds" will get in on the action too.

Activating the life of the street in service of the performance was important to Sharon, who has made a name as the artistic director of the experimental opera company the Industry. Its multimedia feats of derring-do include 2016's "[Hopscotch](#)," which took place in 24 cars rolling through the streets of L.A. For Sharon, "War of the Worlds" has evolved into an institutional critique of classical music. The idea that music unfolds in the protected realm of a concert hall on Bunker Hill with no connection to life outside is worthy of challenging, he says, especially in times of crisis. After the election, he found himself wondering, as an artist, if there wasn't something more important he should be doing.

"Why are we all sitting here in this concert hall together?" he asked himself. "That's not to undercut the value of going to a Beethoven or Bach concert and it reminding you of the humanistic values that we all

share, but there's the danger of that becoming a kind of opium."

People tend to think that the values espoused by the great masters are unassailable, Sharon says, "And because of that, the passivity with which we sit in a concert becomes the attitude with which we approach our daily lives."

Audience members inside Disney Hall during "War of the Worlds" will be asked to take an active role when it comes to perception. Stretches of time will pass during which the only sounds concertgoers will hear will come from the world outside the hall

"It's the first time we have done something this grand or ambitious or beautifully foolish," Rountree says of the L.A. Phil production.

During the rehearsal, Rountree waves his hands in the crisp fall air with the sun on his face, wearing black jeans, sneakers and a T-shirt — a far cry from his usual tuxedo-clad public persona inside Disney Hall. He smiled as a black SUV rigged with a camera for shooting a movie drove past the string players on Main Street. A police escort followed and the peal of an ambulance siren erupted somewhere in the distance. Meanwhile, a crew of workers affixed a vintage Italian deli sign over the Chao Chao Vietnamese Kitchen sign across the street, preparing for the film shoot.

"Can they please do that during the show?" Sharon asks, laughing. "That's amazing. How do you describe that?"

"War of the Worlds" comes close, adding as it does to the rich layers of fact, fantasy and fiction that collide like old friends on the streets of Los Angeles.

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'War of the Worlds'

Where: Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., as well as at three siren sites to be disclosed with an online reservation

When: 2 p.m. Sunday, noon and 2 p.m. Nov. 18.

Price: \$21 and up for Sunday, \$31 and up for Nov. 18 (includes admission to the L.A. Phil's [Noon to Midnight](#) event); siren sites are free with reservation

Info: (323) 850-2000, www.laphil.com

Lisa R. White

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Time Out: <https://www.timeout.com/los-angeles/blog/a-performance-of-war-of-the-worlds-is-taking-over-downtown-l-a-s-old-air-raid-sirens-110917>

A performance of 'War of the Worlds' is taking over Downtown L.A.'s old air raid sirens

By: Danielle DiMegelio / November 9, 2017



Photograph: Courtesy Jeremy Bishop

Expect the unexpected whenever Yuval Sharon is at the helm of an opera. The Industry founder's groundbreaking, unorthodox productions—including *Invisible Cities* (2013) at Union Station, which audiences experienced through wireless headphones, and *Hopscotch* (2015), an oeuvre that took place in moving cars—are a testament to his ability to look beyond the traditional. The same mentality is behind his new boundary-breaking performance piece, *War of the Worlds*, at [Walt Disney Concert Hall](#).

As part of his three-year stint as artist-collaborator with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Sharon has joined creative forces with composer Annie Gosfield to resurrect and reimagine the infamous 1938 broadcast by then-23-year-old radio host Orson Welles. It was through this nationally aired “fake news” piece—an adaptation of H.G. Wells's 19th-century novel, *The War of the Worlds*—that millions of listeners became convinced that aliens were invading planet Earth. The nationwide havoc and hysteria that ensued marked that late-October evening as one of the most memorable moments in U.S. radio history.

In the forthcoming opera, conducted by Christopher Rountree, Sharon looks to Welles's original radio script to create an immersive, realistic production that will be performed beyond the confines of the concert hall.

While LA Phil musicians conjure Gosfield's radio sounds inside the iconic venue, singers will be stationed at three defunct WWII-era sirens in [Downtown L.A.](#) (Olive and 1st Sts; Winston and Main Sts; and Hill and 7th Sts). The performance will stream live through the sirens, which have been repurposed as two-way speakers just for the event, while the singers outside will send back dispatches of the alien invasion to be broadcast live to audiences inside the concert hall.



Photograph: Courtesy CC/Wikimedia/Jengod

The one-of-a-kind performance piece will be staged three times: first on November 12, and again on the following Saturday during the LA Phil's [Noon to Midnight](#), a daylong series of pop-up performances from various ensembles with food trucks and beer gardens.

War of the Worlds is at Walt Disney Concert Hall Nov 12 at 2pm and Nov 18 at noon and 2pm (323-850-2000, [laphil.com](#)). \$10–\$58.

KCRW: <https://www.kcrw.com/news-culture/shows/press-play-with-madeleine-brand/war-of-the-worlds-comes-to-downtown-la#seg-war-of-the-worlds-becomes-an-unconventional-opera-in-la>

Yuval Sharon's interview with Madeleine Brand

'War of the Worlds' becomes an unconventional opera in LA 12 MIN, 58 SEC

Orson Welles' 1938 broadcast "War of the Worlds" was a radio drama about Martians invading earth, based on the novel by H.G. Wells. It was remade into a movie starring Tom Cruise. Now it'll be an opera at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Three wartime sirens will even blast the music out to the streets of Downtown LA. The show is a modern take on how information gets spread, and how reliable it is. "War of the Worlds" will run November 12 and 18.



The new opera 'War of the Worlds,' directed by Yuval Sharon, comes to Walt Disney Concert Hall on November 12 and 18. (Photo courtesy of LA Phil.)

Guests:

[Yuval Sharon](#), director of "War of the Worlds," The Industry

More:

[Get your tickets to 'War of the Worlds' here!](#)

NPR Music: <https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2017/10/11/556899374/opera-director-yuval-sharon-awarded-macarthur-genius-grant>

Opera Director Yuval Sharon Awarded MacArthur 'Genius' Grant

By Tom Huizenga and Robert Siegel / October 11, 2017



American opera and theater director Yuval Sharon has earned one of the most prestigious – and lucrative — honors in the arts world. He was announced, early Wednesday morning, as a [MacArthur Fellow](#), a recipient of the so-called "genius grant" from the MacArthur Foundation, which comes with a no-strings-attached \$625,000 purse. He joins 23 others, representing a broad range of talent in the arts, humanities and sciences. Musicians [Rhiannon Giddens](#) and [Tyshawn Sorey](#) are also among this year's winners.

Sharon, still in his 30s, founded [The Industry](#), an experimental opera company based in Los Angeles. He was singled out for, as the foundation cited, "expanding how opera is performed and experienced through immersive, multisensory and mobile productions that are infusing a new vitality into the genre."

Labeled as "[opera's disrupter in residence](#)," Sharon plays with concepts of reality and fiction in his headphone opera *Invisible Cities* (by Christopher Cerrone), which is set amid real life commuters in a Los Angeles train station. The production was a 2014 Pulitzer Prize finalist. He's also paired CGI technology with traditional staging in a [reanimated version](#) of [Leoš Janáček's](#) *The Cunning Little Vixen*, an opera originally inspired by a comic-strip.

But perhaps no production lives more outside-the-box (literally beyond the four walls of an opera house) or is more worthy of the MacArthur "genius" moniker than Sharon's *Hopscotch*. With a team of six composers, six librettists, over 125 performers and a fleet of limousines, the "mobile opera" unfolds across the city of Los Angeles with audience members and musicians inside vehicles and assigned to specified locations. A lone trumpeter, for instance, offers solos from atop an abandoned water tower perched on the sixth floor of a warehouse. *New Yorker* critic Alex Ross compares its scope and ambition to Wagner's four-day, 15-hour *Ring* cycle, [describing](#) *Hopscotch* as "a combination of road trip, architecture tour, contemporary-music festival and waking dream."

Sharon graduated as an English Literature major (with a minor in dramatic arts) from the University of California, Berkeley in 2001. Before starting The Industry, he worked as an assistant director on productions at the Los Angeles Opera, the San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera and abroad at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg and at Berlin's Komische Oper.

Earlier this year, Sharon was announced as one of the producers at the 2018 Bayreuth Festival in Germany. It's the first time the all-Wagner music fest has named an American to produce an opera. His latest work, an operatic adaptation of Orson Welles' radio drama *War of the Worlds* (with music by Annie Gosfield) premieres at Walt Disney Concert Hall, and on the streets of L.A., on Nov. 12.

In conversation with NPR's Robert Siegel, at the listening link above, Sharon talks about the ideas behind his groundbreaking works. Excerpts from that conversation follow, edited for breadth and clarity.

For those of us haven't experienced your operas, describe what you're doing and what you conceive of it.

I've always been drawn to an idea of opera as something that wasn't just a concert with nice costumes, but was actually something closer to the root of what opera always was, which was an interdisciplinary and multimedia experience. You have to think of these people that put together the first operas, thinking, "OK, we've got a composer, we've got a designer, we've got a poet, a choreographer, we have this beautiful space and we're going to bring all of them together into this kind of unstable mix to try to understand what this thing would be that we would create." And that's why they called it opera. In Italian it translates literally to just "work." When you think of opera on those terms it sounds so contemporary and so open and still something that feels like something emerging. And that's something I've always been drawn to with opera.

In *Hopscotch*, there are multiple plots and the opera unfolds in different locations in Los Angeles and the audience travels from location to location. Do I have that right?

It's a notoriously difficult project to summarize. It did take place in 24 cars and locations all around Los Angeles. I think that when people hear about that project or about *Invisible Cities*, they can come across as a little gimmicky-sounding, or they can sound like it's a cool stunt or something fun to do. But they really come from a very deep investigation into both what opera is and the ideas of opera. But also how operas can connect really closely and deeply with the life of a city and our social experience. In something like *Hopscotch* or *Invisible Cities*, I really aimed to try and bring something that seems inaccessible – just from the idea of the word "opera" – and try and bring it right into the fabric of our experience of everyday life.

You said there's a lot of fear in the opera world, and you also said all fear is manufactured. What do you mean by that? Who is manufacturing the fear?

This is a much bigger question than just an aesthetic question. I think about this a lot in terms of our current political reality or our current social situations. Fears and prejudices, and over reactions and over simplifications, they all go to narrow our minds, and that is being done by people with a specific agenda. A piece of art can actually open us up to what we don't know and what we don't expect and help us see the world from a different perspective. I actually think we get closer to the essence of what it means to be alive and be a part of a community with other human beings. And I think that's so essential now more than ever.

You once said "As arts leaders we're supposed to be the ones that create our audience. I see a resistance to that. It's the idea that, 'Well, it's what our audiences wants.'" You say you're supposed to do what he audience doesn't yet know they want.

They think that the only way they will sell tickets is by giving an audience what they already expect. I don't know a lot of audiences that go to an opera or a theatre piece or a film and wanting to see exactly what they already know they're getting. I think they actually want to be taken on a journey somewhere they've never been before and to experience something brand new. And the only way to do that is to ask the audience to take a leap of faith, but first and foremost you as the artist and the producer have to take the first leap of faith.

(Note: The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which [awards](#) these grants, is among NPR's financial supporters.)

LA Times: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-macarthur-yuval-sharon-20171011-story.html>

MacArthur fellow Yuval Sharon: Opera's man of the moment on how he will use his \$625,000 award

By: Jessica Gelt / October 10, 2017



How can I be a warrior for what's good in the world?"

Yuval Sharon asked himself that question hours before the announcement that he was a 2017 [MacArthur](#) fellow, winner of the so-called genius grant of \$625,000, to be paid in quarterly, no-strings-attached installments over the next five years by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The foundation rewards individuals who have a track record of achievement and "manifest promise for important future advances," the organization said. Sharon's potential rested primarily on the work he has done in Los Angeles as artistic director of the experimental opera company the Industry, he said by phone Tuesday.

"I'm a director, not a standalone artist with a canvas," he said. "I feel so honored, because I get to be the representative of so many creative people who work with me. I'm excited about the spotlight this provides to the Industry."

Sharon rose to national prominence in 2013 with the Industry's ["Invisible Cities,"](#) an immersive opera staged in downtown Los Angeles' Union Station. Singers mingled with harried commuters, bending accepted ideas about the sanctity of traditional performance halls. His next big act was in 2015 with ["Hopscotch,"](#) an ambitious opera performed in 24 cars driving in and around downtown L.A.



“Self-reflection is crucial to artistic work.

— Yuval Sharon

Soon after, Sharon was named the [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#)’s first artist-collaborator in residence. The three-year post set him free to curate nontraditional projects for the L.A. Phil in association with the Industry. This includes his forthcoming performance piece, “War of the Worlds,” which uses the famous Orson Wells 1938 fake-news radio broadcast about a Martian invasion as a springboard for a project that involves piping music from inside Walt Disney Concert Hall to World War II-era sirens on city streets (and sounds from those same streets into the concert hall).

“I think it’s very exciting to be doing something that feels like a direct response to our current social-political situation in a way that I think is very visceral and strong,” he said of “War of the Worlds,” which premieres Nov. 12. “We don’t need to draw direct parallels, because the direct parallels are so clear and alarming.”

Earlier this month, Times music critic Mark Swed noted how the venerable Cleveland Orchestra opened its 100th season by asking Sharon to direct [“The Cunning Little Vixen,”](#) in which animation played on three screens surrounding the musicians.

Sharon had no idea he had been nominated for the fellowship, so the notification phone call in mid-September was like a bolt from the blue. He was driving at the time, and he asked if he could call back when he was out of traffic. He thought he was being contacted for a recommendation for somebody else.

“It was so surreal. They read back to me why I was selected — and I don’t even have the words to describe what it felt like to hear,” he said. “I thought, ‘Wow, I guess that’s what I’m doing,’ but you get in the thicket of doing it, and with no warning, you get this bird’s-eye view of the past 15 years.”

Sharon is known for thinking in wide, zigzagging arcs — for conceiving ideas that seem too audacious to pull off.

The MacArthur money will allow him the freedom and time to reflect on where he’s been and where he hopes to go, he said. He’d also like to write about his craft in the tradition of some of his favorite directors, including Bertolt Brecht, whose book “On Theatre” influenced him greatly as a young man.

In 2020, when he is free of all future work commitments, he will take a six-month sabbatical in Japan, most likely in Kyoto. He’s never been there, but the country’s music, culture, theater and literature have long appealed to him.

“Self-reflection is crucial to artistic work,” he said. “It’s so easy to get caught up in the machine of producing. The second one project is done, you’re on to the next.”

Taking time off will let him explore ideas at the forefront of his mind. He said that he feels genuine terror about the political age he’s living in and that as an artist, he has a responsibility to respond.

“How can I intentionally right the balance?” he asked. “That’s why the arts are so important. We have this administration that represents the worst in humanity and cultivates the worst in us, and the arts do the opposite. They are a calling to our highest and best selves.”

Do 11.17

FITNESS

Burn, Baby, Burn

HEALTH NUTS ARE ALWAYS ON THE HUNT FOR NEW WAYS TO TORCH CALORIES. THE CITY'S LATEST **BOUTIQUE WORKOUTS** ARE UNFORSWEATABLE

L.A.'S FITNESS SCENE is a restless one, with endorphin addicts seeking ever-spicier approaches to better health (and better bods). It's a niche that boutique studios are stepping up to fill: gyms that cater to trends like barre or Spin or circuit after circuit of high-intensity interval training (HIIT for those in

the know). Los Angeles is a petri dish for this very type of innovation because if nothing else, we are a people who'll give most anything a shot (see: sweat lodges).

The latest studio to arrive on the West Coast is New York's Shadowbox, a private boxing gym opening this year at the ROW DTLA. Bass-heavy music pounds

as a motivational instructor takes you through several rounds of bag work. If the crowds at the NYC locations (where a ten-pack of classes costs \$310) have taught us anything, it's that designer workouts are on the rise, not on the outs. Here are six poised to replace your trusty treadmill habit. > SEAN FITZ-GERALD



Hamilton: A Hip-Hop Musical Ride Would you like a little history lesson to go with that uphill Spineval? If you can't get enough of Lin-Manuel Miranda's smash, keep your eyes on SoulCycle's calendar for this popular—but sporadic—theme ride (\$30), which is set to the musical's rhythmic soundtrack. It's been known to pop up at the Hollywood and Brentwood studios. soul-cycle.com.



Orangetheory Fitness The hour-long class (prices vary) mixes cardio and weights with an element of competition: A heart rate monitor tracks your stats, which are projected onto a leaderboard. Don't worry—you get a screen name, so it's not totally *The Hunger Games*. There are 11 L.A.-area locations to choose from. orangetheoryfitness.com.



Namasdrake "Just hold on/We're going om." Cham-pagne Papi would approve of this hour-long yoga class (\$25) set to an all-Drake playlist. Facebook keeps you up-to-date on the nomadic events, which take place everywhere from Space 15 Twenty to the Bootleg. The class also comes in Bowie, Kanye, and Bey varieties. namasdrake.com.



LIT Method The Beverly Grove studio isn't *lit* in the millennial sense of the word—the acronym stands for low-impact training. The cardio regimen (\$28) eschews running, jumping, and weights for resistance bands and what is described on the site as a "very sexy" water-rowing machine (said to activate 84 percent of your muscles). litmethod.com.



The Wall The Hollywood studio's 123 Stack class (\$18) takes you from a ten-minute core workout to 20 minutes of HIIT to 30 minutes of Spin. The Sunday Funday session really is better than the others because mimosas are included. (Everything in moderation, right?) thewallfitness.com.



Sanctuary Fitness DTLA's Sanctuary offers Spin and HIIT classes (\$25) that blend cardio and strength training. There's a different theme each day of the week—surge on Tuesday, revive on Sunday—to keep you coming back for more. sanctuaryfitnessla.com.

70 LAMAG.COM



60-SECOND BIO

Get to Know Yuval Sharon

THE EXPERIMENTAL OPERA GURU BRINGS ORSON WELLES'S *WAR OF THE WORLDS* TO DISNEY HALL

BORN

» Naperville, Illinois, 1979

LIVES IN

» Los Angeles

YOU KNOW HIM FROM

» Did you catch the head-phone opera *Invisible Cities* at Union Station? What about *Hopscotch*, which took place in 24 limos? Sharon masterminded both.

WHAT HE'S UP TO NOW

» He runs his own opera company, the Industry, and is in his second of three years as the L.A. Phil's artist-collaborator.

THE SHOW

» In 1938, a radio broadcast of *War of the Worlds* had listeners thinking they were under alien attack. On November 12 a version Sharon has crafted for the Phil is being transmitted from Disney Hall and through reactivated WWII-era sirens positioned all over L.A.

FUN FACT

» Sharon worked on Wagner's *Ring Cycle* at the L.A. Opera in 2009. He'll be the first American to direct a show at the 2018 Beyreuth Festival, which Wagner founded in 1876.

PHOTO: JEFFREY MAYER; COURTESY SOULCYCLE; DRAKE: TAYLOR HILL; WATER-ROWING MACHINE: LIT METHOD

SCPR: <http://www.scpr.org/programs/the-frame/2017/11/10/60153/air-raid-sirens-a-theremin-and-the-l-a-phil-come-t/>

Air raid sirens, a theremin and the L.A. Phil come together for 'War of the Worlds' opera

By: Michelle Lanz / November 10, 2017

Downtown Los Angeles is the setting [for an ambitious opera adaptation of Orson Welles' 1938 radio drama, "War of The Worlds"](#) on Nov. 12 and 18.

"War of the Worlds" is being presented simultaneously inside Disney Hall and at three outdoor locations in downtown L.A. At these sites, Sharon and his team have repurposed three World War II-era air raid sirens, which will be incorporated into the performance.

The opera was written and directed by Yuval Sharon of The Industry Opera Company, the group behind the operas "Hopscotch" and "Invisible Cities," which unfolded outside the confines of the concert hall.

Frame host John Horn and producer Michelle Lanz caught an early rehearsal and spoke with composer Annie Gosfield, conductor Christopher Rountree and creator Yuval Sharon.

INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS:

On adapting the text for this production of "War of the Worlds":

Sharon: The libretto is actually very true to the original radio broadcast, with some changes specific to Los Angeles and some changes specific to our time. But I liked the fact that you can't quite pinpoint what year we're in as the piece is going on. It feels like it floats between 1938 — the original year of the broadcast — and our current time. I really like that. Sometimes the language is very stilted and feels like it comes from World War II. And other times it feels like it's happening right now. And I think that move back-and-forth from our time to an old time — I hope what it does is help alert the listeners and the audiences that they never get too complacent with where they are in the world of this piece, that they have to keep finding their footing. Instead of moving along with the hysteria and

getting swept away with the hysteria of the moment, that alienation of going back-and-forth is something that keeps us aware.

On how the music blends musical and environmental sounds:

Rountree: What Annie has written is so poly-stylistic. I think there's this lounge tune in the beginning, which is part of where the orchestra goes haywire. There is a sound of a machine, but it's made by a person — for high soprano. It's so challenging that I think someone gets to try it once a day and then their voice runs out. So what Annie's written is an incredible vehicle for that. There are all these samples that are happening. There's the sound of a theremin, which kind of sounds like a soprano, and a violin and ... it's almost dated now. It's like this thing from the '60s and '70s.

On creating the sonic vocabulary for "War of the Worlds":

Gosfield: What you might call non-musical sounds have always been a very important part of my work. But not so much as a pre-conceived notion of, *This is what I'm going to write*. But I hear many things as music that are not necessarily music, and grew up listening to my parents old tube radio tuned in to static and tuned between the stations. So being able to incorporate this into music is just natural to me. I have this huge library of radio samples from the Cold War and from World War II that I got when I did some research at the American Academy in Berlin. So some of those 1938-era recordings will work their way into this, coming through the airwaves from Mars, some in Disney Hall itself. Part of the idea was mixing this otherworldly sub-ensemble — percussionist, theremin and keyboards and the soprano — and just trying to see how we could represent Mars and how we could represent transmissions from Mars.

On the site-specific elements of "War of the Worlds":

Sharon: Beyond Disney Concert Hall there are these three siren sites. For some of the audience, they'll be outside on the street listening to this concert being broadcast through these sirens that haven't made noise in 30 years. So, all of a sudden, they're experiencing this in a very different way. We chose downtown as the centerpiece for the entire production. The audience will be sat in parking lots in a sort of installation that's specific to that particular scene. It's more about downtown as an entity rather than the individual street corners. We're [designing] each of them so that they're all quite different. If you see the piece twice and you see it once from siren one, [then] if you come back and see it from siren two, you're going to see a different character live and you're also going to be in a different environment as well. So each of the four experiences is very unique and separate and independent, but every siren site and Walt Disney Concert Hall is creating this piece together.

On the perception that classical music is detached from reality:

Sharon: The concert hall, which we usually think of as holy and sanctified and separate from the life of the street and the life of a community, is — in this case — being infiltrated by the sounds of the street. The noise and these voices are taking over what we normally think of as a very safe space. And we're looking at that in a very ironic way with this piece, which is that music is somehow protected and there's no touch from the outside world and outside worries — that actually the safest place you can be is in the quiet sanctuary of the concert hall. Sometimes it's great to have that escape into music, but I actually think — and especially in times like ours — we need to remember that we go to these cultural

institutions, no matter whether they're on a hill or whether they're on a street, that we go there to try and learn about our own humanity and try and understand what we're going through and the challenges that face us. So I think it's a really important time to be attacking that boundary between culture and the life of the street and that realizing that life of the street can become the oxygen for that culture.

On how the perception of this piece might have changed due to the political climate:

Sharon: To me, with every new tragedy and uncertainty that's happened since the libretto was written, which was about a year ago, every new change in our current situation — politically and socially — has completely shifted how I think about this project and what the tone of this project is going to be, especially with the siren sites. In many ways, the libretto was being written when it seemed like the primary crisis was fake news — that we can't trust the information that we're hearing. "War of the Worlds" in a way became what we thought, post-election, would just be a sharp satire of the fact that so many people don't think critically of the information that we receive and that "War of the Worlds" was, in many ways, the very first piece of fake news to have challenged its audience, and in many ways failed in that way to wake an audience up to think about what they're hearing. In many ways, I think to myself, *This is actually why we look to art*. We look to art to try and find solidarity with each other and to realize that we're in this together, and if there's going to be a solution to the current crises that we're finding ourselves being attacked by, day in-and-day out, it's going to be by sticking together and creating something that allows our audience to reflect on what that means in a way that isn't just safe — that actually does go to the heart of the matter. With every passing day, I feel like it's more and more urgent that we do a piece that's just like this.

On encountering red tape from City Hall during the planning of "War of the Worlds":

Sharon: That's something that I actually love about doing projects in L.A. because L.A. has government officials that love this kind of stuff and get excited about it. So I found very willing partners throughout City Hall and elsewhere. And this entire concept began during "Hopscotch," working with someone in City Hall for some of our permissions. He was working in [Councilman Jose] Huizar's office and said, *You know, there are these sirens that are all around downtown L.A. Actually, there's 200 of them all over L.A. and you should really do something with those. Those are just ripe for some sort of artistic disruption.* That's what spun out into what "War of the Worlds" was. You can find your inspiration anywhere.

For more information and for tickets go to the LA Phil website!

USC: <https://music.usc.edu/this-saturday-thornton-celebrates-new-music-from-noon-to-midnight-with-the-la-phil/>

November 14, 2017

This Saturday, Thornton celebrates new music from “Noon to Midnight” with the LA Phil

On Saturday, November 18th, the Los Angeles Philharmonic will welcome the city's most adventurous music audiences to Walt Disney Concert Hall for a day-long celebration of contemporary composition, [Noon to Midnight](#). In addition to performances by Steven Schick, Rage Thormbones, LA Signal Lab, Los Angeles Electric 8, wild Up, red fish blue fish, gnarwhallaby, SASSAS, Monday Evening Concerts, and the wulf, six cutting-edge ensembles will feature USC Thornton student, faculty, and alumni musicians or performances of their works.

The afternoon's many pop-up performances will take place alongside the LA Phil New Music Group's world premiere production of *War of the Worlds* by Annie Gosfield (Noon and 2PM), featuring an all-star cast that includes Thornton Vocal Arts alumnus David Castillo (MM '13). Audiences will enjoy a festive and friendly atmosphere, including food trucks, drinks, and art installations.

The following performances will include USC Thornton musicians. Be sure to check the [official schedule](#) for the complete list of events.

At 1PM, the HOCKET piano duo, which includes USC Thornton faculty member [Sarah Gibson](#) (MM '10, DMA '15) and DMA candidate Thomas Kotcheff (MM '12), will get things started in BP Hall with a performance of two-piano works by Andy Akiho, Tristan Perich, and Thomas Kotcheff, including the world premiere of *Tête-à-Tête* by Nina C Young.

The USC Percussion Group takes to the Keck Amphitheatre at 3:15PM, under the leadership of faculty member [Joseph Pereira](#), principal timpani of the LA Phil. Graduate students Jieun Chung, Thomas Kolakowski, Amy Ksandr (MM '17), Bernadette Manalo, David Riccobono, Wesley Strasser (MM '17), Wesley Sumpter, and Jonathan Wisner will perform works by Panayiotis Kokoras, Michel van der Aa, and Ondrej Adamek.

Cellist Nick Photinos and pianist Vicki Ray (DMA '88) will take the stage of BP Hall at precisely 4:10PM for a program of works by Bryce Dessner, David Lang, David T.

Little, Molly Joyce, Florent Ghys, and Thornton Composition faculty member, [Andrew Norman](#).

At 5:30PM, Thornton Composition chair [Donald Crockett](#) and Andreas Levisianos lead the Jacaranda new music ensemble in a program on the main stage of Disney Hall, including the world premiere of a new work by composer Mark Grey.

Finally, the Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra, which was founded by alumnus Benjamin Mitchell (GCRT '17, arts leadership) and features a number of Thornton musicians, will close the evening on the main stage with works by Kristis Auznieks, Pamela Z, Gabriella Smith, and a West Coast premiere by Composition alumnus Peter Shin (MM '17).

General admission to all of the [Noon to Midnight](#) events at WDCH is \$10. Patrons with tickets to the LA Phil's *War of the Worlds* performances will also receive complimentary admission to the Noon to Midnight programming.

REVIEWS

LA Weekly: <http://www.laweekly.com/arts/a-war-of-the-worlds-opera-invades-downtown-la-through-wwii-era-air-raid-sirens-8830171>

What Does It Sound Like When a Genius, Martians and Sigourney Weaver Invade Downtown LA.?

By: Catherine Womack/November 9, 2017

In 1938, the Atlantic Ocean was active and angry. It churned up nine major storms that year, hurtling them toward North America with relentless, deadly force. Hurricane season 1938 climaxed on Sept. 21 when the Great New England Hurricane made landfall in Long Island as a Category 3 storm, killing more than 680 people and obliterating some 57,000 homes.

That same year, on the other side of the globe, Japan and China were entangled in an accelerating war. In Germany, Hitler named himself Supreme Commander of his country's armed forces and set in motion a foreign policy aimed at attack and domination. Across the world, fascism was rearing its ugly, threatening head.

In America, all of this grim news was delivered in real time via news bulletins on the radio. Still a relatively new form of media, radios were popular as a source of both news and entertainment. People tuned in for concerts and their favorite serial dramas or comedy shows. And when those shows were interrupted by breaking news, the entire country experienced those events together. No more reading about yesterday's news in today's paper on your own time. On the radio, the news was immediate, dramatic and part of a collective, simultaneous experience.

On Oct. 30, 1938, 23-year-old actor-writer-producer Orson Welles took advantage of this new medium to dramatic effect. For a special Halloween episode of his weekly radio drama *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, Welles and his fellow castmates put on a dramatic fictional newscast set on Oct. 30, 1939, in which they reported, "live," on an invasion of Earth by Martian aliens.

The War of the Worlds, Welles' retelling of H.G. Wells' classic novel, was convincing. Too convincing. People who tuned in late or missed the intro explanation were terrified. A strange bullet-shaped object had landed in a field in New Jersey. Cow-sized alien beings were crawling out of it. A cloud of black smoke was choking and killing thousands. America was under attack. And just like that, fake news was born.

Welles did such a good job of re-creating the sound of a live news broadcast that he inadvertently caused a panic. Even people who didn't believe that there was an alien invasion thought that something was wrong, that the country was under an attack of some sort.

"It was very similar to today in that people were getting crazy weird news bulletins every day," composer Annie Gosfield says. "There had just been that awful hurricane, and the threat of World War II beginning, people were on edge."

Gosfield is the composer of [*War of the Worlds*](#), a new opera adapted from Welles' radio broadcast. Her piece will receive its world premiere at Disney Concert Hall and various sites around downtown Los Angeles on Sunday, Nov. 12. The outdoor sites are positioned near Cold War-era air raid sirens that have been retrofitted to transmit live from Disney Hall (music performed on the street also will be transmitted back into the hall). Audiences can get tickets to watch the performance from inside the hall, or reserve a spot at one of the siren sites. Or, if they happen to be walking down the street, they can encounter this musical alien invasion fortuitously.

"We definitely don't want to cause an actual panic," says director Yuval Sharon. "But we do want there to be an element of surprise. I'm OK with mild consternation. I actually really want to try and pull the rug out from under the audience with this piece."

Over lunch a few weeks before the premiere, Gosfield and Sharon are brimming with excitement. They are keeping a lot of the details of the project under wraps until the premiere, but their shared enthusiasm for what is about to take place isn't containable.

"We definitely don't want to cause an actual panic. But we do want there to be an element of surprise." —Yuval Sharon

The details they are willing to share are enticing: Sigourney Weaver is narrating the show from inside Disney Hall. Her voice will be heard reporting on the alien invasion over the siren speakers downtown. A small ensemble will evoke the unearthly sounds of Martian invaders (which also will be transmitted live into the streets), and a vocal ensemble will re-create the sounds of air raid sirens, although not too closely. "We got a directive to not use an actual siren sound," Gosfield explains, "because that could actually panic people."

It's hard to think of a better pair to produce a modern-day *War of the Worlds* than Gosfield and Sharon.

A 2017 MacArthur Genius Grant recipient and current artist in residence at the L.A. Phil, Sharon is the founder and artistic director of the Industry, an experimental opera company known for its innovative productions outside traditional concert hall settings. At the Industry, Sharon has put on an opera at L.A.'s historic Union Station (transmitted live to audiences wandering freely around the station with headphones) and produced the world's first mobile opera, *Hopscotch*, which took place in limousines and on motorcycles and rooftops around L.A. He is a quick-talking idea machine whose energy and enthusiasm seem boundless. His creative, prolific brain is in high demand. And he is generous with it.

Sharon got the idea for *War of the Worlds* a couple years ago when Tanner Blackman, then the planning director for District 14 Councilmember José Huizar, told him about the city's defunct Cold War-era air raid sirens. There are some 200

of them scattered around the city. “Once you learn about this project, you start to see them everywhere,” Sharon notes.

Always looking for a way to bring opera out into the streets, Sharon latched on to the idea of transmitting music from Disney Hall via the sirens. Thinking about the speakers led him to consider podcast and radio dramas, which inevitably led him to Orson Welles.



[EXPAND](#)

Genius Grant recipient Yuval Sharon

Courtesy L.A. Phil

When it came to choosing a composer for the piece, Sharon says Gosfield was an obvious choice. A seasoned, acclaimed composer of music that fuses acoustic and electronic sounds, Gosfield's compositions often incorporate her research into jammed radio signals and industrial noises. When she lived in L.A. in the 1980s (she used to play keyboard in a band that had regular gigs at the Hong Kong Cafe in Chinatown), she was fascinated by the old air raid sirens she saw around town. She reveled in the opportunity this project provided to learn more about them.

Gosfield, who has lived in the same apartment in New York since the 1990s, has a dry sense of humor and a no-nonsense demeanor, but she lights up when she talks about the technology involved in this project: "The air raid siren isn't a speaker at all. It's electric. But it's only electric to make it spin. There are reeds inside that spin at different speeds, which is why you hear the pitch go up and then go down. One of the trips I made here we got to go to where they were refurbishing them and see the inside of the speakers. The spinning mechanism was removed, and replaced with these incredibly high-quality speakers."

War of the Worlds is Gosfield's first opera. "And what a place to start," she says with a calm smile.

"I think this project is really special," she continues. "There was so much freedom and incredible artistic collaboration. Basically I did not leave my apartment once I got the libretto. There was no writer's block with this piece. It was like going feral. Thankfully I have an incredibly supportive partner who made sure I got fed."

Sharon points out that all the long hours of composing and the work that went into tackling the technological puzzles of this piece won't be visible during the performance. In the end the focus won't be on the innovative, amorphous, unusual form of this opera but on its story and the timeliness of its themes.

Here we are again, months after catastrophic hurricanes and bogged down by a daily onslaught of stressful news from around the world. There are days when it all seems ready to boil over, when we don't feel safe and when we are on edge. What will it feel like to hear Sigourney Weaver's voice reporting "live" on a modern-day alien invasion? Will we panic? Have we learned to be more critical of the news we consume, whether it comes through radio waves or across social media platforms?

We'll find all that out on Nov. 12 (and again on Nov. 18, when there will be a pair of repeat performances). Unless, that is, the aliens really do come this time.

War of the Worlds, Walt Disney Concert Hall (and other undisclosed locations in downtown L.A.), 111 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Sun., Nov. 12, 2 p.m.; Sat., Nov. 18, noon & 2 p.m.; free-\$58. (323) 850-2000, laphil.com.

New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/13/arts/music/review-war-worlds-los-angeles-philharmonic.html>

Review: A ‘Fake News’ Opera on the Streets of Los Angeles

By Seth Colter Walls / November 13, 2017



Hila Plitmann, in red as the alien La Sirena, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic performing “War of the Worlds” at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Credit Michal Czerwinka for The New York Times

LOS ANGELES — In their 1938 radio adaptation of H.G. Wells’s “The War of the Worlds,” Orson Welles and his Mercury Theater troupe proved that [simulated news](#) — in that case, an uncannily realistic account of an alien invasion — could make for pulse-quickening, even panic-inducing entertainment.

Almost 80 years later, riffing on reportage still pulls an audience. The “Weekend Update” segment of “Saturday Night Live” and “The Daily Show” rely on familiar formulas. But some of the shock has gone out of the enterprise now that “fake news” has become a cliché. Bringing this once-audacious prank to the stage in 2017 faces a hurdle: how to make the original broadcast once again seem surprising.



At the premiere here on Sunday of an operatic version of “War of the Worlds,” the composer Annie Gosfield and the director Yuval Sharon responded to that challenge with a barrage of playful tricks that sprawled well beyond Walt Disney Concert Hall, where the performance was ostensibly taking place. Produced by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Industry (Mr. Sharon’s experimental opera company) and the public art organization Now Art, the production had both chuckle-out-loud moments and haunting ones.



Sigourney Weaver as the narrator in “War of the Worlds.” Credit Michal Czerwonka for The New York Times

In a speaking role, Sigourney Weaver was a crucial link between the original and this new work. Instead of Orson Welles’s radio announcer, whose between-song commentary is interrupted by a Martian invasion, Ms. Weaver introduced the opera by portraying a lightly fictionalized version of herself — that is, as a marquee Hollywood name, here to lend a classical performance some glamour.

Ms. Weaver’s opening lines promised an evening of planetary-theme odes by Ms. Gosfield. Then, after the aliens appeared, she was called upon to “interrupt” this planned concert, giving the audience regular updates and facilitating question-and-answer sessions with sources outside the hall, where extraterrestrial destruction is taking place.

This inside-outside dynamic allowed Mr. Sharon, a recent winner of a MacArthur fellowship and the director of productions that have ranged over a train station and in cars throughout Los Angeles, to indulge his passion for staging operas in [multiple locations](#) simultaneously. This time around, as the “traditional” audience listened to vocalists and members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Disney Hall, Ms. Weaver’s interlocutors and some other instrumentalists were stashed at three locations across the city, where additional crowds could attend, free of charge. (These [exterior sites](#) were chosen from among the locations of this city’s Cold War-era, now-defunct air raid sirens.)

Does this concept sound overstuffed? Initially, at least from inside Disney Hall, it threatened to feel disjointed. There, Ms. Gosfield’s thrilling chamber orchestra writing was, by necessity, often

cut off by the need to reintroduce Ms. Weaver's narrator and her latest bit of news about the alien-induced pandemonium.



The actor James Hayden and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Credit Michal Czerwonka for The New York Times

Yet the hard-charging first movement, “Mercury,” was more than capable of standing on its own as a sizzling orchestral piece. Its references to vintage big-band jazz were refracted through some piercing microtonal harmonies. And the writing for brass instruments often merged seamlessly with buzzing, noisy motifs from the composer’s [“sampling keyboard,”](#) a vivid instrument of her own design, similarly prominent in some of her [earlier work](#).

By the narrator’s interruptions during the following movement — a witty modernization of a crooner-and-orchestra number — the transitions came across as forced and a touch repetitive. But this early clunkiness abated as soon as Ms. Gosfield’s music was allowed to merge with the dramatic passages for Ms. Weaver’s narrator and the various “outdoor” characters.

One ideal blend came during the opera’s most memorable aria, sung by the character Mrs. Martinez — a witness to the panic outside the hall. The mezzo-soprano Suzanna Guzmán performed the song at one of the raid siren locations, accompanied by pizzicato bass and a lyrically swooning violin stationed nearby. The music was relayed to the crowd in Disney Hall as Mr. Sharon’s staging there brought a visualization of the alien (dubbed La Sirena in the libretto) being described by Mrs. Martinez. The collapse of physical distance was simple in design, perhaps, but stunning in execution.

These dizzying shifts in narrative space helped the opera seem like more than just a collection of clever gestures. Mr. Sharon wrote in a program note that “there is no privileged perspective” from which to view the production. But at critical moments, it’s obviously hard for audience members *not* to wonder about which position confers the best possible view. Those unavoidable considerations, in turn, pull the opera away from the comparatively well-trod “fake news” conceit, and toward a poetic way of exploring how different communities might absorb the same developing news story from different vantages and through different media.



Ms. Plitmann as La Sirena. Credit Michal Czerwonka for The New York Times

Are we together during a crisis, or not? This “War of the Worlds” never becomes overtly didactic on this point, preferring to let the question linger in the air. The opera also seems to hold out hope for a truly communal experience. The finale unites players across the three siren stations and the concert hall for one last mutual gasp — even after audience members in Disney Hall have been told that the building’s titanium cladding has protected them alone from the aliens’ deadly heat ray. (Thanks, Frank Gehry!)

The “inside” crowd had the benefit of experiencing the chest-crushing low frequencies of Disney Hall’s organ, and a brief onstage cameo by Mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles. But the off-site crowds might have enjoyed a more rollicking, street-fair experience, — while [still hearing](#) Ms. Gosfield’s imaginative score clearly. There was plenty of lively [crowd-captured video](#) from the [siren sites](#) posted on social media. And there were large-scale, [puppet-and-dance visualizations](#) of the aliens that the Disney Hall crowd never saw.

“War of the Worlds” plays again, twice, on [Nov. 18](#). An enterprising spirit could sign up for a free seat at a siren location, then pay to see the show directly afterward, inside Disney Hall. The rest of us may have to root for a souped-up recorded edition, perhaps one offering different vantage points.

It would also be ideal to have a distilled suite of Ms. Gosfield’s musical highlights. Even in a production that made a virtue of stalling and redistributing the flow of music, her contributions created a steady sense of momentum, conjuring some of that 1930s excitement, if (thankfully) a bit less mass hysteria.

LA Times: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-war-of-the-worlds-review-20171114-story.html>

'War of the Worlds': Delirious opera rises from the death and destruction of L.A.

By Mark Swed / November 13, 2017



Alien singer Hila Plitmann and percussionist Matthew Howard perform with the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group in Annie Gosfield's "War of the Worlds" on Sunday at Walt Disney Concert Hall. (Craig T. Mathew / Los Angeles Philharmonic)

When the [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) got the curious notion it needed another opera director on its payroll (Peter Sellars had been the first in the 1990s), it gave Yuval Sharon the vague title of “artist-collaborator” last season, after he rejected “disrupter at large” as having become too conventionally corporate. What Sharon really is is an *opera*-tor at large. He turns whatever he touches, and wherever he wanders, into opera, whether it wants to be or not.

So here’s what you need to know about the heavily hyped “War of the Worlds” that Sharon mounted at the [Walt Disney Concert Hall](#) on Sunday afternoon for the L.A. Phil, in collaboration with his own massively disruptive opera company, the Industry, and the nonprofit Now Art L.A. A new opera and new kind of opera by Annie Gosfield, it does everything an opera’s supposed to. It does a lot opera’s not supposed to do. That includes immersive opera, one of Sharon’s specialties as the mastermind of “Hopscotch,” the celebrated opera in autos two years ago.

There are two more performances of “War of the Worlds,” both on Saturday afternoon as part of the L.A. Phil new music marathon Noon to Midnight. Stop reading and go straight the [L.A. Phil website](#) and nab any seat you can find (tickets start at \$25).

On the most basic level, this is a fairly straightforward operatic adaption and update of Orson Welles’ famous 1938 radio broadcast, based on H.G. Wells’ science-fiction novel “The War of the Worlds.” At a

time when radio broadcasts were beginning to be interrupted by news flashes, Welles treated the play as an ordinary dance-band radio program with increasingly frightening bulletins of an alien invasion. The brilliantly theatrical night-before-Halloween prank caused panic among some gullible listeners, giving credence to Russian futurist Velimir Khlebnikov's prediction that radio had the power to become the Great Sorcerer. Sharon sees the panic as an early-warning sign of the imposing threat of fake news.



Sigourney Weaver is narrator of "War of the Worlds" at Walt Disney Concert Hall. (Craig T. Mathew / Los Angeles Philharmonic)

Riffing on the radio show, this "War of the Worlds" begins as a symphony concert, albeit one with a celebrity host, Sigourney Weaver. The opera will eventually take over the concert, which is meant to include Gosfield's new celestial orchestral cycle to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Holst's "The Planets."

The program book has elaborately descriptive program notes by one Alastair Featherbottom, of the new nine-planet suite, which begins with "Mercury, the Trickster." A bass (James Hayden) is part of the languorously sexy "Venus" movement that follows, offering camp intimations of some bisexual Elvis business. We get no further (no robot taking the orchestra or 99 women's voices lift us to random perfection of "Pluto").

Weaver breaks in again and again on the first two movements with reports from outdoors, which are beamed into the hall (audio only, this is radio). Astronomy professor Pierson (actor Hugo Armstrong), standing on a parking lot, attempts to allay fear with his soothing British accent. Mrs. Martinez (mezzo-soprano Suzanna Guzmán) offers a more feverish firsthand account of the scary machines and creatures somewhere on Main Street. Gen. Lansing (baritone Hadleigh Adams) haplessly leads the troops in attacking the aliens.

Before long the music creeps into the action. The Martians have an alien voice in soprano Hila Plitmann's stratospherically supernatural coloratura (and she does look like she might have stepped out of an outtake of "Alien"), accompanied by theremin and otherworldly percussion. Sharon's libretto follows Peter Koch's original radio play fairly closely. L.A. doesn't fare any better than New York City. Civic officials are of little help, although the mayor valiantly tries. There is political humor for all.

We're told at the end that Disney Hall's titanium reflected the Martians' death rays. (Of course, titanium proved too expensive to the Music Center bottom-liners, so architect [Frank Gehry](#) actually turned to steel. Fake news really may signal the end of us all.)

The best way to write about "War of the Worlds" is not to write about it, which is why I've left the show's secret weapon to the end, even though it should necessarily always be the first item of operatic business with a new work. It, though, is the greatest surprise of all.

Gosfield is a composer who often picks up old stuff and puts it to new use in her pieces, be it a piano score of Debussy, junk from decrepit factories or the scratchy cactus needles that were once used for playing 78 rpm records. Her approach to "War of the Worlds" seems to be that of a 22nd century post-Martian-invasion musician archaeologist trying to re-create the music of a time slightly earlier than our own, using a few clues and the broken remnants of instruments and rusty electronics.



Christopher Rountree conducting. (Craig T. Mathew / Los Angeles Philharmonic)

The electronics are pervasive in the orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group was conducted with exceptional vibrancy and dramatic flair by Christopher Rountree (yet another secret weapon). Those electronics at first can sound like they are meant to degrade modern instrumental timbre in a boneheaded effort toward authenticity, but they wind up doing the opposite, enhancing the color and atmospheric flavor of whatever they come near.

Still, half the time you don't know what is what. The solo cello that underscores professor Pierson, or the violin and bassoon for the acting secretary of the Interior (Estella Ramos) are so effective that they seem to amplify the spoken voice.

Finally, there are those decommissioned sirens left over from the Second World War that still peek out from behind billboards and buildings around town, noticed primarily by history buffs. They're the symbol of the production and were one of the motivating ideas for both Sharon and Gosfield, who was obsessed with them when she studied at CalArts in the 1980s.

In the end, they are about the least interesting thing visually, theatrically or sonically about the production. It is not that they aren't marvelous in their mysteriously antiquated way; it is just that every other aspect of this opera and its sensational production and performance happens to be more marvelous.

Go for the curtain call alone. That I won't give away.

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'War of the Worlds'

Where: Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., as well as at three siren sites to be disclosed with an online reservation

When: Noon and 2 p.m. Saturday

Price: \$25-\$58 (includes admission to the L.A. Phil's [Noon to Midnight](#) event); siren sites are free with reservation

Info: (323) 850-2000, www.laphil.com

Running time: 1 hour, 5 minutes

Classical Voice America: <http://classicalvoiceamerica.org/2017/11/13/sharons-war-of-the-worlds-takes-off-at-disney-hall/>

Spaced-Out Opera Lifts Off With Martian Help

By Rick Schultz / November 13, 2017



Narrator Sigourney Weaver (left) and soprano Hila Plitmann (right) as a Martian visitor flank Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti, making a surprise appearance as the Mayor, in 'War of the Worlds.' (Craig T. Mathew/Mathew Imaging)

LOS ANGELES — By turns silly, sophisticated, and just plain fun, [Yuval Sharon's](#) sci-fi opera *War of the Worlds* premiered Nov. 12 with [Christopher Rountree](#) leading the [Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group](#) before an enthusiastic audience in a sold-out [Walt Disney Concert Hall](#).

Fast becoming one of the hottest tickets in town, *War of the Worlds* features the combined attractions of [Annie Gosfield's](#) riveting score, coloratura soprano [Hila Plitmann's](#) tour-de-force portrayal of a Martian, and actress [Sigourney Weaver](#) of the *Alien* film franchise as narrator. Two additional performances kicking off the Philharmonic's marathon "[Noon to Midnight](#)" new music festival on Nov. 18 are nearly sold out.

Sharon, a 2017 MacArthur Fellow who is artistic director of [The Industry](#), an experimental L.A. opera company, based his libretto on [Howard Koch's 1938 adaptation](#) for Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre radio series of H.G. Wells' classic 1898 sci-fi novel about a Martian invasion of Earth.



Too late to build that wall. Aliens control the streets. (Greg Grudt/Mathew Imaging)

Gosfield devised an intriguing score for the radio program that audiences watch in Disney Hall, but the LA Phil New Music Group doesn't get much continuity trying to perform her original centenary tribute to Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. The work's pulsating rhythms and overall strangeness make us want to hear more. Alas, news flashes of odd happenings reported from three "siren sites" outside Disney Hall continually interrupt the music as Weaver becomes an increasingly unnerved host.

Like Sharon's 2015 opera [Hopscotch](#), which kept passengers in a fleet of limousines in thrall to multiple storylines while traveling in and around Los Angeles, *War of the Worlds* must have created another nightmare scenario in terms of its logistics and tech requirements. There's a small audience seated at each of the "siren sites" (curious bystanders were also welcome to stand), along with singers, a few instrumentalists, and "alien dancers."



Hila Plitmann as the Martian, with percussionist Matthew Howard. (Craig T. Mathew)

and increasingly dire reports of the Martian invasion, spoken and sung, are transmitted into Disney Hall, while the audience at the sites could likewise hear, but not see, the show there.

As Professor Pierson (actor [Hugh Armstrong](#)) reports space debris crashing onto the streets of Los Angeles,

Weaver tells us to remain calm. We're safe in the hall; there's no need to consult our cell phones. And so it goes. We return to the metallic sheen of Gosfield's score, only to hear from Mrs. Martinez (mezzo-soprano [Suzanna Guzmán](#), full-voiced even when heard remotely) and baritone [Hadleigh Adams](#) (clearly having a good time as General Lansing). Adams got a big laugh from the audience as he became hysterical. At one point, the panic in his voice almost sounded like yodeling.

Throughout, Sharon's libretto (he also directs) is mostly goofy fun, studded with a few surprises along the way. But there's also a serious side to the production. After all, the day after Welles' Mercury broadcast, the headline in the *New York Daily News* read, "[FAKE RADIO 'WAR' STIRS TERROR THROUGH U.S.](#)" No wonder Sharon thought Welles' controversial radio show might still speak to our era of social media and "fake news."

Though the 65-minute production becomes a bit talky and arch towards the end (mild spoiler alert: the power of music and Disney Hall's tough exterior ultimately repel the aliens' heat ray and save humankind), it's never heavy going. Sharon wisely cut the Mercury Theatre radio broadcast's long coda where Welles' character recounts his wanderings amid the wreckage left by the Martians.

But Sharon's *War of the Worlds* ultimately soars on the wings of Gosfield's score and Plitmann's stunning coloratura.



Death and destruction reign outside Disney Hall. (Greg Grudt)

"The air was full of sound, a deafening and confusing conflict of noises," Wells wrote in his novel. But except for the arrival of the aliens, a great rumbling that shook Disney Hall, Gosfield's score is surprisingly eloquent, especially as rendered by Rountree and the LA Phil New Music Group, demonstrating a singular alchemy — her ability to transform noise into something not only highly rhythmic but also, in its way, refined.

To be sure, she uses an arsenal of percussion and a sometimes threatening brass section, anchored by [David Rejano's](#) trombone. For "Earth," she gave the Disney Hall organ a visceral workout. Static radio noise, which is important to her work generally, acts as sonic transition from concert hall to siren site, where Gosfield deploys 1938-era jammed radio signals. As she notes in the program, these shifting signals and timbres are "like a radio drifting between stations, evoking terrestrial broadcasts mixed with a faraway Martian atmosphere."



Christopher Rountree conducted. (Craig T. Mathew)

Plitmann, who sings a wordless vocalise as the Martian, appears behind a glass enclosure above the Disney Hall stage with the "La Sirena" Ensemble: [Joanne Pearce Martin](#) on theremin, celesta, and sampler, and [Matthew Howard](#) on a variety of percussion instruments. Plitmann's melismas maintained an attractive (she is a siren, after all) and otherworldly melodic contour. At times, using subtle motions of her neck and shoulders, Plitmann's alien being seemed to be attempting some kind of gestural communication.

Indeed, from my Orchestra East seat in Disney Hall, Plitmann, with her sinister-looking red Mohawk haircut, looked like an alien [Travis Bickle](#). Ornate tattoos also decorated thick grey skin, her body draped in a tight off-the-shoulder red dress. But when she took her bows to roars from the audience, I realized that she was actually wearing a narrow military-like red cap on her bald head. It took a while to get her unnerving appearance and the eerily appealing sound of her disembodied voice out of my mind.



Outside Disney Hall, Gen. Lansing (Hadleigh Adams), Mrs. Martinez (Suzanna Guzmán), and a lab assistant (Clayton Farris) monitor alarming events. (Greg Grudt)

San Francisco Classical Voice: <https://www.sfcv.org/reviews/los-angeles-philharmonic/walt-disney-hall-under-alien-attack-in-war-of-the-worlds>

Walt Disney Hall Under Alien Attack in *War of the Worlds*

By Jim Farber / November 14, 2017



Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group in Annie Gosfield's *War of the Worlds* | Credit: Craig T. Matthew/Matthew Imaging

A truly remarkable event took place ...

We interrupt this review to bring you an important announcement. There has been an invasion of interplanetary proportions! We have reports that the world premiere of a major composition by [Annie Gosfield](#) at the Walt Disney Concert Hall Sunday conceived to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Gustav Holst's *The Planets* (commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the cutting-edge opera company, The Industry) was disrupted by an invading force from the planet Mars.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I hate to interrupt your enjoyment of this wonderful music, but the L.A. Phil wanted you to be aware of some breaking news." This announcement was made by the concert's narrator, Sigourney Weaver, approximately 15 minutes after the concert commenced.

Note: The following information may prove unsuitable for younger audiences.

Weaver, who was in communication with scientific and military authorities at three downtown air-raid siren locations, reported in a voice filled with tension, “It seems that several unexplained explosions were observed in the sky just over Los Angeles!” And it has been confirmed that a sizable sonic disturbance did indeed cause considerable trembling in the hall.

In an attempt to complete Gosfield’s premiere, Weaver re-introduced conductor Christopher Rountree and the work’s second movement, evoking the planet Venus. Gosfield’s previous portrait, of the planet Mercury, had fused volcanic tonal effects with the syncopations of a 1930s dance band. But just as bass James Hayden was intoning the section of Yuval Sharon’s libretto that delves into a report in *The Star Magazine* exposing Elvis Presley’s bisexuality, the hall was rocked by another seismic vibration. Clearly flustered, Weaver returned to the stage and urged the audience to this time, “Truly take note of your nearest exit. There is a possibility we may have to evacuate!”

As reports from three air-raid siren locations were broadcast into the hall, the eyewitness accounts from Professor Richard Pierson, KCRW meteorologist, Dr. Melissa Morse, General Lansing (heading up the military response), and a Mrs. Martinez (owner of La Luna Azul restaurant) made it apparent that the Martian invasion was going to take precedence over Gosfield’s musical portrait of the planets.

Instead, her music became a boldly evocative mirror of the growing anxiety produced by this “war of the worlds.” There were explosive effects from a vast battery of percussion instruments interspersed with ethereal glimmers, blaring brass outbursts, thundering chords from the organ, radio jamming static, and the otherworldly sounds of a [Theremin](#), the quavering voice of “Red Planet Mars.”



Sigorney Weaver delivers bad news in War of the Worlds | Credit: Craig T. Matthew/Matthew Imaging



In a desperate attempt to avoid panic, Weaver introduced Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti who came onstage and made a plea for everyone to remain calm. He pointed out the safety features of the hall designed by Frank Gehry (who was in attendance) as opposed to the chaos and mayhem that now reigned outside the hall.

Then, despite the most rigid security measures, the Queen of the Martians, La Sirena, (bearing a strange resemblance to Lady Gaga) appeared. Her message, however, of high fluttering leaps and trills, guttural growls and amazing vocal inflections proved totally unintelligible. It appeared that all was lost. The Martians were truly going to Beat L.A!

It was the polished surfaces of the Walt Disney Concert Hall that reflected the Martian heat ray back on itself and saved the city from destruction. Thank you, Frank Gehry!

This brilliantly produced fake news and musical commentary (which will be repeated at noon and 2 p.m. next Saturday) was created by director/librettist Yuval Sharon; composer Annie Gosfield; “Alien” hunter supreme Sigourney Weaver;

conductor Christopher Rountree; and the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group. The onsite commentators were: Hugo Anderson as Professor Pierson, Suzanna Guzmán as Mrs. Martinez, and Hadleigh Adams as General Lansing. The otherworldly figure and interstellar voice of La Sirena was sung by Hila Plitmann. The role of Mayor Garcetti was played by Mayor Eric Garcetti.

In 2016, when the Los Angeles Philharmonic began its three-year collaboration with Yuval Sharon (recipient of a 2017 MacArthur Foundation fellowship), it was in order to create performances like *War of the Worlds* that stretch the performance envelope by re-examining the dynamics between theater, opera, technology, and symphonic presentation.



Alien singer Hila Plitmann with the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group in Annie Gosfield's War of the Worlds | Credit: Craig T. Matthew/Matthew Imaging



One of the off-site locations for War of the Worlds | Credit: Craig T. Matthew/Matthew Imaging

In the case of *War of the Worlds*, the audience in the hall never sees the action or the musical performances that are simultaneously taking place at the three off-site locations. They are “radioed” into the hall in much the same way Orson Welles’s “reporters” from the Mercury Theatre called in their reports from Grover’s Mill on Oct. 30, 1938.

The Industry and the Philharmonic sweated the details, from the questionable verisimilitude of the program notes by Alistair Featherbottom to the live video news feed that greeted patrons as they “evacuated” the hall.

The complex sound design was managed by Jonathan Deans, with David Bullard at Disney Hall, and Jody Elf at the siren locations. The alien costume design was by Jaymee Ngerwichit. The lighting design was by Pablo Santiago.

Tickets are available for two more performances of *War of the Worlds* at noon and 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 18. Admission is free to the three siren locations: Siren 1: 135 S. Olive St.; Siren 2: 416 S. Main St; and Siren 3: 719 S. Hill St. If you attend one of the siren locations you will hear the concert from Disney Hall through the sirens I assume, since I was reporting from the hall.



KCET: <https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/war-of-the-worlds-for-the-21st-century-takes-over-downtown-los-angeles>

'War of the Worlds' for the 21st Century Takes Over Downtown Los Angeles
By Victoria Looseleaf / November 14, 2017

It might have been one of the earlier disseminations of fake news, if, that is, the October 30, 1938 radio broadcast of “War of the Worlds,” hadn’t already been a dramatization of H.G. Wells’ 1898 novel of the same name. Chalk it up to wunderkind Orson Welles, 23 at the time, who with his band of actors from Mercury Theatre on the Air, offered a documentary-like portrayal of Martians invading America, with the first spaceships landing in, of all places, New Jersey.

What ensued was mass hysteria, with terrified listeners stampeding from their homes into the streets and reports of suicide flooding hospital switchboards everywhere. Anxiety-ridden, the country was still in the midst of the Depression and also on the brink of World War II with the rise of Hitler. It wasn’t surprising, then, that this one-hour radio play took its listeners by metaphorical storm.

Now, nearly 80 years after that iconic broadcast, Yuval Sharon, founder and artistic director of The Industry, the company devoted to new and experimental opera, has brought his radical adaptation of the play to Walt Disney Concert Hall and the streets of downtown Los Angeles (November 12 and 18).

Using the original radio script as the basis of this bold new performance piece, Sharon invited Annie Gosfield to compose the score, with Christopher Rountree (of wild Up fame) conducting the LA Phil New Music Group. With some 25 musicians performing at the Hall - instrumentation includes Theremin, celesta and sampling — the score was broadcast through three refurbished WWII-era sirens that have been reactivated for two-way communication. Onsite musicians included multiple percussionists, a cellist, violinist and bassist, with performers sending their reports of alien invasion back to Disney Hall.

Narrated by actor Sigourney Weaver, this “War” opened with a brass raucousness that vacillated between a “Twilight Zone”-like two-note motif and static radio sounds. Rountree led the ensemble with sweeping gestures, evoking, at times, a celestial, er, one might even say, extra-terrestrial quality reminiscent of Lalo Schiffrin’s “Mission Impossible” theme, with Mark Kashper leading an intense string section that could feel at home in any Bernard Herrmann score.



Sigourney Weaver narrates this latest rendition of "War of the Worlds" | Craig T. Mathew of Mathew Imaging

But the cacophony had just begun when Weaver alerted the audience to breaking news, explaining that “we may need to evacuate,” though there was “no need to panic.” There was great interplay between Weaver and the singers at the three siren sites, when a convincing Mayor Eric Garcetti made a surprise appearance at the Hall, assuring us that even though Martians had landed, the citizens of L.A. would prevail.

Supertitles were projected on screens in the concert venue, with the most striking visuals — and an otherworldly sonic landscape — coming from the astonishing Hila Plitmann as La Sirena who, with Joanne Pearce Martin on Theremin/sampler and Matthew Howard credited with percussion for live foley, performed from a riser at the rear of the stage, Pablo Santiago’s lush lighting adding to the atmosphere.

A cross between the late Peruvian songbird, Yma Sumac, scat specialist Ella Fitzgerald and Lady Gaga, Plitmann rocked a skin-tight red dress that was in contrast to her silver-painted face, neck and arms as she reached for glass-shattering notes, gurgling, trilling and writhing as if possessed.

A lone siren speaker — a yellow metal cylinder — hung from the ceiling as the audience was cautioned to “avoid the 110,” after gas masks were deemed “useless in Van Nuys.” The sold-out crowd, in addition to finding humor in Sharon’s narrative, also appreciated its relevancy (mezzo-soprano Suzanna Guzmán talked/sang of “undocumented aliens” from Siren Site 2), and at the opera’s end — hint: Frank Gehry’s Disney Hall, by dint of its titanium-like skin, kept us safe from deadly “heat rays” — music was triumphant in this profoundly ingenious endeavor

If all of this sounds a bit heady, it’s in keeping with the New York Times’ description of Sharon as “opera’s disrupter in residence,” meaning he’s the man who brought opera into 24

limousines (“Hopscotch,” 2015), L.A.’s Union Station (the 2013 “headphone” opera “Invisible Cities”), and to various “non-spaces,” such as warehouses, parking lots, and escalator corridors.

But tackling “War of the Worlds” would seem a daunting project, even for Sharon, as Welles not only directed the drama and voiced the narrator, Professor Richard Pierson, becoming an overnight sensation in the process, but because of its logistical challenges.

“Orson Welles is one of my heroes,” said Sharon, who was recently honored with a 2017 MacArthur Fellowship, “so I knew a lot about “War of the Worlds” and his pre-Hollywood career before he switched mediums to film. But one of my chief inspirations came from the WWII sirens out on the street.”

In fact, it was Tanner Blackman, former planning director for councilmember José Huizar and Carmen Zella, artistic director of NOW Art LA, a public arts organization that is also a co-producer of “War of the Worlds,” who had investigated the history of the 276 air raid sirens scattered throughout town, and conceived the vision to repurpose them into a sound art network. Sharon, who learned of the sirens from Blackman at about the same time the LA Phil tapped him for a three-year residency (his appointment began in 2016), immediately understood how to make the concert hall experience pour onto the streets of downtown L.A.

Jewish Journal: <http://jewishjournal.com/culture/arts/227424/composer-annie-gosfield-and-yuval-sharons-war-of-the-worlds/>

Composer Annie Gosfield and Yuval Sharon's 'War of the Worlds'

By Rick Schultz / November 14, 2017

Annie Gosfield made her name by composing percussive and highly rhythmic contemporary music often employing sounds such as industrial noises and radio static. So she was a natural choice to create the score for Yuval Sharon's experimental opera "War of the Worlds," a musical adaptation of Orson Welles' controversial 1938 "fake news" radio broadcast, based on the H.G. Wells classic about an alien invasion.

The opera received its world premiere at Walt Disney Concert Hall on Nov. 12 and will return for two more performances on Nov. 18.

"The genesis of the project was doing something involving public art and World War II air-raid sirens," Gosfield said in a telephone interview. "When I lived in Los Angeles in the 1980s, I was completely fascinated by them and how they would go unnoticed."

For Gosfield, 57, part of the challenge of "War of the Worlds" was building an arsenal of otherworldly sounds: "There's also quite a bit of static, the sound of the radio going a bit haywire, and jammed radio signals," she said. "Taking something that is not considered music and lending it a high degree of refinement — tuning it, even though it might not be traditionally tuned, changing the level and getting the pitch where I want — is important to me."

The Grammy-winning, Israeli-born soprano Hila Plitmann plays the alien, singing an eerie and sinister wordless role.

It was Gosfield's idea to have Sigourney Weaver of the "Alien" film franchise emcee the concert inside the hall, which is performed by the L.A. Philharmonic New Music Group led by Christopher Rountree. Reports of the unfolding invasion gradually emerge from three outdoor "siren sites" — complete with refurbished World War II air-raid sirens — where speakers will broadcast "news" of the invasion.

"We have the sense of people on the street being the eyes and ears of the people in the concert hall," Gosfield said. "We're playing with pitches high and low, but we actually had to be careful not to make the air-raid sirens sound exactly like [real] air-raid sirens. We had to evoke them, so people wouldn't think there's a real emergency."

Gosfield also wanted to convey the spirit of a ballroom dance orchestra as heard on a radio broadcast from the period.

“The project has been in the planning stages for quite a while, before Trump and fake news became part of the culture,” Gosfield said.

But while Welles’ radio play brought panic to thousands of listeners, she isn’t worried that Sharon’s take on the story will generate a similar reaction. “Do you think somebody coming upon three percussionists onstage and somebody portraying a general will think it’s terrorism?” she said. “I certainly hope not.”

Sharon, who is also the opera’s director, praised Gosfield’s “complex but engaging music, [which] goes far beyond setting the tone of the drama. ... She immediately saw the opportunities in the disembodied voices concept, and spun a truly unique and unpredictable score.”

Gosfield also gave the word “unpredictable” an admiring spin when asked about working with Sharon, who is a 2017 MacArthur Fellow and artist collaborator with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. “You don’t know exactly how different elements are going to come together,” she said. “That makes it especially exciting for me, because the classical music world can be a little staid. But with Yuval, it’s this sense of flying by the seat of your pants.”

Gosfield, whose grandparents were left-leaning Eastern European immigrants, grew up Jewish in Philadelphia. “My parents were incredibly supportive, not musicians but great music lovers,” she said. “They emphasized creativity.”

One of Gosfield’s more groundbreaking projects, “EWA7,” featured on her 2001 disc, “Flying Sparks and Heavy Machinery,” was inspired by her site-specific residency in industrial environments in Nuremberg, Germany. There, she explored how machine sounds and ambient noise were perceived and developed in a factory. The piece was performed in working factory EWA7 with her band and some help from factory workers.

“I was living in a house that was once the ministry of finance for the Third Reich,” Gosfield recalled. “It was the 70th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference, where senior Nazi officials discussed the Final Solution. In many ways, it felt great to say, as a Jew, ‘Here I am, an honored guest.’ How much have things changed? It was pretty incredible.”

“War of the Worlds” will be performed twice on Nov. 18. For tickets and more information, visit laphil.com.

SCPR: <https://www.scpr.org/programs/take-two/2017/11/14/60205/downtown-la-is-invaded-by-martians-in-war-of-the-w/>

Downtown LA is invaded by Martians in War of the Worlds revamp

By Adriana Cargill / November 14, 2017



Before the War of the World performance started a nervous TV reporter named Hector G. Wallace paced back and forth in front of a pile of debris supposedly caused by one of the mysterious explosions. Set design by Calder Greenwood. Photo credit: Adriana Cargill

Loud explosions. Green flashes over the sky of Los Angeles. Matching explosions on the surface of Mars. Nobody knew what was going on or who was behind it.

If you were on the corner of Winston and Main Streets in downtown this weekend, that's what you would have heard come from a very frantic-looking man. He was dressed as a TV reporter and talking to a camera. But he was also standing on a stage in a parking lot surrounded by a set made to look like city rubble. People were watching in white folding chairs as music from Walt Disney Concert Hall streamed out of nearby speakers.



The TV media van the performers would enter and come out of. A military general, the secretary of state, reporters and eyewitnesses all streamed in and out of the van during the performance. Photo credit: Adriana Cargill

This scene was very confusing to people passing by. No one seemed to have any idea what was going on. As the story developed, the audience and people walking by heard that aliens from the planet Mars were attacking downtown Los Angeles.

What exactly was going on?



A crowd watched actors who played reporter Hector G. Wallace of WOTW TV and Dr. Melissa Morse, KCRW's head meteorologist. They asked an eyewitness questions about the mysterious explosions and flashes of green light. Photo credit: Adriana Cargill

The music and actors were part of the LA Phil's modern take on the classic radio drama, The War of the Worlds. The performance was directed by Yuval Sharon, composed by Annie Gosfield and conducted by Chris Rountree. Sigourney Weaver narrated the performance and was continually interrupting the concert with news bulletins about the developing situation.

People on the street didn't seem to pay much attention to the performance until the 'aliens' were broadcast from a yellow decommissioned cold war siren on the street. Sharon came up with the idea to use the sirens after a city official approached him and said there were more than 200 sirens across Los Angeles that he might consider using in a piece someday.



The yellow decommissioned cold war era siren on the corner of Winston and Main streets in downtown Los Angeles. Performances from the Walt Disney Concert Hall were broadcast from this siren and others across the downtown. The music was composed by Annie Gosfield. Photo credit: Adriana Cargill

The sound coming from them was crackly but clear enough that it turned heads on the street. People walking by stopped in their tracks, took out their smartphones and started snapping photos and looking very, very confused. When the director Yuval Sharon created this piece, he was hoping for just this kind of reaction.

I'm actually hoping that no one will be fooled by this pieceI would love everybody to say, 'Wow they're creating this kind of manipulative structure of this piece that's trying to fool me. Why are they doing this and what is this telling me about my everyday life? And how does it relate to our current political reality?

The War of the Worlds was first broadcast in 1938 as a radio drama about aliens from Mars invading the US, except the people listening back then thought it was real and it caused a panic. In this War of the Worlds rendition, no one had the complete picture. The audience in Walt Disney Concert Hall couldn't see the reporters at the sirens...and the reporters couldn't see the audience in Disney Hall.

So how did anybody know if it was real or fake? Just like the listeners of the original broadcast, many of the people walking by on the street didn't have the context to understand what they were seeing and hearing, which was part of Yuval's intention.



Passerby's stopped to check out the War of the Worlds performance on Nov 12, 2017. Photo credit: Adriana Cargill

There's a cameo by a 20-foot tall alien puppet, which is obviously a prop, but there's also an appearance by the real L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti:

Please do not attempt to leave this building. Just outside these walls is utter chaos...and if you're listening outside, find a stick, find a broom to defend yourselves and our way of life here in Los Angeles.




One of the aliens that invaded downtown as part of the War of the Worlds performance put on by the LA Phil and the Industry, a new opera company in collaboration with Now Art LA. The alien and set were designed by Calder Greenwood. Photo credit: Adriana Cargill

Sharon said when he creates he doesn't think about what the audience will get out of it, but with his reenactment of The War of the Worlds, he was a little bit more explicit:

“So if one organ of information like the news is being manipulated in brazen ways... in ways that are so obvious and are affecting the way the people believe what is and is not real.... I feel we need to use our own resources to raise the alarm... you know, quite literally set a siren going to get people to pay attention to this.”

Many people enjoyed the show but some were left feeling uneasy. It was scary to hear eerie noises coming out of the sirens and to hear parts of L.A. were under attack, one woman said.

They weren't quite sure what to make of it, which is exactly what Sharon was going for. Sharon is a 2017 MacArthur Foundation genius grant recipient known for site-specific operas that push boundaries, if not destroy them entirely.



“Question everything. Question authority. Question what you hear. I hope that the hour piece is an opportunity to really reflect on how to engage with making change.”

Wall Street Journal: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/war-of-the-worlds-review-the-invasion-takes-l-a-1510783781>

‘War of the Worlds’ Review: The Invasion Takes L.A.

The panic-inducing radio play gets an overhaul in a production helmed by composer Annie Gosfield and theatrical provocateur Yuval Sharon in collaboration with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

By: David Mermestein / November 15, 2017



Sigourney Weaver in 'War of the Worlds' PHOTO: CRAIG T. MATHEW/MATHEW IMAGING

In October 1938, Orson Welles frightened parts of this nation with a radio adaptation, written by Howard Koch, of H.G. Wells’s late-Victorian novel “The War of the Worlds.” The drama wasn’t especially timely in the traditional sense, but it inspired panic in enough listeners to land Welles on the front page of several major American newspapers. Since then, the radio play and the reaction it spawned have steadily returned to public consciousness because some believe they offer telling insights into how easily average citizens can be frightened and manipulated.

The New York-based composer Annie Gosfield and the L.A.-based director and theatrical provocateur Yuval Sharon must think so, for they have revisited the material in collaboration with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the public-art organization Now Art and

Mr. Sharon’s company, the Industry. Their iteration, which they’re calling an opera but is really more of a theatrical happening with music, transplants the action from Koch’s Depression-era New York and New Jersey to current-day Los Angeles.

Local arts lovers with a taste for the cutting edge will know Mr. Sharon, a recent recipient of a lucrative MacArthur Foundation grant, as the inspired moving force behind a series of increasingly adventurous new works that have been staged in unusual places—including Union

Station (“Invisible Cities”) and in automobiles that stopped at rotating locations downtown (“Hopscotch”).

The move to the Walt Disney Concert Hall—where “War of the Worlds” received its premiere on Sunday and where it will be performed twice more on Saturday as part of the Philharmonic’s “Noon to Midnight” extravaganza—marks something of a shift toward the mainstream for Mr. Sharon, who was named the orchestra’s “artist-collaborator” in 2016 and found mixed success late last season with two events: a Liederabend that juxtaposed songs by Schubert with brief dramatic episodes from Samuel Beckett and a staged production of Lou Harrison’s rarely seen opera “Young Caesar.”

For “War of the Worlds,” Mr. Sharon’s imprint is even greater; he is the work’s librettist as well as its adaptor and director. The amusing central conceit finds the audience gathered for a concert of Ms. Gosfield’s music, cheekily indebted to Holst’s “Planets,” hosted by the actress Sigourney Weaver, appearing as herself and thus injecting both Hollywood pizazz and requisite meta into the proceedings. She reappears at key points in the 65-minute experience, her mien morphing from mild fluster to dread as she conveys news of the increasing devastation just outside the concert hall’s walls.

Broadening the work’s scope are the three remote locations where related parts of the drama unfold simultaneously. These satellite sites are within walking distance of Disney Hall and those unable to secure entry to the main event may wish to visit these ancillary spaces, all near decommissioned Cold War-era air-raid sirens that have been incorporated into the action as the alien equivalent of sleeper cells. The historic sirens have been retrofitted with state-of-the-art speakers and transmit live the activities in the hall to those outside. Speakers in the hall serve the reverse purpose when the drama shifts to the scientists and onlookers encountering the aliens.

Ms. Gosfield’s music, performed by the Philharmonic’s New Music Group and authoritatively conducted by Christopher Rountree, is an appealing pastiche that combines the industrial sounds for which she is best known with more traditional forms, including delightful allusions to Kurt Weill’s Broadway years and mid-20th-century Latin-inflected dance rhythms. And those

fond of vintage sci-fi movies will relish her canny use of synthesizer (the source of those disconcerting radio-wave sounds and other distortions) and theremin (with its inimitably eerie fluctuations), as well as innovatively struck percussion, much of it produced in a section of the auditorium usually reserved for seating or large choruses and here sealed off to muffle the alien sounds.

That area also serves as something of a cage for the game soprano Hila Plitmann, attired as an alien in a silvery second skin beneath a fish-tailed crimson gown and a cap that recalls stewardesses from the “Mad Men” era. Her performance of menacing hisses and various feats of vocalise gives her the show’s ostensible star turn—her only competition the increasingly addled bass crooner, a droll James Hayden, whose standout song “Venus” was entirely Ms. Gosfield’s creation. Other voices (like that of the mezzo-soprano Suzanna Guzmán and the baritone Hadleigh Adams) were transmitted from the remote sites and thus unseen at Disney Hall.

Many of the show’s most relatable lines are too locally oriented for audiences elsewhere, so Mr. Sharon will have to alter his libretto if this work is to travel. But there seems no other reason why this deft and witty riff on our inherent vulnerabilities—to superior powers, uncertainty, impulsive thinking, etc.—should remain bound to this city in particular. In any case, Mr. Sharon is clearly going places.

Musical America:

<https://www.musicalamerica.com/news/newsstory.cfm?storyID=39315&categoryID=4>

Yuval Sharon Takes on H.G. Wells in War of the Worlds

By Richard S. Ginell / November 15, 2017

LOS ANGELES: The day before Halloween in 1938, “boy genius” Orson Welles scared the bejeebers out of many credulous folk with his quasi-realistic depiction of a Martian invasion of Earth on the radio. Today, we might apply the by-now-overused epithet “fake news” to that phenomenon – and the idea of what is real and what is not ignited the imagination of a newly-anointed MacArthur “Genius,” one Yuval Sharon.

So with all of the pre-planned diligence and complicated execution of, yes, an invasion, Sharon’s adaptation of Welles’ and Howard E. Koch’s adaptation of H.G. Wells’ *War Of The Worlds* struck Los Angeles Sunday afternoon. Unlike an invasion, there was plenty of advance publicity for this project – a joint effort by Sharon’s experimental opera company The Industry, NOW Art, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic – resulting in a sold-out Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Furthering Sharon’s agenda to get opera out of enclosed culture palaces in order to interact with the community – e.g. previous projects like *Invisible Cities* and *Hopscotch* – this *War Of The Worlds* took place on four “stages,” Disney Hall itself and three outdoor sites in downtown Los Angeles.

Each of the outdoor portions took place underneath air raid sirens left over from World War II and decommissioned in 1985, now refurbished and fitted with new Meyer Sound loudspeakers. On-the-spot “reports” of the Martian invasion from these sites were piped into Disney Hall as scripted parts of the work, while the goings-on within the hall was sent back onto the street for the benefit of audiences and passers-by. There were no video feeds – and that was deliberate, the idea being to usher us back to the days of radio and the theatre of the imagination in Welles’ time.

Inside Disney Hall, Sharon’s adaptation of Koch’s script loosely followed the arc of the original, with the references to Grover’s Mill, NJ and New York City replaced by local outposts like Tarzana, Van Nuys, Lankershim Blvd. and the always-jammed 110 freeway. Actress Sigourney Weaver played the part of the (mostly) unflappable Narrator. In an unbilled surprise appearance, Los Angeles’ mayor Eric Garcetti played himself, delivering the bad news about the Martian invasion with the practiced ease of a politician who is used to reading off a TelePrompTer.

Superimposed upon all of this was a score by Annie Gosfield who, with the centennial of Holst’s *The Planets* in mind, was commissioned to compose her own set of iconoclastic impressions of the nine planets in our solar system. Gosfield’s score is an eclectic concoction, opening with a goofy “Mercury” in an electro-acoustic amalgam welded together by a two-note motif and a

“Venus” that plays like an avant-garde pop song. Later, it gets creepier when the Martians start to arrive – and more militant with big crunches of the pipe organ and percussion backings with roots in Varèse, eventually building to a monumental climax as the invaders get closer to Disney Hall.

At first, Gosfield’s score was front and center, interrupted by news bulletins from Weaver and actors stationed at the outdoor sirens. But at a midway point, the interruptions ceased, the music became a continuous undercurrent, and the piece felt more like a serious, even contemplative contemporary opera.

The LA Phil New Music Group, led with customary energy by wild Up’s Christopher Rountree, replaced the palm court orchestra on the 1938 broadcast. LA Phil keyboardist Joanne Pearce Martin skillfully manipulated spooky tremolos from a Moog theremin, sometimes in tandem with the ionospheric vocalises of the fearless soprano Hila Plitmann who was portraying an alien, La Sirena.

Bass James Hayden, made up to look like a stiff Disney-animatronic-like figure, was entrusted with Gosfield’s weird lyrics for the “Venus” movement, singing with appropriate unctuousness. Out in the field, mezzo-soprano Suzanna Guzmán was stationed at Siren 2 as an innocent bystander (Mrs. Martinez), singing in Spanish in a wild, wavering manner, and there were several “alien dancers” whose activities could only be imagined by those of us in the hall.

All of this couldn’t have been easy to organize, yet the synchronization between four locales seemed to work just fine. Whatever similarities there were between the Welles *War Of The Worlds* and the Sharon/Gosfield update were overwhelmed by the differences in not only the sound and format but in how audiences would react.

Unlike the Welles production, which caused panic in some of the streets, this 62-minute production comes to us after nearly 80 years of history and experience that has left its mark in pervasive cynicism and disbelief – heightened to a great degree over the last year by the current Administration. Welles’ original may have been meant as a Halloween prank, but some took it literally in a more innocent time. No one would be frightened or misled by the Sharon/Gosfield update. The audience in Disney Hall laughed at all of the local references (obviously some site-specific rewriting will be needed if this production ever travels), the deafening bass sounds rumbling through the hall signifying the invasion wouldn’t bother audiences raised at the cineplex, the denouement near the close came across as hokey beyond words.

In the end, all of the groups inside and outside the hall unite in a solemn finale built upon drones, emphasizing a sense of community as people go about their own business. This seems to be becoming a Sharon signature in L.A.; *Hopscotch* concluded in a similar fashion right down to the use of drones. But while Sharon may have succeeded in creating a viable, quirky form of operatic theatre that reaches beyond traditional walls, his dream of a unified

community may never be a good fit in sprawling, car-centric, culturally and geographically fragmented Los Angeles.

Those who missed the world premiere Sunday will get two more cracks at *War Of The Worlds* this Saturday, Nov. 18, when it returns as part of the LA Phil's "From Noon To Midnight 2" marathon. There will be performances at noon and at 2 p.m., thus enabling listeners on the move a chance to experience the piece both in Disney Hall and at a siren location, one of which is only a block's walk from the hall. For the world at large, a recording is being made of the performances.

Daily Bulletin: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/2017/11/16/war-of-the-worlds-opera-invades-la-leaving-us-saucer-eyed/>

‘War of the Worlds’ opera invades L.A., leaving us saucer-eyed

By: David Allen / November 16, 2017

Among a lengthy list of my favorite things in life would be 1) [Orson Welles’ famous “War of the Worlds” radio drama](#) and 2) [Cold War-era air raid sirens](#), some of which are still rusting away above public sidewalks around Southern California.

You can imagine my reaction, then, to the news that a new operatic version of the Welles broadcast, to be performed in downtown Los Angeles, would incorporate air raid sirens. From my standpoint, this promised to be the best mashup since chocolate met peanut butter.

Yuval Sharon’s “The War of the Worlds” would be performed at four locations simultaneously: the main stage inside Walt Disney Concert Hall and three downtown air raid sirens. Those open-air seats were free. I made a reservation for Sunday afternoon’s debut performance and, incorporating a couple of other favorite things, took the train and ate lunch at Grand Central Market.

My site was at 7th and Hill streets, about four blocks south of the market, where the parking lot behind the siren was set up like a military encampment with a mock howitzer, sandbags and three actors in fatigues.





As we took our seats in rows of white plastic chairs, the actors stayed in bumbling character, gazing up and around at neighboring high-rises through binoculars and barking semi-absurd commands to each other. They used a fake walkie-talkie to place complicated Starbucks orders with an imaginary confederate and pretended to operate prop radio equipment. It was a great warm-up.

At the appointed time, the show inside Disney Hall began, sent to us via loudspeakers. Sigourney Weaver emceed a live concert led by Christopher Rountree of planetary music, starting with the eerily beautiful “Mercury” and “Venus,” composed by Annie Gosfield. For us in the streets, it was audio, just as in 1938, when [Welles’ broadcast](#) delighted many while [sending some into panic mode](#).

And the music was interrupted at times, just as with the dance music of Welles’ broadcast, by news bulletins about mysterious explosions on Mars.

Much of the action shifted to the three outdoor sites, broadcast to the rest of us. An astronomer character, Professor Pierson, was interviewed from First and Olive streets, a siren site near Disney Hall. He assured listeners there was nothing to be alarmed about, until suddenly there was: a flash in the sky and a loud bang that he said could be heard “as far north as Tarzana.” Gosh!

From Fourth and Main streets, a “KCRW head meteorologist” (snort!) told us that the object in question “looks like a piece of metal, a cylinder, mounted high on a pole” — hmm, like an air raid siren? An eyewitness, a Mrs. Martinez, played by singer Suzanna Guzman, called it La Sirena. She sang a lovely aria about it.

Then our siren, and the others, began broadcasting the alien response — musical, of course. It’s an opera, after all.

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

At our encampment, General Lansing arrived to survey the scene and lead the troops. “We have constructed a wall of defense,” he sang, “so all cause for alarm, if such cause ever existed, is now entirely unjustified.”

In impeccable timing, down the sidewalk came the Martian, a 20-foot puppet with long, thin, metal legs, each held aloft and manipulated by a dancer in a shiny silver body suit. The sidewalk on Hill Street was clear, alas, so no winos were around to fall to their knees in wonder or pick a fight. But a Metro bus rumbled by, the same shade of orange as the Martian, and I had to wonder what the passengers thought.

At other sites, where there was more foot traffic, passersby [are said to have peered at the air raid sirens in confusion](#).

Inside Disney Hall, Mayor Eric Garcetti made a cameo, saying the city was in chaos and urging residents to “find a stick, find a broom to defend yourselves and our way of life here in Los Angeles.”

[The New York Times reviewer](#) was inside Disney Hall and seemed to regret that choice, writing: “...the off-site crowds might have enjoyed a more rollicking, street-fair experience — while still hearing Ms. Gosfield’s imaginative score clearly. There was plenty of lively crowd-captured video from the siren sites posted on social media. And there were large-scale, puppet-and-dance visualizations of the aliens that the Disney Hall crowd never saw.”

It’s OK, N.Y. Times. Just ask my advice next time.

“The War of the Worlds” repeats Saturday at noon and 2 p.m.; visit laphil.com for details and tickets. I give the Mars-attacks opera two tentacles up.

At the conclusion, the performers at our siren site finally broke character and took a bow. Except the Martian, although the dancers removed their head coverings. We gave them all enthusiastic applause.

As if to avert a Wellesian panic, one actor assured us, “This was just a joke!”

I’m keeping a broomstick handy just in case.

LA Times: <http://beta.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-noon-to-midnight-notebook-20171121-story.html>

Noon to Midnight, L.A. Phil delivers new music (and free ice cream)

By: Mark Swed / November 20, 2017



Jieun Chung performs with the USC Percussion Group on Saturday in the Walt Disney Concert Hall garden as part of the Los Angeles Philharmonic's new music marathon, Noon to Midnight. (Patrick T. Fallon /Los Angeles Times)

The logo for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's 12-hour new music extravaganza, Noon to Midnight, was a large bright yellow sun surrounded by a color wheel of small rings darkening from orange to, well, midnight blue. So it was Saturday at Walt Disney Concert Hall.

I began by skirting the morning's long, long box office line for \$10 tickets that got you into everything except the two repeat performances of Annie Gosfield's "War of the Worlds" and headed over to the Tinker Toy parking lot across the street. It was one of three outdoor sites for ancillary performances of Gosfield's opera, the conception of "War of the Worlds" librettist, director and Svengali, Yuval Sharon. If you could survive the relentless sun beating down, you had no need to panic over a menacing heat ray from invading aliens.

A dozen hours later I chilled in Disney's fancy Founders Room, turned over for once to the hoi polloi and taken over for intriguing sound and video installations, along with live performances of alluring drone works by the wulf. That's the name of a different sort of founder, an artists' loft (being forced out by rising rent) in a once dodgy part of downtown that helped create the DTLA new music scene that Noon to Midnight celebrates. We lounged on the pillows and chairs and drank free wine as though we were big shots at L.A. Phil intermission.

This was the second of what promises to be an annual marathon of pop-up performances inside and all around Disney Hall. No cranny was safe from new music. Eighteen SoCal ensembles, most made up of the least daunted young performers you are likely to encounter anywhere, held court. More than 50 pieces were played, with the main focus on our decade. Twenty were world premieres; six, L.A. Phil commissions. As many as four events were allowed to go on at the same time.

There's nothing like a new car — the smell of fresh upholstery, the purr of a reliable engine, the feel of the steering wheel. The excitement can make it easy to justify the interest rate on the loan that comes with it.

The garden was turned into a beer garden. Food trucks took over the sidewalk in front of the hall. Disney and its environs were packed with young people, art-world sophisticates and old timers. Out-of-towners attracted by "War of the Worlds" couldn't quite believe what they were seeing — a concert hall living up to architect Frank Gehry's intention of being the living room for the city and gutsy young composers and performers (one and the same in many instances) the toast of the town. I wish Mayor Eric Garcetti, who made a delightful surprise appearance in the first performance of "War of the Worlds" a week earlier, had returned to reprise his role rather than send an email for narrator Sigourney Weaver to read. City officials need to witness this first hand.

But what do you actually witness? It's as much a party as a gaggle of performances. You're handed a sheet that lists places, performers and pieces, but no additional information is offered. The music must speak for itself.

The typical way to take in the day is to graze. Duck into this program in the hall; catch those percussionists creating pure magic in the garden as the sun sets. A beer break. A ridiculously gloppy food-truck sandwich for dinner that is easy to regret. A free scoop courtesy of the great Peddler's Creamery that is no problem working off. My phone informs me that I walked three miles and climbed 28 floors during the marathon.

Stick it out to the bitter end and if the sun doesn't fry your brain at noon, the onslaught of new work will do the trick. It's all a jumble, so please don't expect a rundown of pieces and performances.

The biggest overall impression was the level of experimentation, particularly with the groups that are part of the DTLA scene. There is a sense around the country that new music has been co-opted by marketing forces, be it the need to mollify conventional symphony and opera audiences or the increasingly cozy relationship between young composers and the commercial pop world. There was, as far as I could tell Saturday, none of that.

Young people — and a handful of older people too — made strange sounds because timbre and tone matter. A lot of music was abstract yet absorbing. New ideas were tried out. A lot of them worked.

Christopher Rountree was the most notable presence of the day, conducting the two performances of "War of the Worlds" and two full programs with his own new music ensemble, wild Up. One of those was devoted to the premieres of six new works by composers between the ages of 18 and 30 who are invited to participate in the L.A. Phil's National Composers Intensive.

This year, three of the composers were from the U.S. and three from Mexico. They gathered during the orchestra's CDMX festival of Mexican music last month to workshop their pieces. Each has something marvelous to offer — spacey harmonics, ominously growling brass, thumps and squeaks that could make you smile, soothing sounds of tearing paper (something we all have too much of in our lives), the satisfying pops of bubble wrap, pulses that come and go or that never come because you don't need them, the always alluring plunks of a prepared piano. The composers are David Bird, Tonia Ko, Aldo Lombero, Nate May, Erika Vega and Juan Andrés Vergara.

Wild Up itself has grown from its origins as a group of feisty students and recent grads to a first-rate ensemble with a distinctive L.A. personality. Rountree now sports a suit, and players' dress is new-music black, not whatever is clean in their closets. Their concertmaster, Andrew Tholl, is quickly becoming a significant composer, and the premiere of his new work, "every moment is an opportunity to shine," for 13 solo strings seated in a semi-circle, began like Arvo Pärt and then got harmonically strange and into a crazy pizzicato frenzy that was an opportunity to sparkle.

What else? Los Angeles Electric 8 (eight electric guitars) played Daniel Corral's "Circle Limit III" on the sidewalk in front of Disney producing a stunning wall of sound as aural complement to Gehry's steel. Steve Schick and his UCSD percussion ensemble, red fish blue fish, kept the garden and outdoor amphitheater buzzing and beating much of the afternoon with big, arresting pieces by John Luther Adams, Gérard Grisey and Wenjing Guo. SASSAS' noise jam made an ungodly racket.

A snappy new chamber symphony premiered by Jacaranda proved playful and inventive, its twists and turns a pleasure. The chamber orchestra, Kaleidoscope, bopped along to a recording of robotic voices in the premiere of Pamela Z's "And the Movement of the Tongue."

The imaginative Southland Ensemble added very good vibes to Chris Kallmyer's installation, "Soft Structures," that modeled a stage in BP Hall after a Case Study house with "very good vibes." Monday Evening Concerts took over that space late in the evening with more good vibes — Michael Pisaro's utterly satisfying sound of rice dropping and an inviting new solo harp piece by Anne LeBaron, "Poem for Doreen." The four-member gnarwhallaby was as impressively gnarly as its name in a difficult, complex new piece by Richard Barrett.

There was more, much more that I missed, including the cello-piano duo Photinos & Ray, the USC Percussion Group, Rage Thormbones and Hocket. So I'll stop with the T-shirt. On its all-encompassing road to becoming the Apple of orchestras, the L.A. Phil has even gotten into good design: It makes, as with CDMX and now Noon to Midnight, the best orchestra T-shirts in the business.

Art Now LA: <http://artnowla.com/2017/11/20/war-worlds-redux/>

“War of the Worlds” Redux On Location At 7th & Hill

By: Victoria Looseleaf / November 20, 2017



War of the Worlds

Siren Site 3

Photos by Phantom Street Artist

November 18, 2017



It's just another ordinary November day in **Los Angeles**: sunny, partly cloudy with a hint of danger in the air. How else to explain the presence of **General Lansing (Hadleigh Adams)** in this empty parking lot at 7th and Hill? **OY!**



Ross Steeves is telling everybody to calm down. He also asks who wants a **Starbucks**? Make ours a pumpkin spice latte, please.



Ngernwichit, alien choreographer **Lara Helena** and production designer **Calder Greenwood**.)



The hell with Starbucks. There's trouble on the horizon and Lansing thinks he sees something on top of the cylinder. Who knew that these **WWII** sirens – some 276 of them to be precise – have been scattered throughout our burg all these years...just waiting to be re-activated.



OMFG!

Is it a bird, a plane or what? We hear that 700 armed men are closing in on the old metal tube. And the cylinder is rising. It's standing on legs...actually rearing up on a sort of metal framework.

"Fasten your seat belts, it's going to be a bumpy night!" Oh, wrong movie. Apologies to **Bette Davis**.



Wow! Even the soldiers are freaking out. That doesn't bode well for us civilians, who just came out on this humdrum day to listen to some **Annie Gosfield** music with a libretto by **Yuval Sharon**.



Wheel! They're coming. And much as we hate to admit it, this strange looking creature seems a bit benign – and a **Louise Bourgeois** sculpture it ain't. We love how it's being powered, in any case, by silver-clad *terpsichoreans*. Our kind of aliens.



It's good to see that the soldiers, including **Cheryl Umana**, roused themselves and are back to giving orders.



EEK! On closer inspection, we notice that these beings (pictured here: **Jessica Kittredge**), only have one eye. How very **Cyclopesque!** (Thanks to costume designer **Jaymee Ngerwichit**, alien choreographer **Lara Helena** and production designer **Calder Greenwood**.)



Sanity and peace prevail! The invasion has been halted, and we understand that the titanium of **Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall** repelled the aliens' heat rays. Take a bow, soldiers and alien movers – **Myles Brewer**, **Jen Haley** and **Ottavio Taddei** – and let us all rejoice in the power of music, especially as performed by the stellar musicians of the **Los Angeles Philharmonic**. Yes!

Broadway World: <https://www.broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/Review-The-Brilliantly-Creative-Yuval-Sharon-Brings-a-Modern-WORLD-OF-THE-WORLDS-Radio-Show-to-the-Disney-Concert-Hall-20171120>

Review: The Brilliantly Creative Yuval Sharon Brings a Modern WORLD OF THE WORLDS Radio Show to the Disney Concert Hall

By; Shari Barrett / November 20, 2017



performed by [Orson Welles](#) terrified the nation into believing Martians had landed in New Jersey.

On Saturday, November 18, 2017, I attended the world premiere operatic, four-site adaptation of WAR OF THE WORLDS, adapted and directed by Yuval Sharon, with music by Annie Gosfield, co-produced by The Industry and NOW Art. The production was based on the original radio play by [Howard Koch](#), which when



Performed in unison within the Disney Concert Hall and at three refurbished air raid siren sites in the nearby downtown LA area, from where news bulletin reports were acted out and reported in, the entire experience was both breathtaking and mind-blowing and certainly one I will never forget.



streets below as they reported in about the strange happenings going on around us as the Martian invasion takes place.

I decided the best way to "see" the entire production was to experience it at both the Disney Concert Hall and at one of the siren sites. So I first attended the presentation at Siren Site 1 at noon, set atop the parking structure just to the east of the Disney Concert Hall with the beautiful LA Skyline surrounding us on all 4 sides. The Los Angeles Times building and City Hall provided the backdrop to the staging area, with the top of the Disney Concert Hall visible behind the audience. From this vantage point, the actors checked the city



The other two sites, like this one, were located in the nearby downtown area where actors portrayed characters reporting in remotely during the show, each of whom communicated with the main performance space at the Disney Concert Hall, making the entire production like a much-more technically inclined radio show with the off-site reports only heard within the Disney Hall rather than also being seen, creating a modern "theatre-of-the-mind" experience.



The former Air Raid Sirens used are the 1940s original ones installed during WWII to alert LA citizens of an impending enemy attack. The same sirens were modified and re-used in the 1950s to alert citizens of an impending nuclear strike by the Russians during the Cold War. I certainly remember doing "drop drills" as a child in elementary school when the sirens were tested, getting under our desks, turning away from the windows, and putting our hands over our necks. But even back then, I knew any radioactive bomb dropped

on Los Angeles would be the death of us all.



The three downtown LA sirens were completely refurbished - the siren "heads" were detached, and old rusted and rotting parts were removed and replaced with new Meyer Sound speakers for the performance, allowing the live music and presentation from the Disney Hall to be heard at all 3 sites, with each of the Siren Sites performances shared audibly with the audience in the Disney Concert Hall in real time. And it is from these sirens that the Martians launch their attack, alerted vocally by La Sirena that the time to

attack has arrived.



To complete the experience, at 2pm I attended the full WAR OF THE WORLDS presentation within the Disney Concert Hall, narrated from this site by [Sigourney Weaver](#) with Los Angeles Philharmonic conductor Christopher Rountree leading the musicians at all sites. Ms. Weaver began by announcing tonight's music selection by Annie Gosfield, based on a journey through our solar system, beginning with the Sun. But interruptions soon alerted her that a lot more than

music was being communicated from the Plant Mars in the form of an alien invasion as it unfolded at and reported in from the three Siren sites.



Adding to the other worldly atmosphere within the Disney Concert Hall was singer [Hila Plitmann](#) as La Sirena, the blue-skinned Martian whose high-pitched warbling, along with [Joanne Pearce](#) Martin on Theremin and Matthew Howard on percussion, added in to the distinct science fiction mood. Others actors at this site included [David Castillo](#) as the Officer, [James Hayden](#) as the Commander/Sound Designer, and Jon Keenan as Gunner/Stage Hand.



While the sound, singers, and lighting effects were outstanding, the thing that blew my mind was near the end when the Disney Concert Hall was being attacked by an invading Martian ship and the bright white flashing lights streaming in from all the windows at the top of the hall above the audience really made the attack feel real, with many audience members looking up and gasping! Thankfully, the titanium in the walls rebuffed the attack and we survived! Kudos to all the technical staff for their outstanding contributions to

this massive, creative undertaking, performed to perfection.



follow were the episodes you got to see as the story of what happened when Marco Polo met Chinese Emperor Kublai Khan!



sites. I am still amazed each time I remember that experience, and now cannot wait for the next amazing adventure to be created by Mr. Sharon, the Industry's mastermind creator and director of the most incredible theatrical presentations now being done in Los Angeles. Learn more at <https://theindustryla.org>.

Photo Credit: Craig T. Mathew and Greg Grudt/Mathew Imaging

[#Mathewimaging](#) [#LAPhil](#)

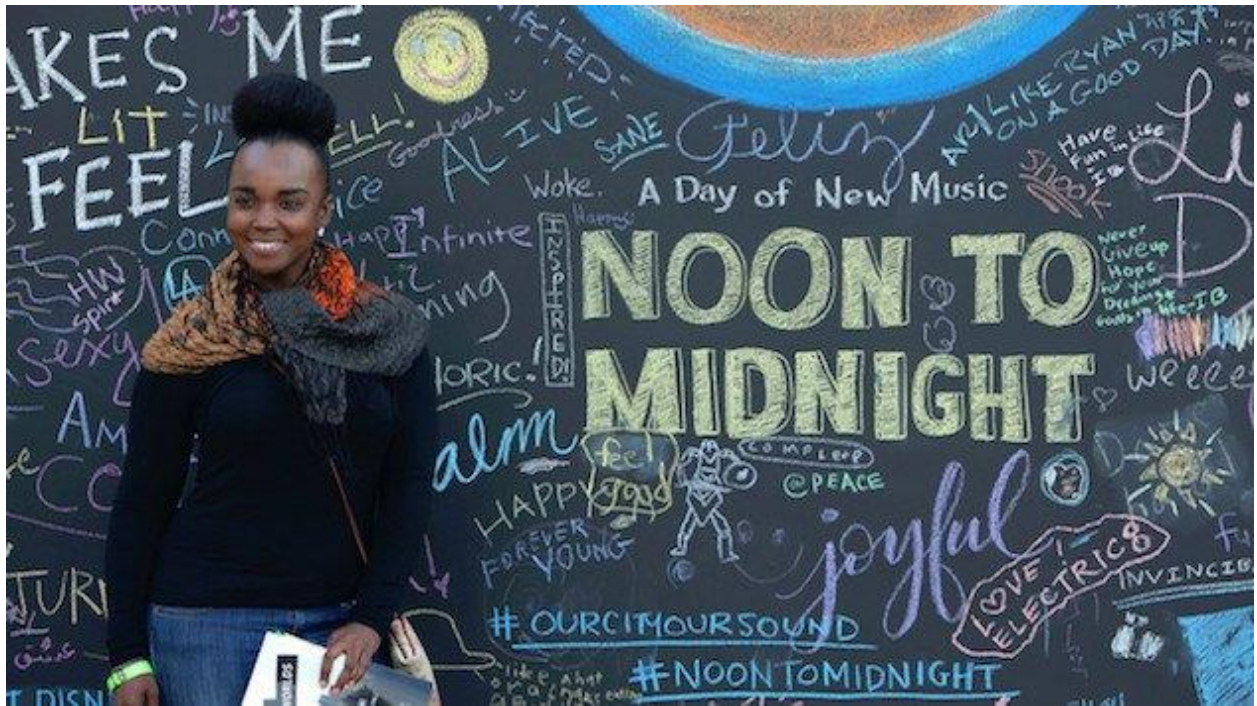
I cannot commend Yuval Sharon enough for yet another magnificently entertaining, site-specific operatic presentation he created and directed. His imagination seems to know no bounds, given his other Industry shows, including INVISIBLE CITIES performed with a live on-site orchestra at Union Station while actors and singers on headsets performing scenes around the station were simultaneously broadcast with the orchestra through headsets worn by each travelling audience member. Whichever actors you chose to

Then the Industry presented HOPSCOTCH, with audience members travelling around the greater downtown LA area in specially-fitted limousines which took us to different sites in the city to witness scenes telling an unfolding love story - although not in chronological order. At a central hub in East LA, 24 scenes were set up where visitors could watch all the scenes taking place at the same time, as well as listen to many musicians who were accompanying the others traveling with the audience in limos to the various

San Francisco Classical Voice: <https://www.sfcv.org/reviews/los-angeles-philharmonic/la-phils-noon-to-midnight-marathon-runs-the-gamut-of-new-music>

L.A. Phil's Noon to Midnight Marathon Runs the Gamut of New Music

By: Jim Farber / November 21, 2017



L.A. Phil's Noon to Midnight offered 12 hours of continuous music | Credit: Greg Grudt/Mathew Imaging

The Los Angeles Philharmonic's musical marathon, *Noon to Midnight*, which took place Saturday at the Walt Disney Concert Hall is a lot like Forrest Gump's chocolate box — You never know what you're going to get. It's a 12-hour kaleidoscope of musical organizations, composers, and musicians that's less about what you like or don't like (and there's more than enough of both to go around), than having the chance to discover what's going on.

What are the newest trends? Who represents the cutting edge? Who's mired in the past? And if they are, does that past maintain its validity? Who's intrepidly crossing musical border zones and blurring the boundaries?

The statistics alone were impressive: 12 continuous hours of performance representing 21 overlapping concerts curated by 16 different organizations performed in multiple locations, including 14 world premieres. Was it exciting? Definitely. Was it exhausting? Absolutely.

This year there was also, quite literally, a joker in the deck. It took the form of Yuval Sharon and Annie Gosfield's *War of the Worlds*. This multi-location adaptation of the Orson Welles' radio play had two reprise performances during *Noon to Midnight*. (For a detailed account see [my SFCV review](#)).



The reprise of War of the Worlds raged in the background | Credit: Greg Grudt/Mathew Imaging

The performances were a mixed blessing. Sold as a separate ticket, they created a collision that could have been called “War of the Concerts.” *War of the Worlds* is a big, flashy, tongue-firmly-in-cheek performance that includes a lot of humor. It is the type of piece that stimulates conversation. So, when the two full houses let out the audience was predictably boisterous. The problem was that the concerts of *Noon to Midnight* were going on in various parts of the hall at the same time, concerts that tended to be considerably more intimate and softer in volume. The disruption was palpable, both for the listeners and the performers. It really wasn't until the crowd for the 2 p.m. performance of *War of the Worlds* departed the hall that *Noon to Midnight* hit its optimum rhythm for its own audience.

Room does not exist within the context of this review to give every performance the critical appraisal it deserves. Nor was it possible to hear and see all that was available. What I will say is the range of musical expression was vast — from a set of microtonal choruses with texts drawn from Euripides's *The Bakkai* sung in ancient Greek, to a piece for three toy pianos that so beautifully dovetailed the music sounded like Scarlatti meets Terry Riley.

There were large ensemble pieces performed by wild Up and the Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra. There were several performances featuring percussion ensembles, a meditative work for solo gong, and an outdoor soundscape for six suspended microphones that sounded like another invasion from outer space.



Sarah Gibson and Thomas Kotcheff (Hocket) with Vicki Ray on toy pianos | Credit: Craig T. Mathew/Mathew Imaging

As *War of the Worlds* raged on the main stage, two fine young pianists (and toy pianists), Sarah Gibson and Thomas Kotcheff, who perform as Hocket, performed a skillfully crafted recital of Andy Akiho's *Karakurenai* for prepared piano; *qsqsqsqsqqqqqqqq* by Tristan Perich (the piece I mentioned for three toy pianos with Vicki Ray joining in); the world premiere of Nina C. Young's *Tête-à-Tête*, and Kotcheff's percussive composition, *wgah 'nahl fhtagn*. The [online program notes](#) did not provide translations for those titles.

The smaller ensembles performed in a flexible space normally used for the Philharmonic's preconcert talks — the BP Hall. It was here that [LA Signal Lab](#) presented a really impressive jazz/classical fusion concert. The ensemble consists of Noah Meites (trumpet), Sean Pawling (trombone), Hitomi Oba (tenor saxophone), Dan Marschak (piano and synthesizer), Ross Garren (harmonica and synthesizer), Adrienne Pope (violin), Linnea Powell (viola), and Stephen Pfeifer (bass).



LA Signal Lab

Coalesce by Marschak evoked the wistful atmosphere of Aaron Copland's *Quiet City* with its melancholy trumpet solos, while Noah Meites's *Water and Power* paid homage to the late Toots Thielemans. Throughout the set, Oba improvised superbly on the sax.

For the first of their two concerts, conductor Christopher Rountree and his orchestra, wild Up, performed works by six emerging composers who were asked to join the L.A. Philharmonic's National Composer's Intensive. The first piece, Erika Vega's *Icebergs Breaking Under Cloudy Skies*, evoked birdcalls in the night and was both meditative and evocative. Thoughts of *From the Canyons to the Stars* and *The Grand Canyon Suite* came to mind. I found the other pieces by Tonia Ko, Aldo Lombera, Nate May, Erika Vega, and Juan Andres far less interesting, all too similar in form, and, in the case of the last two, overly reliant on gimmicks.



Jacaranda Music

Some of the finest orchestral musicianship of the entire event was turned in by the players of **Jacaranda Music**. The two-part program began with the world premiere of Mark Grey's *Fantasmagoriana*, a three-movement piece (conducted by Donald Crockett) that blends deep, classically oriented roots with a more post-minimalist style. It's a piece that deserves more hearings.

The most "old fashioned" performances were given by the group gnarwhallaby, two decidedly dissonant, atonal works by Élise Roy (*homeostasis*) and Richard Barrett (*tkiva*). Well played as they were by Brian Walsh, Richard Valitutto, and Matt Barbier, the music was a trip down roads already well-trodden.



Christopher Rountree and wild Up | Credit: Craig T. Mathew/Mathew Imaging

When wild Up returned, they performed a piece that most obviously displayed a sense of humor, Alex Temple's *The Man Who Hated Everything*. Dedicated to the rambunctious musical train wreck improvisations of Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, it was a hoot. I hope Frank was there in spirit to enjoy its irreverent grandeur. Pieces by Andrew Tholl and Du Yun featured propulsive string effects with more than a hint of *Shaker Loops*.

The final orchestral concert was by the members of Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra. It featured a grandly scaled work for solo piano and orchestra, *Snippets of Joy*, by Kristis Auznieks. While impressive, it was a musical idea that has yet to find full expression. On the other hand, *And the Movement of the Tongue* by Pamela Z, which combined a dialog of taped interviews about the nature of accents with an underscoring of richly textured orchestral effects, would have benefitted from some editing.

By then I was ready to call it a night.

KCRW: <http://www.kcrw.com/news-culture/shows/special-programming/war-of-the-worlds>

November 23, 2017

FROM THIS EPISODE

War of the Worlds is a new opera performed at the Walt Disney Concert Hall and on the streets of Los Angeles. Orson Welles' 1938 "fake news" radio program led millions of panicked listeners to believe that aliens were invading Earth. Yuval Sharon has used the original radio script as the basis of this audacious new performance piece.

The LA Phil New Music Group performed the opera onstage at Walt Disney Concert Hall and broadcast live onto the streets of downtown LA. through three refurbished WWII-era sirens – reactivated for two-way communication. Performers stationed at the sirens sent their reports of alien invasion back to the Concert Hall. Annie Gosfield composed the work.

For more details on the performers, click [here](#).

War of the Worlds radio credits:

LA Phil New Music Group
Music by Annie Gosfield
Concept, Direction, Libretto by Yuval Sharon
Conducted by Christopher Rountree
Production Design by Calder Greenwood

Presented by the LA Phil
Co-produced with The Industry and Now Art.
The War of the Worlds radio play by Howard Koch used by permission of Peter Koch
War of the Worlds is sponsored by Meyer Sound.

New Classic: <http://newclassic.la/2017/12/05/noon-to-midnight-at-the-la-phil/>

The LA Phil's Second Noon to Midnight transformed Disney Hall

By: Brandon Rolle / December 5, 2017

On November 18th Walt Disney Concert Hall transformed into a showcase of the community, talent and swagger of Los Angeles new music. The second annual Noon to Midnight event was as much an exhibition as a festival: An overlapping schedule of pop-up performances populated the building's many nestled spaces, encouraging attendees to wander and casually sample the day's various offerings. The music-making spilled over Gehry's grand titanium shipwreck onto the sidewalk and plaza, but the main stage served as a central hub for major performances, punctuating the day with moments of communion between curious ears scattering outwards toward the bustling amphitheater, beer garden, and cozy nooks and crannies of the hall. In truth, this collar-loosening was the first successful performance of the day. Among younger audiences, the glitzy, glass-enclosed posters of Dudamel might seem out of touch with the Phil's superimposed tagline "our city, our sound" as his immaculate white bow tie and baton are a far cry from the flimsy band posters that litter telephone poles around Echo Park. But something about licking food truck drippings off of your fingers while listening to electric guitars compete with traffic noise really tempers the imposing austerity of the concert hall. And so, from the very onset, Noon to Midnight transformed the space from a venue for witnessing art into a home-base for engaging with it.

And engaging it was. [Yuval Sharon](#) and [Annie Gosfield](#)'s new performance piece, *War of the Worlds* was a fitting centerpiece for the event, occupying both the hall and remote sites in a sprawling, tech-savvy production that cleverly balanced national and local relevance (see [Nick Norton's review](#) here). [Wild Up](#) performed two separate sets. The first was a showcase of the collaborative works born of the LA Phil's National Composers Intensive, featuring new pieces by six young composers. As one might expect, the music reflected an excited exploration of the ensemble's open-mindedness, navigated by some promising compositional voices. The second set utilized the ensemble's larger forces to premiere several new works that best demonstrated the ensemble's agile, performative charm—sometimes dance-y, sometimes delicate, sometimes asking "how did I end up waist deep in this swamp" and "are trombone multiphonics the only way out." But whether shimmering or sloshing, [Christopher Rountree](#) and wild Up were always committed, always convincing, and always a hell of a lot of fun to watch.

The smaller ensembles offered a more intimate experience, including a noisy, forward-looking set by [gnarwhallaby](#), installation performances by [HOCKET](#) and [Southland Ensemble](#), jazzy moments with the [LA Signal Lab](#), and a tight, driving performance by [Jacaranda](#). Outdoor spaces hosted less traditional instrumentations like [RAGE THORNBONES](#) and [Los Angeles Electric 8](#). The performance that perhaps best encapsulated Noon to Midnight as a whole was Grisey's *Le Noir de l'Etoile*: [red fish blue fish](#), spread among the serene beer garden atop Disney Hall, animated the crisp evening air and city views with a radically virtuosic performance in which audience members strolled between and around the performers to create a consuming, fluid and completely individual experience of the colossal work. Here the performance and

experience of the music were inseparably entangled, defined by the audience's direct engagement with the production. The same could be said of [Chris Kallmyer's](#) *Soft Structures*, almost a festival in itself.

In total, the day included more than twenty separate programs, and it would be impossible to speak to each set individually. But parsing the experience into discrete parts would betray the atmosphere the LA Phil took such care to create in the first place; Noon to Midnight is a monument of local music that generates all the electricity and none of the pomp of the traditional concert. The music, performers, spaces, drinks and food all embodied an LA personality that manifested in every detail. Having spent most of my life in Silicon Valley, what strikes me most since moving to Los Angeles is the physicality of the city: people don't just philosophize about things, they *make* them. There is a reverence for the man-made and the hand-made: What the east side lacks in blooming nature it replaces with colorful graffiti, what towering buildings of Hollywood obscure from your view they replace with blinding LEDs and enormous marquis. In a field of new music that can all too easily slip into intellectualism, this combining of upstart and established groups alike was a heartening account of the range of artists getting their hands seriously dirty making art. It is clear that music here is being made not only in pristine halls, but also in aged, mixed-use buildings with shoddy plumbing. And so, rather than hanging the the local art on a white wall, standing back and rubbing its beard to pontificate, Noon to Midnight was instead an invitation to come together, wash hands, and admire the buildup of dirt in the sink. A glorious, silver sink in the middle of downtown.

The New Yorker: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/11/the-dark-side-of-the-gold-rush>

The Dark Side of the Gold Rush

By Alex Ross / December 11, 2017

November was a good month for new opera in the Golden State. Down south, the Los Angeles Philharmonic presented Annie Gosfield's "War of the Worlds," an adaptation of Orson Welles's hoax broadcast of 1938, which fooled some radio listeners into believing that a Martian invasion was under way. As with "Girls of the Golden West," an episode from the American past proves uncomfortably relevant to the present. Gosfield, a New York-based composer with a virtuosic command of classical, pop, and avant-garde styles, began the score before "fake news" entered the lexicon. Like Welles, she places the reality-bending power of the media under scrutiny.

The libretto is by the young Los Angeles-based director Yuval Sharon, who three years ago masterminded the astounding multi-composer opera "Hopscotch," in which audience members were ferried around L.A. in limousines. "War of the Worlds" was less logistically elaborate, but it did involve simultaneous performances in various locations. The main audience was seated at Disney Hall, where the orchestra was ostensibly performing a new suite, by Gosfield, modelled on Holst's "The Planets." The actress Sigourney Weaver, who has a history with aliens, assumed the pose of an unctuous gala host. Halfway through the "Mercury" movement, she broke in with the first of many news bulletins. As the concert faltered—we never got past "Earth"—Weaver elicited live reports from three nearby parking lots, each of which had its own performers and audience. The auxiliary sites were placed near antiquated air-raid sirens that still stand throughout the city; they hummed with extraterrestrial transmissions. Scientists jabbered technicalities; a TV reporter interviewed eyewitnesses; a military honcho tried to impose order. Eric Garcetti, the mayor of Los Angeles, had a cameo, appearing onstage at Disney with a reassuring message: "Please don't attempt to leave this building. Just outside these walls is utter chaos." A climactic ray-gun assault on Disney was repelled by the metal shield that Frank Gehry had presciently installed on the exterior. Weaver exclaimed, "The power of music has redeemed humanity once again!"

This "War of the Worlds" is, in other words, a comedy from the outset. Wisely, it makes no attempt to duplicate the original 1938 scare, although a few passersby at the outdoor sites were momentarily bewildered by the racket. (One bystander asked, "What's going on, dude?" When someone answered, "Aliens have landed," he nodded and walked away.) The libretto is well stocked with in-jokes. There are obligatory references to L.A. traffic, which apparently gets even worse during Martian invasions. Weaver incited extended laughter when she reported computer anomalies and "gas outbursts" in such locales as "Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania." Gosfield's "Planets" deftly parodies composerly clichés: the "Venus" movement contains textbook examples of how not to double voices with instrumental lines. Like "Hopscotch," "War of the Worlds" changed shape depending on where you were watching. No one had a privileged view. Indeed, the siren stations, where tickets were free, were probably the most fun: to the delight of kids in attendance, puppet aliens encroached upon the

audience, and they conspicuously resembled the titular robot in “*WALL-E*.” Underneath the silliness was a sharp critique of the idea of art as refuge, consolation, or distraction. We are meant to roll our eyes when Weaver gushes, “Every time we gather in this magnificent building, we ascend to a higher plane where peace and compassion reign supreme.” Gosfield’s score alternates adroitly between campy pastiche and authentic sci-fi eeriness. Her interpolation of radio-jamming signals, distorted transmissions, and other electronic fuzz adds layers of sonic unease. In the coda, a darkly radiant mass of sound, incorporating voices and instruments from all four sites, evokes Earth under the gaze of what is described as “a great intelligence, vast, cool, and unsympathetic.”

“War of the Worlds” was a collaboration between the L.A. Phil and the Industry, Sharon’s experimental opera company. A tight-knit troupe of singers and actors matched the verve of Welles’s Mercury Theatre on the Air. The baritone Hadleigh Adams delivered a comic tour de force as General Lansing, who becomes unhinged as he extolls a Trumpian “wall of defense” that is supposed to keep aliens at bay. Gosfield gives him a full-on mad scene, with deranged atonal coloratura. The actor Gabriel Romero supplied a lifelike sketch of a harried and addled TV reporter. The soprano Hila Plitmann arrestingly portrayed a Martian spokesperson, her voice oscillating like a sine wave. The Philharmonic musicians, under the incisive direction of Christopher Rountree, gamely tackled unusual assignments. David Garrett, Jin-Shin Dai, and Jory Herman deserve particular praise for executing string solos in parking lots under a hot sun.

Two of the three performances of “War of the Worlds” were folded into the L.A. Phil’s annual new-music marathon, Noon to Midnight. Several thousand curiosity-seekers took in a vast range of contemporary idioms, including sounds at the far end of the experimental spectrum. The SASSAS collective—the Society for the Activation of Social Space Through Art and Sound—unleashed improvisatory anarchy in an amphitheatre behind Disney Hall. In a reception area inside Disney, Michael Pisaro oversaw a rendition of his piece “Ricefall,” which involves grains of rice being poured on metallic, ceramic, and plastic surfaces. The percussion ensemble red fish blue fish occupied Disney’s garden with another extraterrestrial composition: Gérard Grisey’s “Le Noir de l’Étoile,” which incorporates deep-space radio waves emitted by pulsars. Meanwhile, food trucks on Grand Avenue supplied pizza and pad thai.

The impression in both San Francisco and Los Angeles was of a vital, engaged new-music cohort, one unafraid of risk. This incaution is a counterweight to a classical-music culture that, for the most part, cowers in the face of modern life. On the same weekend as the L.A. Phil marathon, Andris Nelsons, the music director of the Boston Symphony, told a public-radio host that sexual harassment was not a problem in the classical world, and that if people listened to more music “they would become better human beings.” This is precisely the kind of head-in-the-sand idealism targeted in “War of the Worlds.” Nelsons later amended his remarks, but a sense of obliviousness remained. A few days later, the conductor Mariss Jansons was quoted as saying that women on the podium weren’t his “cup of tea.” He, too, attempted a clarification, yet his original words sounded more sincere. Perhaps such disgraceful episodes will hasten the end of the age of the maestro. These days, composers have a great deal more to say about the tumultuous, terrifying, not yet hopeless world in which we live. ♦

New Classic LA: <http://newclassic.la/2017/12/01/yuval-sharon-demolishes-fourth-wall-war-worlds/>

Yuval Sharon demolishes the fourth wall with *War of the Worlds*

By: Nick Norton / December 1, 2017



Hila Plitmann at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Photo by Craig T. Mathew/Mathew Imaging

When the [LA Phil](#) and [The Industry](#) announced that they would be partnering to present a new spin on Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* involving the disused air raid sirens left all over Los Angeles since the cold war, my immediate reaction was, "well of course they are." The original Welles radio dramatization was broadcast as a news report interrupting a concert; with Yuval's penchant for staging stories with multiple perspectives interacting and occurring at multiple locations simultaneously, directing a drama that was literally intended to be broadcast back and forth between different locations makes almost too much sense. I imagined perhaps even not telling the audience inside of Disney Hall that the concert they were attending would be interrupted by an alien invasion, instead billing it solely as the premiere of Annie Gosfield's new orchestral suite inspired by Holst's *The Planets*.

While that particular fantasy didn't quite happen, *War of the Worlds* did manage to blast through my rather high expectations. It is in many ways the most fully realized version of Yuval's unique brand of opera theatre, a project perhaps more deeply connected to Los Angeles than even *Hopscotch*. Rather than take the essential Wells/Welles story/broadcast and stage it, the new libretto (by Sharon himself) engages with contemporary LA life, politics, and a lot of sci fi fandom. Its layers of metacommentary on cultural life in 2017 are a joy to unpeel.

Let's begin with the premise. Audiences were seated both inside the concert hall and at three "siren sites" around LA. The opera began with Sigourney Weaver as a guest celebrity host for an

LA Phil concert, which was broadcast to the three sites. For the first performance I was at site one, where a pair of scientists were listening to the broadcast on the radio while doing some experiments, and for the second I was in the hall. Before we go any farther, let's think about the setup. The Industry's other productions, as ambitious and wild and creative and postmodern as they are, often run into a fourth wall problem. In *Hopscotch*, for instance, yes, you were in a car with the singers and actors, but it still felt as if they were performing for a large audience, or for a camera, as if it didn't matter that you were there.

That's not exactly a knock on *Hopscotch* or its performers, but it was definitely odd to be sitting two feet from someone singing their heart out but not actually interacting with you. The fourth wall is a tricky thing, though – break it too obviously and it can completely ruin the narrative, [like the remote scene in Michael Haneke's *Funny Games*](#). Such breaks have to serve the story rather than spice it up. In the cases of *Hopscotch*, *Invisible Cities*, and *Crescent City*, I think Yuval was right in his avoidance of dealing with the fourth wall in the drama, much as the staging might make it seem like the obvious device to manipulate.

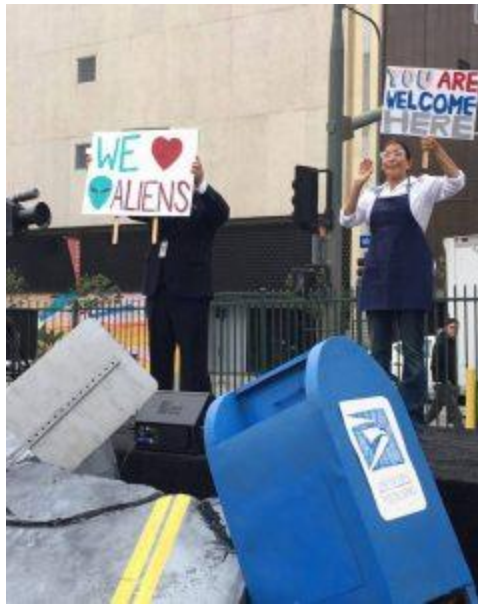
That the actual plot of *War of the Worlds* included a concert broadcast being interrupted, however, finally gave Yuval the legitimate justification to start playing with that fourth wall. It's *normal* to have a bunch of celebrities show up and hang out at LA Phil concerts — [hell, it's almost a marketing device](#) — so having Sigourney Weaver show up and participate brought the opera's narrative into our normal experience as LA Phil concertgoers. It seemed to say “this is actually happening to you,” rather than “watch and listen to this thing we are performing,” and it was convincing.

The choice to cast Weaver as the all-knowing person in a science fiction situation itself is a trope we're also familiar with. It's almost a requirement for a self-aware sci fi film these days to give her a cameo or have her show up at the end to explain to the characters what is actually happening. This casting decision further brings *War of the Worlds* into our world, and isn't lost on Yuval's libretto, with the scientists (read: lovable nerds) at site one geeking out over getting to talk to Ellen Ripley. Sitting at site one and listening to an LA Phil broadcast is what both the audience *and* the scientists are doing, so it makes perfect sense that they would interact. And interact we did, with Professor Pierson and his assistant (perfectly portrayed by actors Hugo Armstrong and Clayton Farris, respectively) bantering with the audience before the concert, and Professor Pierson developing a celebrity crush on Weaver.

When the music and story get rolling, though, the metanarrative helps the opera to get real, and real important. Jorge Luis Borges once pondered,

Why does it disturb us that...the thousand and one nights be [included] in the book of the Thousand and One Nights? Why does it disturb us that Don Quixote be a reader of the Quixote and Hamlet a spectator of Hamlet? I believe I have found the reason: these inversions suggest that if the characters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious.

I believe that with *War of the Worlds*, the inverse is true. As the sirens around Los Angeles wake up from their machine slumber to coordinate the martian attack, mayor Eric Garcetti himself walks onstage to tell the audience that – paraphrasing – “these things have been hiding in plain sight for 70 years, and that we’ll fight them to defend our way of life in Los Angeles.” In case it wasn’t clear that this is an opera about America and LA in 2017, when the Mexican shop owner portrayed by hometown opera hero Suzana Guzmán gets asked about the aliens, she immediately launches into a panicked defense of her legal immigrant status. It’s not that we, the audience, can be fictitious, but that the fiction can be fact.



Suzanna Guzmán as the shop owner Mrs. Martinez in War of the Worlds

Sometimes with Industry productions it can feel like the music, while important, takes a backseat to the setting. While the narrative structure and libretto are integral to *War of the Worlds*, in this case it is clearer than ever that they are in support of Annie Gosfield’s score and the performers. Yuval has said that gathering a community for artistic purposes can be a form of sociopolitical action, and the mere premise of this opera is that we’re getting together to listen to a piece of music. That literally happens here, as being at a concert, with a tongue-in-cheek name check to Frank Gehry’s silver building, ends up saving the listeners from the invasion.

Christopher Rountree’s muscular but agile conducting style was a perfect match for Gosfield’s synth-laden orchestral score with occasional dips into popular idioms. Furthering our theme of music-as-community here, one got the feeling that not only did most of the people in the hall actually know Rountree from around town, but that he was having a blast being exactly who he is, even getting to act a little with the sound guy, “Dave,” in a nod to *2001: A Space Odyssey*. At least one other critic wrote that he was hoping for an orchestral suite of movements from the opera; I’ll second that request. And coloratura soprano Hila Plitmann’s portrayal of La Sirena, or the wordless, *musique concrète instrumentale* of the alarm sirens – broadcast through the actual alarm sirens – was utterly stunning.

Making art together in a diverse community is our hometown's calling card. The Industry's past productions have done that splendidly for their audience. With *War of the Worlds*, the LA Phil and The Industry do it *with* their audience. To live in LA is to be a part of this story and project. By embracing that, *War of the Worlds* becomes not only engrossing and entertaining as hell, but a vital piece of opera theatre.

New Yorker: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/2017-in-review/notable-performances-and-recordings-of-2017>

Notable Performances and Recordings of 2017

By: Alex Ross / December 11, 2017

The loveliest experience of my listening year took place on a balmy September night at the Hollywood Bowl. Yo-Yo Ma came to the great amphitheatre in the Hollywood Hills to play the six solo cello suites of Bach. I had doubts about the enterprise going in. Could Ma's instrument be amplified effectively in such a wide open space? Could such intimate music speak to a crowd of thousands? People prize the Bowl for its casual conviviality. Patrons dine, drink, and, sometimes, chatter among themselves. A lighter repertory works best: Holst's "Planets" is a blast. Bach's itineraries of the world spirit are another matter.

I sat with a friend well to the back, several hundred feet from the stage. Ma was a mere dot in the middle distance. Video screens on either side of the shell provided closeups of his playing and of his famous grin, but, for the most part, I looked out at the sandy-brown landscape, at the glimmer of far lights, and, most of all, at the crowd, which filled all but a few of the Bowl's more than seventeen thousand seats. Almost no one made a sound. Almost no one moved. When a large audience is listening intently, it creates an atmosphere that cannot be measured or recorded, only remembered. Here, it was as if music had stilled the world.

Ma applied his customary virtuosity and warmth. At times, he seemed to lose the narrative thread as he savored every twist and turn of Bach's endless melody. Several of the sarabandes slowed to a contemplative crawl. Thomas Demenga's new recording of the suites, for the ECM label (see below), has more straight-ahead song and dance in it. But you never doubted the sincerity of Ma's approach: he was following his natural musical rhythms, to the point that it felt less like a performance than like an interior monologue. Little was lost in the amplification: the cello sound remained full, nuanced, and unforced.

Since the death of Luciano Pavarotti, Ma has been the most popularly celebrated of classical musicians. Very few other soloists could have sold out the Bowl. If Ma enticed thousands to the space, it was Bach who held them rapt, for nearly three hours. The enthusiasm of large crowds is always a bit unsettling: no matter how innocent the occasion, you can imagine the energy of the collective being channelled to less wholesome ends. The huge, serene company at the Bowl was another matter: it was under the spell of a solitary searcher in the dark. One of the only sounds I heard around me was someone quietly sobbing.

Ten Notable Performances of 2017

"Ipsa Dixit" at Dixon Place, February 4th

The composer, singer, and theatre artist Kate Soper is one of the great originals of her generation—a maker of erudite entertainments that inhabit a self-invented realm halfway

between opera and philosophy. “Ipsa Dixit,” her most recent large-scale work, was seen in the intimate confines of Dixon Place; she deserves a much bigger stage. [Read more.](#)

“Infinite Now” at the Flemish Opera, April 23rd

Chaya Czernowin’s opera “Infinite Now” tells two harrowing stories in alternation: one, of the chaos and gore of the First World War; the other, of a Chinese woman trapped in a claustrophobic male realm. The merging of the stories has an epiphanic effect, as if a mystery of human misery has been solved. [Read more.](#)

Mozart at the Pierre Boulez Saal, April 30th

At the age of seventy-five, the conductor, pianist, and intellectual politician Daniel Barenboim is at the height of his powers. This year, he presided over the inauguration of the Pierre Boulez Saal, in Berlin—another concert-hall masterpiece by Frank Gehry and Yasuhisa Toyota. Barenboim’s account of the last three Mozart symphonies with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra exploded with detail. [Read more.](#)

The Dream Unfinished at Cooper Union, June 11th

[The Dream Unfinished](#) is a visionary chamber orchestra dedicated to discovering and reviving minority composers. The group’s concerts combine music-making with activism: their event in June featured works by William Grant Still, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Margaret Bonds, and others, alongside presentations about the school-to-prison pipeline—the criminalization of minority children in the education system. The most riveting voice was that of Truth Templeton, a thirteen-year-old Brooklynite who held forth precociously on the topic of protest music. You may see his name again.

Roomful of Teeth at the Tank, June 21st

The Tank, a converted water tank in the high-desert town of Rangely, Colorado, has long been a secret gathering place for improvising musicians who prize its hyper-reverberant acoustics. It is now open to the public, and the vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth celebrated midsummer there with sounds that welled up out of the earth. [Read more.](#)

“La Clemenza di Tito” in Salzburg, July 30th

Peter Sellars instigated two major new productions this year. “[Girls of the Golden West](#),” Sellars’s latest collaboration with John Adams, felt like a work in progress, though a major

opera should emerge from it. Mozart’s “Clemenza,” which was seen at the Salzburg Festival, was one of Sellars’s finest, most finished creations—a study in power, betrayal, and compassion, with singers of color dominating the cast. [Read more.](#)

Bach at the Hollywood Bowl, September 12th

Read about Yo-Yo Ma’s performance in the introduction above.

“The Force of Things” at Montclair State, October 8th



Photograph by Marina Levatskaya / Peak Performances at Montclair State University

Ashley Fure’s experimental opera “[The Force of Things](#),” which Peak Performances brought to Montclair, New Jersey, rivalled Czernowin’s “Infinite Now” as the most purely visceral music-theatre outing of the year. Fure, who studied with Czernowin, aims to capture the “mounting hum of ecological anxiety around us,” and, unnervingly, succeeds. [Read more.](#)

Monteverdi at Lincoln Center, October 18th–21st

John Eliot Gardiner and a brilliant company of collaborators enchanted New York audiences this fall with deft, vivid productions of the three surviving operas of Claudio Monteverdi, on the occasion of the composer’s four-hundred-and-fiftieth birthday. The obvious was again confirmed: the first great opera composer remains the master of the game. [Read more.](#)

“War of the Worlds” at the L.A. Phil, November 18th

The Los Angeles Philharmonic is so far ahead of other American orchestras that it is in competition mainly with its own past achievements. This fall, it offered Annie Gosfield's site-specific opera "War of the Worlds," created in tandem with the director [Yuval Sharon](#). Musicians positioned in parking lots around downtown Los Angeles helped to replicate Orson Welles's famous radio hoax. Two performances took place in the context of the Noon to Midnight marathon, an every-which-way survey of Southern California's vibrant new-music scene. The L.A. Phil has a new leader in Simon Woods, but no change of direction is needed. [Read more](#).

Ten Notable Recordings

Tyshawn Sorey, "Verisimilitude"

Sorey, Cory Smythe, Chris Tordini (Pi)

"Divine Theatre," works of Giaches de Wert

Stile Antico (Harmonia Mundi)

Bach, Solo Cello Suites

Thomas Demenga (ECM)

Jürg Frey, "Collection Gustave Roud"

Frey, Stefan Thut, Dante Boon, Andrew McIntosh, Regula Konrad, Stephen Altoft, Lee Ferguson (Another Timbre)

Scott Wollschleger, "Soft Aberration"

Longleash, Anne Lanzilotti, Karl Larson, Andy Kozar, Corrine Byrne, John Popham, Mivos Quartet (New Focus)

Linda Catlin Smith, "Drifter"

Apartment House, Bozzini Quartet (Another Timbre)

Björk, "Utopia"

(One Little Indian)

Du Yun, “Angel’s Bone”

Abigail Fischer, Jennifer Charles, Kyle Bielfield, Kyle Pfortmiller, Julian Wachner conducting the Choir of Trinity Wall Street and Novus NY (VIA Artists)

Kurtág, Complete Works for Ensemble and Choir

Reinbert de Leeuw conducting Asko / Schönberg and the Netherlands Radio Choir (ECM)

Berlioz, “Les Troyens”

Joyce DiDonato, Michael Spyres, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Stéphane Degout, Nicolas Courjal, Marianne Crebassa, Hanna Hipp, Cyrille Dubois, Stanislas de Barbeyrac, Philippe Sly, John Nelson conducting the orchestra and chorus of the Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Choeur de l’Opéra du Rhin, Badischer Staatsopernchor (Erato)

Ten More

James Weeks, “Mala Punica”

Exaudi (Winter & Winter)

Daniel Lentz, “River of 1000 Streams”

Vicki Ray (Cold Blue)

George Benjamin, “Into the Little Hill,” “Dream of the Song,” “Flight”

Hila Plitmann, Susan Bickley, Bejun Mehta, Michael Cox, Benjamin conducting the London Sinfonietta, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the Netherlands Chamber Choir (Nimbus)

Gregory Spears, “Fellow Travelers”

Aaron Blake, Joseph Lattanzi, Devon Guthrie, Alexandra Schoeny, Mark Gibson conducting the Cincinnati Symphony (Fanfare Cincinnati)

“Sabine Devieille: Mirages”

Alexandre Tharaud, François-Xavier Roth conducting Les Siècles (Warner)

Weinberg, Chamber Symphonies Nos. 1-4, Piano Quintet (arr. Pushkarev and Kremer)

Gidon Kremer, Kremerata Baltica (ECM)

Chaya Czernowin, “HIDDEN”

JACK Quartet, Inbal Hever (Wergo)

Sibelius, “In the Stream of Life”

Gerald Finley, Edward Gardner conducting the Bergen Philharmonic (Chandos)

George Lewis, “Assemblage”

Ensemble Dal Niente (New World)

Wagner, “Parsifal”

Andreas Schager, Anja Kampe, Wolfgang Koch, René Pape, Daniel Barenboim conducting the Staatskapelle Berlin and Staatsoperchor, Dmitri Tcherniakov directing (BelAir DVD)

Music Book of the Year

Tim Rutherford-Johnson, “[Music After the Fall: Modern Composition and Culture Since 1989](#)”
(University of California Press)

MUSIC IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IN 2017 – THE LA PHIL SETS THE TONE

By Richard S. Ginell / Dec. 13, 2017

LOS ANGELES: Some commentators on the East Coast finally conceded this year that Southern California is the place to be as far as “important” progressive musical activity is concerned. As usual, the Los Angeles Philharmonic positioned itself at the center of a lot of it.

In April, the Phil hosted a Reykjavik Festival, devoting a big chunk of programming to contemporary Icelandic composers and musicians whose music spilled over several genre boundaries yet maintained a striking uniformity of sound that reflected a distant land. The main concerts – partially led by the Phil’s conductor laureate Esa-Pekka Salonen – all sold out months in advance, which would be considered startling but for the fact that the popular Icelandic rock band Sigur Ros was sharing the bill. Yet the most arresting piece of all was the sole historical item, a spectacularly rowdy Organ Concerto by Jón Leifs from 1930.

In October, the LA Phil came right back with another unlikely (for a symphony orchestra) event – the CDMX Festival of music from Mexico City that also blithely jumped around from genre to genre. This time, the Phil’s music and artistic director Gustavo Dudamel participated, leading colorful, percussive orchestral showpieces to the manner born and backing Mexican pop music acts.

Semi-staged opera tailored to the dimensions of Walt Disney Concert Hall continued to offer an alternative to the full productions at LA Opera across the street. The LA Phil’s fresh new take on John Adams’ once-controversial *Nixon In China* Mar. 3, using home movies from Richard Nixon’s actual 1972 visit as backdrops, placed the opera in a more realistic – and more compelling – context.

With his new affiliation as artist-collaborator with the LA Phil in gear, the maverick director Yuval Sharon struck with a number of productions. He was able to make coherent sense of Lou Harrison’s star-crossed magnum opus *Young Caesar* June 13 with judicious editing and the restoration of original elements such as puppetry and a mix of conventional and exotic instruments. As a result, Harrison’s piece never had it so good.

On Nov. 12 and 18, Sharon delivered his most successful – and most fun – brainstorm yet, a contemporary rewrite of the 1938 Orson Welles broadcast of *War of the Worlds*. Sharon came up with a crazy multi-platform staging indoors at Disney Hall and outdoors alongside three ancient air raid sirens, and got an imaginative, at times weirdly-orchestrated score from Annie Gosfield. The “cast” included a laughably lurching mechanical spider from Mars and a surprise cameo from L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti.

Yet one of the most significant events for the LA Phil did not occur on a stage. LA Phil president Deborah Borda, who presided over its move into Disney Hall and an adventurous expansion of its repertoire and mission while making it the most-solidly-financed orchestra in the country, suddenly skipped town in the spring to take over the New York Philharmonic. She left plans in place for the Phil's centennial season blowout in 2018-19, but what will happen after that was the big question. One hint is that her successor Simon Woods used to be a record producer for EMI Classics and helped launch an enterprising in-house record label during his most recent job as CEO of the Seattle Symphony. Perhaps he could rev up the LA Phil's recording activities, which had tapered off during the Borda regime.

There was also a changing of the guard at the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra where Jeffrey Kahane capped his 20 years as music director with a "Lift Every Voice" festival in January that centered upon the music of his distant relative, Kurt Weill. As it happened, the festival occurred around the time of the inauguration of Donald Trump – and Kahane took the opportunity to address the political turmoil both in his words and in powerful performances of Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *Lost in the Stars*. As of this writing, his successor has not been chosen.

Meanwhile to the south, the mavericks at Long Beach Opera ventured where others in the entertainment capital dared not go Mar. 12 by staging the U.S. premiere of *The Perfect American*, Philip Glass' absorbing if controversial opera that painted an unflattering picture of the last days of Walt Disney.

To the north, the new Valley Performing Arts Center in Northridge loomed larger in importance, scoring with a three-concert observance of John Adams' 70th birthday in January and February that made use of the resources of Jacaranda, the St. Lawrence String Quartet and Chris Rountree's raucous new music band, wild Up.

Further out of town, the Ojai Festival turned to jazz pianist/composer Vijay Iyer as its music director-*du-jour* in June and received an agenda unlike any other in its history – loaded with avant-garde classical, jazz, and world music, improvised and not, that pushed the limits of what an audience can absorb.

And what of the standard repertoire? Yes, there was still a lot of that to be found in Southern California, with performances to savor like the La Scala-framed production of Verdi's *Nabucco* at LA Opera with the ageless Plácido Domingo shining in the title role Oct. 14, or Grant Gershon's perfectly-paced Orff *Carmina Burana* with the LA Master Chorale Sep. 24. But mainly, it was the new and the unusual that occupied the spotlight this year.

LA Observed:

http://www.laobserved.com/intell/2017/12/downtown_upended_and_millepied.php

Downtown upended and Millepied finds a home at the Wallis

By Donna Perlmutter / December 17, 2017



Scene from "Persona." Larry Ho/LA Opera

Okay. It's not the epic rebellion in our national discourse. Or the raging fires. But anyone who happened to be at our downtown arts citadels recently might think the sedate world of classical music had been upended too.

Suddenly the usual audiences had disappeared, along with a healthy supply of their canes and conveyances. Big crowds came garbed in T-shirts (some of them exhorting others to "Fuck Trump"). Revelers with trendy haircuts wearing Melrose Avenue fashions jammed the sidewalks surrounding Disney Hall, bustling through its doors and sprawling along its gardens and onto every spare surface.

They heard the call. It was to the annual DTLA festival titled Noon to Midnight and sponsored by the LA Philharmonic, a new music marathon headlined by what we now define as opera, Annie Gosfield's "War of the Worlds," its libretto by Yuval Sharon. He's the

hot new director of all things avant-garde, including car rides with sopranos, and this piece is based on Orson Welles' radio show that rocked the air waves back in 1938.

But there's more.

One level down from Disney, at REDCAT, we got to see composer Keeril Makan's "Persona," quite a bit more recognizable as opera than the above, with Jay Scheib's libretto based on the Ingmar Bergman film. It turned out to be a thoroughly engrossing venture -- the superb contribution of LA Opera's Off Grand wing, created at MIT. And we can remember how often these artistic transliterations drain off the impact of the original.

Not so here. A concentrated study of two women -- one a traumatized mute patient, the other her live-in nurse -- delivers both the music and the interplay that binds them to mesmerizing effect.

Also, Redcat's small raked stage makes a perfect venue for the work's intimacies. With cameras positioned all around the performing area the action can be picked up either way -- watching it on screen or directly.

What becomes the central drama is how a silent partner can stimulate the other to do all the talking, to reveal what she has never thought of or deeply reacted to before. And in the process a kind of counter-transference occurs; the therapist and patient step out of their roles. Here it's the nurse, Alma, who dredges up her own secrets and painful feelings while Elisabet, her charge, merely listens, but, by so doing, triggers the outpouring.

Amanda Crider, as the central character, carries 90 percent of the work, singing the altogether apt musical lines of anguish and reverie and longing before the mute patient -- all of it set off by the chamber ensemble's instructive underpinnings and accents.

If only the other major event at the Disney complex, "War of the Worlds," reached this level. But no matter what Welles had envisioned for his Halloween entertainment -- he based it on the H.G. Wells science fiction novel -- his radio audiences back then tuned in and mistakenly took it as reality news: The planet was being invaded, so panic arose among that small number who listened.

Yet what Yuval and Gosfield wrought from it was a fanciful graphic comic. And I can't say the fun-loving Noon to Midnight crowd on that afternoon didn't rally to the piece as a semi-hilarious circus. It had sirens and street noise, and ominous clattering, clanging, squalling episodes, along with jazzy, big-band accompaniments and sound effects to Sigourney Weaver's mock-serious narrations. Think of it as an off-pitch Broadway musical with happy shenanigans.

But I'm happy to say that Yuval's installations of last year are gone -- those giant marshmallow clouds hovering over the indoor escalators from parking garage to lobby, the ones that totally obscure Frank Gehry's linear design. And gone also are their industrial drone accompaniments that conflict with the orchestra's last tones, the ones we're still

savoring, the ones still reverberating in our ears from a just-ended concert. Ah... free at last.

It's enough to make a music lover happy all over again. Especially in hearing the LA Phil play Bernstein's Serenade, this time with Hilary Hahn. She's actually the third violinist to bring this ever-more seductive gem to Los Angeles recently. And proving -- in this, the composer's centennial year -- just how many interpretive paths it invites. No chance it will stay in the undeservedly neglected drawer any more.

With Jonathon Heyward stepping up to the podium authoritatively for what is really a violin concerto, Hahn -- in bare feet peeking now and then from her long, glittery gown -- gave us a clear-voiced and easy, lyrical, lilting account of its varied landscape. She and the 25-year-old conductor delivered its delectable waltzes made modern in a warm Mitteleuropa way, along with its soulful characterizations, its sentiments of quiet sorrow, and even its jazzy coda, à la "West Side Story."

Heyward and the orchestra seemed like old familiar partners in "The Firebird" Suite -- irresistible music played with all the mysterious glitter and melodic tenderness that Stravinsky can evoke in the very best performances. This was one. You had to believe your ears.

Back on the Westside, there was more music to prick up your ears -- as accompaniment to LA Dance Project's altogether intriguing bill at the company's new residence, the Wallis.

And it proved my point, that music makes the dance. Credit goes to Benjamin Millepied, arbiter of the five-year-old troupe's repertory. His choices, throughout the time he's been in our midst, cover a remarkably wide spectrum -- both as a choreographer himself and the works he collects from others.



Photo by Larry Ho/LA Dance Project

A standout in the Wallis show was his "In Silence We Speak" -- underpinned by David Lang music, selections from several of the composer's albums.

I'd say that this work, a duet for Rachelle Rafailides and Janie Taylor, achieves a brilliance from its totality of effects. The music has an ethereal quality at once emotional and Millepied answers it with his dance design; the two women bend and arc together in empathy, feeling sorrow or loss or hope and connecting for each episode. The music binds them, speaks the tone of their relationship, a one-ness that goes beyond unison routines.

And visually, well, they look like Modigliani in motion -- both of them tall, lean, lithe in silky,

flowing jumpsuits and sneakers. The rust-to-gold hues of the costumes (Ermenegildo Zegna and Alessandro Sartori, no less) and the burnished lighting complement the whole scene. Artistic perfection. If dance could live as a museum installation, this would be the ticket.

Another ticket, when it comes to the big picture, is how Millepied opens himself to new vistas, "Orpheus Highway," as an example. Here he does something similar to the Keeril Makan/Jay Scheib opera, "Persona," with simultaneous tracks for the audience, both stage and film version. And it works in provocative ways.

This Orpheus and Eurydice travel a roadway, in place of the River Styx, and we feel the urgency of their trip to possible salvation driven by Steve Reich's Triple Quartet. The piece is never less than exhilarating, even suspenseful and physically draining as we watch its epic journey.

With this first Wallis season Millepied seems to be in his finest fettle to date.

In Review



Michael Fabiano and Ellie Dehn, des Grieux and Manon at SFO

mant les yeux," the tenor gave a finely etched performance of "Ah! Fuyez, douce image" that seemed the essence of Romanticism.

In the title role, soprano Ellie Dehn made a hazier impression. Dehn—who replaced soprano Nadine Sierra, the originally announced Manon, before rehearsals began—has the top notes for Massenet's heroine, but she projected weakly in her middle register, particularly in the opera's early scenes, when her singing ranged from inexact to inaudible. Dehn gained in stature as the performance progressed, delivering a touching "N'est-ce plus ma main." Still, it was hard to avoid the sense that this was an incomplete assumption: despite her wayward actions, Manon must project a core of fragility and pathos that was scarcely in evidence here.

In the supporting roles, bass James Creswell's handsomely sung des Grieux père made the strongest impression. David Pershall's energetic Lescart, Timothy Mix's robust Brétigny and Robert Brubaker's leering Guillot made apt contributions, and Monica Dewey (Poussette), Laura Krumm (Javotte) and Renée Rapier (Rosette) minced convincingly as the trio of actresses. The chorus sang lustily.

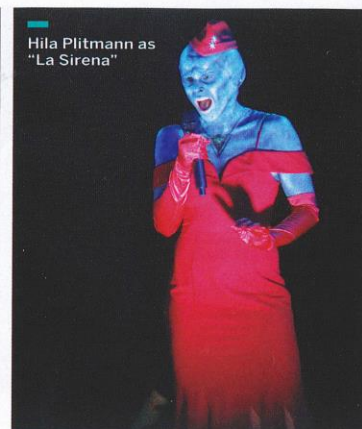
But this was Fabiano's night—and Fournillier's. The conductor drew vibrant sound from the orchestra, shaping Massenet's insinuating motifs and deftly layered orchestral textures with precision and clarity. —Georgia Rowe

The War of the Worlds

Los Angeles

IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE to reproduce the public panic that was generated on October 30, 1938, when CBS Radio broadcast Orson Welles's *Mercury Theatre on the Air* adaptation of H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*; many people thought they were listening to reports of an actual invasion from Mars. Nevertheless, in the present age of "fake news," there is immense potential in revisiting this celebrated occasion in order to examine the manipulation of mass media.

The 2017 *War of the Worlds* (seen Nov. 12), a presentation of the LA Phil New Music Group with The Industry and NOW Art, was staged in the Disney Hall and at three open-air sites in downtown Los Angeles, all centered on decommissioned but still extant air-raid sirens from World War II. It was the brainchild of Yuval Sharon, the operatic *Wunderkind* who is the founder of The Industry. The basic conceit was that we were present at a concert which was to feature a new orchestral cycle by Annie Gosfield, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the first performance of Holst's *Planets*. Each orchestral piece would describe a planet, with the sequence of pieces arranged as a progression away from the sun. The event was introduced by an elegantly clad Narrator, played with wit and aplomb by Sigourney Weaver. In the middle of the first piece, "Mercury," she announced that there had been an alien invasion from Mars and, in live communication with actors, singers, dancers and audience members at the three open-air sites, a tale unfolded of the total destruction of Los Angeles—and potentially of the nation. Landings had taken place, we were told, particularly in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania. In the middle of the mayhem, we were visited in person by the current mayor of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti, who assured us that all would be well if we just stayed in place. At the end we faced the prospect of a world in which every human action would be subject to unceasing



Hila Plitmann as "La Sirena"

scrutiny by the Martian invaders.

Despite the somewhat downbeat ending, the entire event acquired the invigorating atmosphere of a barnyard festival; I have never encountered such raucous entertainment in a concert hall before. We heard only three episodes of Gosfield's orchestral cycle before the mayhem began. They were very tantalizing: "Mercury" was a volatile mix of sharp, quicksilver melodies and fragmented jazz, making an alarmist impact on our ears; "Venus" was laden with lush, heavy, languorous brass with little hint of sexual vitality; and "Earth" was characterized by hideously oppressive chords. After this, the function of the music changed from lyrical description to dramatic accompaniment, as the Martian attack, indicated by ear-splitting rumbles on the speakers and wild flashes of lights in the auditorium, got underway. The musical highlight belonged to the fantastically versatile Hila Plitmann, who, as "La Sirena," an embodiment of the Martian invasion, sang an erratic melisma of notes ranging from the stratospherically high to the depths of her register, where she quacked like a duck and squealed like a scalded cat. At the start, the Narrator told us we had come to the hall to be elevated by music "to a higher plane where peace and compassion reign supreme"; as the event ended with wistful notes extending into silence and nothingness, we doubted whether

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peace and compassion could ever again be part of the human landscape.

Christopher Rountree conducted the chamber orchestra of twenty-five instrumentalists with flexibility, panache and no little acting skill, which heightened the humor of the performance. As I drove out of the Disney Hall parking garage after the show, I could not help breathing a slight sigh of relief to see that life in L.A. was going on normally—or at least, it seemed to be. —Simon Williams

Nabucco

Los Angeles

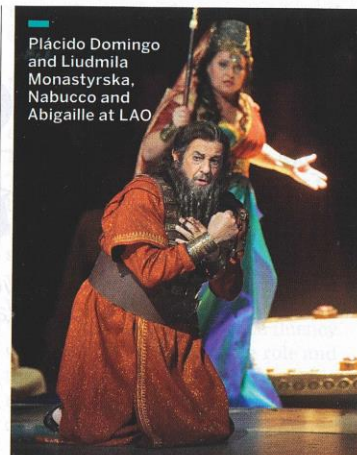
LA OPERA'S REVIVAL of *Nabucco* (seen Nov. 11) convinced us of the thrilling musical power of Verdi's first masterpiece. James Conlon's conducting of the overture was a model of control, balancing gigantic dramatic statements with pleasingly fluid lyricism; later, the great ensembles, which comprise much of the action, unfolded with stately grandeur. Grant Gershon's chorus sang with such unified, focused intensity that cataclysm always seemed imminent.

Plácido Domingo's interpretation of Nabucco was revelatory. The role is frequently sung by bass-baritones, who tend to make the Babylonian king into a predatory monster. Domingo did not shirk the despotic aspects of the character, but the exceptional clarity and characteristic brightness of his singing made his Nabucco a compelling human being; this was a portrait of a dictator who discovers how vulnerable he is to the world he had previously oppressed.

In her LA Opera debut, Ukrainian spinto soprano Liudmyla Monastyrskaya sang Abigail, confirming with impressive force her reputation for producing eardrum-bursting volume. Less expected, but equally splendid, was her notably plangent lament for lost happiness in the Act II *cantabile* "Anch'io dischiuso un giorno," shaped with sufficient intimacy to establish Abigail as a sympathetic character. This allowed us to follow her subsequent descent into tyranny with some interest and even

justified her odd conversion to religion at the very end of the opera. The third magnificent voice in the cast belonged to the Zaccaria, Morris Robinson, whose immense bass truly conveyed the stability and durability of Judaism. The roles of Fenena and Ismaele were little developed by Verdi and his librettist, Temistocle Solera, but Nancy Fabiola Herrera and Mario Chang sang them with conviction.

Thaddeus Strassberger, who made his LA Opera debut in 2012 with another early Verdi work, *I Due Foscari*, had the unenviable task of putting *Nabucco's* unwieldy dramaturgy on stage. Strassberger, who served as his own scenic designer for *Nabucco*, set the action behind a proscenium arch representing the Teatro alla Scala in 1842; in the onstage boxes were seated members of the Austrian aristocracy who were the governing power in Milan at the time of *Nabucco's* world premiere. If this scheme was intended to give a political slant to the action, it was unsuccessful on that score, but it did provide an ingenious solution to some of the staging problems: the sets both reflected the grandeur of the music and easily accommodated the large chorus and masses of extras. Nevertheless, the action remained static, and toward the end, when Verdi's inspiration was clearly lagging,



Plácido Domingo and Liudmyla Monastyrskaya, Nabucco and Abigail at LAO

there were passages of careless staging that lost all specificity and allowed the last half hour to drag.

Nabucco's old-fashioned melodrama is likely to reduce contemporary audiences to giggles, while the intense religiosity of the opera's ending has an uncomfortable ring in the secular domain of the opera house. But despite these obstacles, *Nabucco* is worth hearing: the opera overwhelms us with its mighty walls of sound, which are the manifestation of the twenty-eight-year-old Verdi's own discovery of his profound melodic gift. —Simon Williams

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REVIEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

INTERNATIONAL

Mahagonny in Zurich • Verdi's *Masnadieri* at Volksoper Wien • Anna Netrebko and Piotr Beczala in Vienna's *Adriana* • Bayerische Staatsoper's *Nozze di Figaro* • *Die Lustige Witwe* at Munich's Gärtnerplatz • Calixto Bieito stages Nuremberg's *Troyens*.

NORTH AMERICA

The Met revives *Madama Butterfly* and *The Magic Flute* • New York City Opera salutes Dominick Argento • *The Mother of Us All* in Hudson, NY • world premiere of *Mr. Burke and Mr. Hare* in Boston • Odyssey Opera's *Siege of Calais* • *Figaro* in Pittsburgh and Detroit • DiChiera's *Cyrano* in Charlotte • Offenbach's *Orphée aux Enfers* in New Orleans • *Tosca* in Omaha • Opera Colorado's *Bohème* • San Diego hears *The Pirates of Penzance* and *As One*.

CONCERTS AND RECITALS

The Met dedicates the Verdi Requiem to Dmitri Hvorostovsky • *La Damnation de Faust* from the BSO • *Layla and Majnun* in concert in Manhattan • NYFOS sings Leonard Bernstein • Bolcom's *From the Diary of Sally Hemmings* • The Swedish Radio Choir and Jordi Savall at the White Light Festival • Barbara Hannigan in recital • *La Straniera* in D.C.