



OJAI YOUTH OPERA PRESENTS

NIGHTINGALE & *The* TOWER

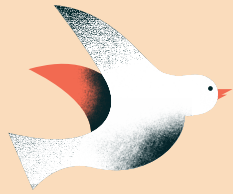
AN ORIGINAL OPERA FOR THE DIGITAL AGE



STORY BY
REBECCA COMERFORD & MIKAEL JORGENSEN

LIBRETTO BY
REBECCA COMERFORD

COMPOSED & ARRANGED BY
JASON TREUTING & BETH MEYERS



NIGHTINGALE & *The* TOWER



- **NIGHTINGALE AND THE TOWER** is an electronic Chamber Opera created for six professional adult singers from the Opera world, twenty Youth Company members, ages 7-18, orchestra, synthesizers and earth harp. Combining elements of digital and acoustic sounds, this pioneering new work from groundbreaking classical composer, *Jason Treuting*, Grammy Award Winning folk-rock musician, *Mikael Jorgensen* and vocal visionary, *Rebecca Comerford*, melds the elements of a rich neo-classical score, alongside electronic and synthesized textures to create a bold, multi-disciplinary work of art never before seen.
- **THIS IS A STORY ABOUT** the delicate balance children must tread between technology and the environment, in a dystopian world that no longer seeks value in nature or it's wild and beautiful imperfections.
- **SYNOPSIS** Somewhere in the not-too-distant future, a village sits at edge of a deep forest. Inside this forest, a Nightingale is born, heralding the dawn of a new epoch in time. However, this mythical bird is born with a broken wing and does not possess the ability to fly. An oracle witnesses as the bird is birthed into existence and explains that her birth is an omen to all who encounter her that the new dawn of the digital age is upon them. At the edge of this forest is a house where ten-year-old Teo lives with his single mother, Sandra, alongside his neighbors Margot, Annalise and Leah, their parents Liza and John, and a troubled young man named Rusty and his ill-tempered father, Pete, who is raising him alone. Teo's spinal chord is paralyzed due to an accident he had when he was a little boy and as a result he must use

a wheelchair to get around. Despite his disability, he has a grace and quiet strength that motivates all his actions and decision making, causing him to appear less earthbound and more guided by an angelic realm. As Teo and the neighborhood children walk home from school one day, they decide to take the shortcut through the forbidden forest. When they do, they stumble upon the newly born Nightingale, struggling to move under the weight of her broken wing. These kids who spend little time in nature, with the exception of Teo, are unsure of what to do with the wounded bird. When Rusty throws stones at it, Teo defends the bird and makes it his mission to rescue the animal and rehabilitate it to flying once more. What ensues from there is an odyssey into the deepest part of the forest where Teo encounters a giant super Tower that holds all the collective consciousness of humanity, run by a mercurial Empress and two twin princesses that serve as programmers for the technological Id. After encountering the Tower, Teo is forced to question everything he was ever taught about the natural world around him. In order to save the Nightingale, he must reveal the existence of the Tower to his mother and the other parents of the village, who remain ignorant of its whereabouts. Together, the children form an unlikely bond to save the Nightingale and in turn, encounter the truth about themselves and the adults in their lives, who are at times flawed by the very technology they seek to use. If they can heal the Nightingale, they can restore harmony between the natural world and the everadvancing forces of technology that seek to consume their world. By doing so, they can heal themselves.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



— **Rebecca Comerford**

— Hailed by *Variety Magazine* as a “standout character actress” in the cult classic comedy, *The Living Wake*, as “the future of lyric theatre in America” by *Classical Voice Magazine*, and “brilliant” by the *New York Times*, Rebecca Comerford’s voice and sincere dramatic intensity has been felt in concert halls, theatres and movie screens across America and Europe. As a concert soloist she has performed in such venues as *Carnegie Hall*, *Avery Fischer Hall/Lincoln Center*, *The J. Paul Getty Museum*, *Symphony Space*, *The Orpheum Theatre Memphis*, *Vienna Staatsoper* and *Aspen Music Festival*. Her latest one-woman show “Songs of Resistance and Rebellion” recently made it’s debut at New York City’s iconic *Neue Galerie* as part of the *Café Sabarsky Cabaret Series*, with collaborator and Broadway Music Director, *Anna Dagmar* on the piano. As an actor she has been seen in such films as the SXSW Audience Winner, *Explicit Ills*, opposite the Roots frontman, *Tariq Trotter*, Iranian filmmaker *Shirin Neshat*’s experimental short, *Issar*, *The Living Wake*, opposite Academy Award nominee *Jesse Eisenberg* and as a writer, composer and lead in the period western, *Sulphur Mountain*. In addition to her original compositions and librettos, Rebecca co-founded *Ojai Youth Opera Company* in 2014, the first autonomous youth opera theatre in America, dedicated to telling original stories with a socially conscious message for youth. OYO has brought some of the best and brightest in the Opera field to mentor young singers ages 7-18 to the idillic Ojai Valley every summer. These artists include Metropolitan Opera star, *Falk Struckmann*, Metropolitan Opera director *Louisa Muller*, contralto *Nicole Mitchell* and conductor, *Kostis Protopapas*.



COMPOSER

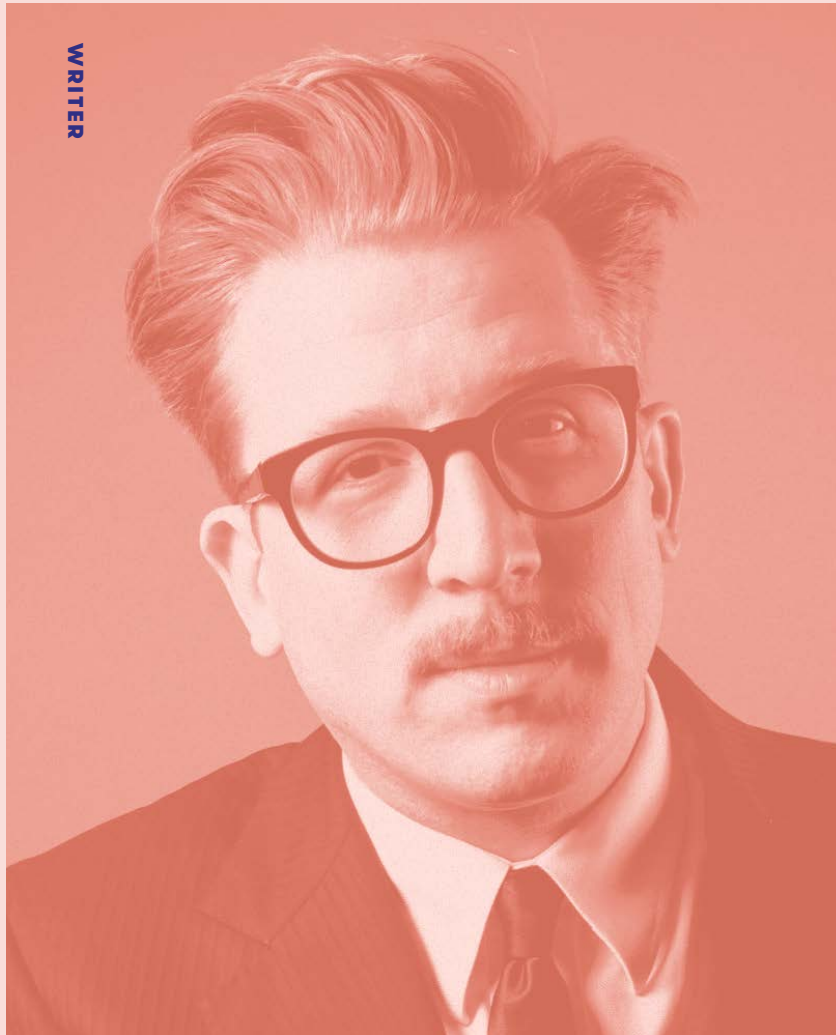


— Jason Treuting

— Acknowledged worldwide, *Jason Treuting's* accomplishments as composer and performer are staggering. As a performer, he has collaborated with artists as diverse as **David Lang**, **Steve Reich**, **John Zorn**, tabla master **Zakir Hussein**, electronic music duo **Matmos**, rock band **The National**, and choreographer **Eliot Field**. He has been a featured performer with the **LA Philharmonic**, **BAM**, **Live from Lincoln Center Festival**, **DOM Moscow**, **The Walker Art Center**, **Le National Montréal**, and the **Ojai Music Festival**, to name a few. His many compositions have been featured at the **Kennedy Center**, **The Brooklyn Academy of Music New Wave Festival**, **The League of Composers Orchestra**, **The Whitney Museum**, and **Lincoln Center**. Jason's music has been featured on **NPR's Weekend Edition**, as well as **WNYC's Sound-Check** and **Evening Music**. His first CD with **So Percussion**, "Amid the Noise," was chosen as a top ten album of the year by All About Jazz and "Spring" from **QQQ's Unpacking the Trailer** was selected as track of the week by USA Today. His music is recorded on **Cantaloupe Music** and New Amsterdam Records. He has been featured as composer-in-residence at the **Carlsbad Music Festival** and the **Canberra International Music Festival**, Australia. Ojai Youth Opera is thrilled to premiere Treuting's opera as our first original score. Treuting is a graduate of **Eastman School of Music** and **Yale University**.



WRITER

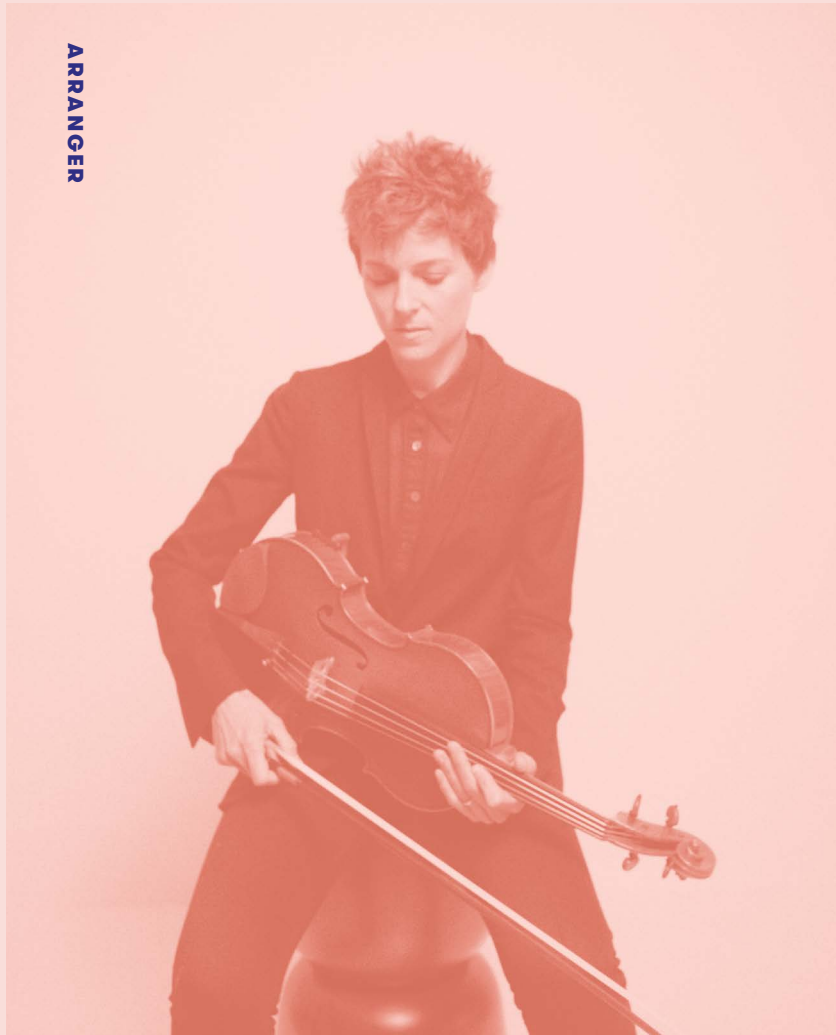


— Mikael Jorgensen

— Ojai's own *Mikael Jorgensen* is a long time member of the revered indie rock band *Wilco*, for which he has won multiple Grammy awards. As an electronic musician, Mikael began his career apprenticing under his father, a Danish recording engineer whose passion for music and all its production arts inspired his son. His wide-ranging education, including studies in fine arts, video, electronics, and computer science, provided him an extraordinary base for his work as a master of modern-digital and retro-analog production. Mikael joined Wilco in 2002 to perform real-time sound manipulations. He gradually moved to the stage itself, manning his laptop as well as taking on more and more keyboard duties. Wilco's numerous industry awards include seven **Grammy nominations**, winning two for the 2005 release, *A Ghost is Born*. Mikael was a featured Artist for Ventura's own *Focus* on the *Masters* series in 2017. Jorgensen will be joining OYO as a guest artist faculty member and as the wizard behind our electronic score manipulations for the *Education Outreach* performances and world premiere.



ARRANGER



— **Beth Meyers**

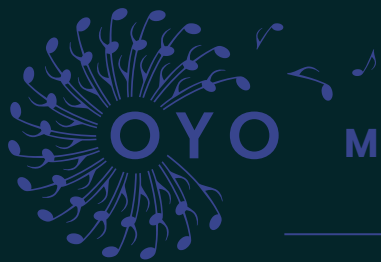
— Arranger, Beth Meyers is a founding member of **janus** (flute/viola/harp trio) whose debut album ***i am not*** was called “gorgeously subtle” (NPR’s Studio 360). Through her more than 12 years of collaboration, **janus** has commissioned over one hundred new works for the trio repertoire. She is also a founding member of the quirky folk-prog band, **QQQ** (viola, hardanger fiddle, acoustic guitar and drums) whose debut album ***Unpacking the Trailer*** (also New Amsterdam Records) was hailed “a bold statement of purpose disguised as an unpretentious lark” (Time Out New York). Beth has performed with ensembles and artists including **ACME Ensemble, Alarm Will Sound, Antony and the Johnsons, Chromeo, Clare and The Reasons, Da Capo Chamber Players, Ensemble ACJW, Kishibashi, Matmos, Meredith Monk, Pierre Boulez, Theater of a Two-Headed Calf, Frank Ocean, John Legend, Rochester Philharmonic, the Roots, Signal, Regina Spektor, So Percussion, Steve Reich, Sufjan Stevens, Theo Bleckman, the Ying Quartet and the Princeton Symphony Orchestra**. Beth is a graduate of the **Eastman School of Music**. Currently, Beth spends a good deal of her playing in NYC where she is the violist for **Wicked** and can be heard in various contemporary music ensembles. Her daily creative energy is focused on playing banjo, ukelele and singing in her new duo project, **Damsel** with guitarist/singer, **Monica Mugan**.





— YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GROWING UP WITH THE LIGHT AND DARK SIDES OF THE WORLD-WIDE-WEB AND BECOMING AWARE OF THE INCREASED USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

— While these technologies are expanding their world and creating a greater sense of interdependence and connectivity, qualities such as empathy, abstract thought, and authentic human expression are gradually being lost. **Nightingale and the Tower** will explore this balance between both worlds through a unique compositional style that will highlight the voices of our youth company members alongside world-class Opera singers. Following our mission to educate through high-calibre performance practice, **Ojai Youth Opera** chose to produce this opera as a vehicle to create a dialogue about the importance of technology in the lives of our youth. We hope to highlight through musical exploration their shared humanity, creativity, and empathy in a modern world that can, at times, make them feel isolated. This project also seeks to question how much time we spend in the natural world, and how much we stand to lose, should we choose to ignore these changes.



MISSION STATEMENT



– **We believe, through the spirit of youth, the transformative art form of Opera awakens the authentic expression of humanity and keeps it alive.**

NIGHTINGALE & The TOWER



– **Imagination knows no limits.**

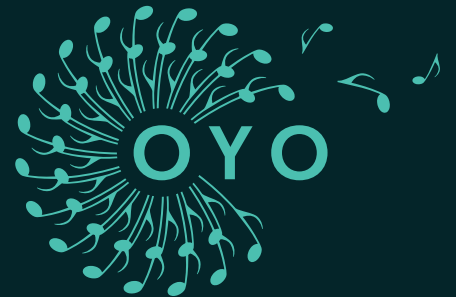
OJAI YOUTH OPERA



— WE BELIEVE, THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH, THE TRANSFORMATIVE ART FORM OF OPERA AWAKENS THE AUTHENTIC EXPRESSION OF HUMANITY AND KEEPS IT ALIVE.

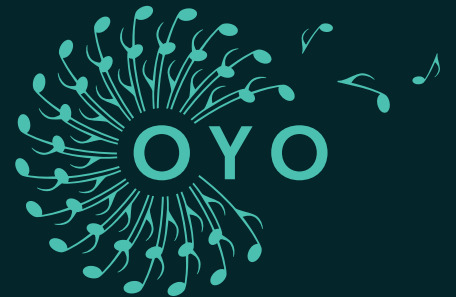
— Ojai Youth Opera (OYO) is dedicated to enriching the lives of Ojai’s youth, community and the wider world through the study, performance, development and lifelong appreciation for Opera and all of its associated Production Arts by presenting a full calendar year of productions-- both classical and original works from voices in the community of Ojai and around the world-- creating opportunity for discovery, fostering transformative outreach and education about the art form and encouraging its growth through our distinct Ojai educational programs, workshops and camps.

Our unique and successful model is offered to the global community through our publishing arm, offering proven, dynamic Opera workshop and educational curriculums, educational and production videos, licensing of original works and livestreaming of OYO performances throughout the year.









Thank you.

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NIGHTINGALE & *The* TOWER

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