

January 2010

INTERVIEW:

Trumpet Soloist **James Ackley**

INTERVIEW:

Soprano **Tina Milhorn Stallard**

Q & A:

Composer **Robert J. Bradshaw**
on the chamber opera "Gabriel"

Biographies:

2010 ITG Conference host, **Brian Evans**
AOBO Principal Trumpet, **Joshua Clarke**.



James Ackley

Beaumont Arts

NEW MUSIC MAGAZINE

TROMBA MUNDI

Trumpet Ensemble



Tromba Mundi members include:

James Ackley
University of South Carolina

Bryan Appleby-Wineberg
Rowan University

Scott Belck
Capital University

Jean-Christophe Dobrzelewski
West Chester University

Judith Saxton
UNC School of the Arts

Joey Tartell
Indiana University

It is hard to imagine a better trumpet ensemble than Tromba Mundi, whose members play with admirable purity of tone and nearly flawless balance, intonation, and ensemble precision. - American Record Guide

A thoroughly enjoyable disc. Brilliantly played and recorded." - Fanfare Magazine

Tromba Mundi's first CD a success. Their self-titled 1st release is a must for trumpet players, brass enthusiasts, and casual listeners alike. - Classical Voice of New England

... AVAILABLE THROUGH MSRCD.COM & AMAZON ...

This trumpet group is comprised of some of the best players in the nation. The balance, intonation, blend, and ensemble are fantastic. - David Hickman (Arizona State University)

This new compact disc demonstrates beautiful, well-thought out ensemble playing. The intonation is superb and the interpretations are rock solid. - Anthony Plog, Soloist

This CD should be required listening for all trumpet ensembles. - Kevin E. Eisensmith, ITG President

The playing is absolutely first-rate. - Peter Bond, New York Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

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The following articles were compiled from questions submitted through email, online chatting and social networking sites concerning the composition, performance and creative impetus behind “.Gabriel”, an opera by Robert J. Bradshaw.

Additional questions were submitted for the two principal characters, James Ackley and Tina Milhorn Stallard, who made the first recording of “.Gabriel” in January, 2010.

“.Gabriel” was commissioned by the Australian Trumpet Guild for the 35th Annual Conference of the International Trumpet Guild, 2010. The opera will be premiered by Opera Australia’s Assistant Music Director, Tony Legge (Director/Piano), Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra Principal Trumpet, Joshua Clarke (Gabriel), and members of the Opera Australia and Ballet Orchestra.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about this exciting project by reading this magazine. For additional information, scores, recording and performance information, please contact Beauport Press Music Publications by email at: mail@beauportpress.com.

I have had the pleasure of working closely with professional trumpet players for many years. In fact, I play the instrument myself. So, when Greg Wing responded to one of the article requests with the question:

“What one thing influenced you to pick the trumpet as your instrument?”

I just had to laugh out loud. Why was it so funny? Because, like so many people who choose to play the trumpet, I also had one of these stories!

I will never forget the day I decided to play trumpet. I was attending a musical my father was conducting and there, in the pit, was a trumpeter warming up. WOW! I was awestruck.

I watched him play the entire night. By the end of the show there was no doubt. I was going to play the trumpet!

I hope that you will enjoy other stories of how people fell in love with the instrument, including Greg’s! Look for them throughout this magazine.

- Robert J. Bradshaw



James, would you tell us about your education?

I attended Baldwin-Wallace College for my undergraduate studies. It had a strong Conservatory of Music and great teachers (many of whom were members of the Cleveland Orchestra). The school was just the right size for me, not too big, which aided in my development as a person. I was shy by nature, so I didn't want to be at a big school or large university. BW was excellent and I highly recommend it! I studied with Mr. James Darling of the Cleveland Orchestra (retired) and the late Mary Squire of the Ohio Chamber Orchestra.

I attended the Cleveland Institute of Music for my Masters degree. My teacher at BW, Mr. D, said "OK, where should I send you to school? Oh, I know, you are going to CIM!" I auditioned and ultimately studied for two years with Mr. Michael Sachs, principal trumpet of the Cleveland Orchestra.

Has your education influenced, or had a large impact on, your career?

Having a good education is of the utmost importance. At BW, I received a complete, well-rounded education. I studied music but I also took religious studies. My writing skills improved and I became more proficient in general education subjects as well. More than anything, this has helped me get to where I am today. Speaking primarily of the trumpet, I would say that where you go and who you study with has a

A CANDID INTERVIEW WITH

JAMES ACKLEY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF TRUMPET
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

HORNS

James performs on Yamaha trumpets. His Bb Trumpet is a Yamaha NY Artist Model and his C Trumpet is a Yamaha Chicago Artist Model.

I primarily perform on C Trumpet. I like that it sparkles a little more than Bb and the response is more immediate. I also hear in concert pitch. Performing on C trumpet facilitates playing for me, especially if transposing. Besides, who really wants to transpose in the key of E on a Bb trumpet! Not me.

My other horns are also made by Yamaha. I play the 9835 long bell piccolo trumpet. It has a very warm sound, yet has that sparkle and carrying power if needed for the orchestral playing. My Yamaha Cornet is an amazing instrument. I try to program it on recitals as much as possible. I also play on the Artist Model Eb and the Bobby Shew Flugelhorn.

*Yamaha's trumpets are expertly constructed, providing many options for different types of players. For me, they work extremely well, whether I'm playing as a soloist, an orchestral musician, in a Latin Salsa band or chamber music (usually, all on the C trumpet, of course). As a member of **Tromba Mundi**, an exciting new trumpet ensemble comprised of some of the top players/educators in the nation, I also use these trumpets to great success.*



tremendous impact on your progress as a trumpeter but more importantly as a musician. You want a great teacher that has a good track record, is performing, and is a true professional in every sense of the word. You want a teacher that is tough and demanding but can lend an ear and know how to steer your goals and fine tune them. You need a school that offers performance opportunities with

Does your study or preparation differ depending on what you will be performing?

My study remains the same no matter what. The only difference is, I may throw something into my daily study that directly relates to a problem I have with a particular solo, excerpt, etc. I pretty much practice the same types of things on a daily ba-

IT WAS THE SOUND. ONCE I HEARD IT, THERE WAS NO GOING BACK.

JAMES ACKLEY

excellent ensemble directors that are amazing musicians. You also want a trumpet studio that is competitive, with a track record of excellence. As a trumpeter, you will grow more within a great studio, with a great learning attitude, than anywhere else!

Do you ever speak with or contact people you studied with in college?

Yes, I'm still in contact with old college buddies and my teachers from time to time. Even if I don't see or hear from them in years, when we do get together it just clicks. Having people like that in your life is very pleasing. I remain very close with a few friends from school, speaking on a regular basis.

Any important professional experiences (and have those experiences shaped your playing)?

I have had SO many experiences I would say were important. I learn from every experience - what to do, what not to do; what to say, what not to say; how to play, how to avoid bad playing; everything. But I would say one of the most important was my experience abroad. It shaped me both as a person and as a player. I became more confident and I opened up as a person. This, in turn, really aided my playing. I am thankful for the experience, especially since I met my wife while I was away!

sis. The one thing that does change is the solos I work on, outside my daily routine. These include solos, excerpts, brass quintet pieces, et al. I practice these sorts of things VERY slowly and at half volume. I will practice this way until close to the performance, when I will then work on speed and the "performance" aspect of it, playing full volume when called for. Even then, I will go over certain things again and again, slowly and methodically. During the performance, whatever I am performing, I try to completely let go - I don't think about what I wanted to do in the practice room or how

I need to do something at that particular moment. I let it happen. At some point, you need to trust your instinct, your practice and study and let it all come out on its own. I just listen to my sound and adjust it with what is going on but I play along with the concept that happens simultaneously in my inner ear. It's hard to explain but suffice it to say, I don't think when I play - I listen and adjust. The thought went into it long before I began to perform.

For me it was hearing Al Hirt play the "Green Hornet" Theme and how impressed I was with the sound. I remember asking my dad, "Dad, what kind of instrument is that?" He said, "that's a trumpet son!". I replied, "Wow! I'd like to learn how to play that, Dad." The next week I had a Conn Director rental and a private lesson scheduled. That was 50 years ago.

- Greg Wing

You mentioned that your daily practice generally stays the same. Could you

tell us a little about your daily routine? What contributes most to your success as a trumpeter and professional musician?

My daily routine consists of various facets of playing: I start with a 15-30 minute warm-up. Any

more, in my mind, is not warming-up, it's practicing! I take a short break and then begin with simple tonguing exercises and scales. I work out of several different books and I don't play the same things everyday. I do, however, play scales everyday with different articulations - generally for the simple tongue. I then move to interval studies (wide leaps and skips). Afterwards, I play double and triple tongue exercises from the Arban book. Again, I probably don't play the same exercises everyday. For example, if flexibility is an issue that day, I may do more lip flexibility exercises.

Legato playing is next. I use the Rochut, Concone and any other lyrical etude book I can get my hands on. I go for the musical line and connection in between notes at this point. These are usually sight-read, and transposed, but I'm sure by now I have repeated many of them numerous times! Depending on whether it's a tough playing day or not, I will also practice range and power studies from the Stamp book, the Vizzutti books and other exercises I have collected over the years. This is the part of the daily routine, and the only part, that I actually play "loudly". Most of the time, I play at a comfortable mezzo-piano dynamic level.

And...I always use a metronome! My tuner doesn't come out until I am practicing something, although I will use a drone every now and again. Everything takes me around 45 minutes to an hour to do. I take a break of at least 30 minutes afterwards - although it's usually much more. Practice sessions are then scattered throughout the day, from 15 minutes to 45 minutes at a time. I try to record these as much as possible.

I wish I could practice at the same time everyday. But the reality of it is, it's hard to do with a family, teaching, performing, traveling, etc. There are days that I can't even play my daily routine! But, in general, I try to do it before I teach, in the morning around 7 or 8 am. I then practice throughout the day. If I'm teaching a lot that day, I may not practice much because I play a lot during lessons. In the evenings, when I don't have a concert, I like to play orchestral excerpts, solos, selected etudes, and sight-reading. Sometimes I record myself for review, other times I just have fun. Lately, I've been playing duets with my oldest son, Kevin, who just started the trumpet! We have another son who is younger, so perhaps at some point we'll do trios!

The things that contribute most to my success

would have to be hard work and peace of mind. I have other hobbies and I have my family to keep me well grounded. I try to have a good outlook on life and a healthy outlook on music. It's tough sometimes not to get too intense on myself, to expect too much. I've learned to practice hard and then to trust what I have done. I also think my religious faith has empowered me to do the best I can and to trust in what I cannot change (but, work on it at the same time).

How much time do you spend in rehearsals in addition to practicing and teaching?

MOUTHPIECES

Monette

James performs on Monette Prana Mouthpieces.

To be honest, I'm not much of an equipment junky. I like equipment as much as the next trumpet geek but if something is working I don't play around with it. Therefore, I haven't changed my equipment in years. This is especially true of my mouthpiece. I have been playing on Monette mouthpieces since 1994.

I began using the 1-5M series but as Dave Monette evolved in his design concepts, I changed to the Prana 1-5 series mouthpieces. Each mouthpiece is designed for the exact key of the instrument. This ensures pitch accuracy and a true ringing and resonant tone on each horn. To me, it's easier to play and produce what I hear internally - both musically and technically. That's what it's all about.

It's difficult to tell, really. Some weeks I can spend more than 20 hours in rehearsal. When this happens, I usually don't teach much! But a normal week is around 5-10 hours of rehearsals a week on top of teaching and practicing. It comes down to time management. You need to manage your time well and I try not to waste any.

That doesn't sound like you have very much non-trumpet time! What deeply motivates or inspires

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"I am always interested to see the process with which composers approach their work. I know many of Robert J. Bradshaw's compositions and they are always thoughtfully prepared and presented but, above all, are accessible to both performer and audience.

That is not to say that his music does not contain challenges for both, but on hearing or reading a Bradshaw piece, I am always struck with the impression that both performer and audience will enjoy the music and want to play or hear it again, as well as seek out his other works.

- Brian Evans

President, Australian Trumpet Guild
Director (2001-2007) and
Secretary (2007-2009)
International Trumpet Guild
Host ITG2010

Q. & A. WITH

ROBERT

J. BRADSHAW

COMPOSER OF THE NEW CHAMBER OPERA

.Gabriel

an opera by
Robert J. Bradshaw
for three voices, trumpet and orchestra
(or chamber ensemble)

commissioned by
Australian Trumpet Guild
for the 35th Annual Conference of the
International Trumpet Guild, 2010
 Sydney, Australia • Brian Evans, Host

to be premiered by
Tony Legge, Director (piano)
Joshua Clarke, "Gabriel" (trumpet)
and members of the **Australian**
Opera and Ballet Orchestra

recorded by
The Palmetto Camerata
featuring **James Ackley** (trumpet)
Tina Milhorn Stallard (soprano)

While preparing the **Sonata Premiere Project**, my emails and posts were met with curiosity, surprise and excitement. This new technology presented such a wonderful opportunity to connect in ways never before imagined. However, that initial excitement began to ebb almost instantly! By the time 2007 rolled around, I was hearing that people were getting tired of emails. Email boxes were being filled with every type of notification, advertisement and request imaginable. And then, as if by design, social networking sites began to take hold. Of course, several notable sites had been around for years but by 2009, millions of people were networking.

However, not everyone's experience was as positive as mine. While I was using the technology to connect with musicians, other people were getting into dangerous situations in chat rooms - being fooled by online personas that were hiding sinister intentions. While I was organizing performances and traveling to teach master classes about composition (all entirely organized online), I was watching shows about teens committing suicide because of statements made by peers on blogs. At the same time I was building my musical network, I was hearing about the pitfalls of cyberspace on the news. It all seemed so surreal. Arguments about application, file and audio sharing. Napster. MySpace. Hacking. Identity theft. Spamming. Phishing... where would it end?

Virtually every single bill we pay, or service we use, can be purchased online without ever speaking to a person. Just fill in the blanks, click the boxes and type in your credit card number. *Done.* Colleges are teaching classes over the Internet, sometimes with no in-person student/teacher contact at all. *Cost effective.* We pick movies through online services. *No more trips to the video store.* When traveling, we can video chat for free almost anywhere in the world! *Amazing.*

There is no doubt about it. Society likes technology. It makes life easier and I must say that I agree. Technology certainly makes my life easier. However, while I was working on ".Gabriel" I realized that I was becoming less patient when waiting in line or on hold. "Wouldn't it be much easier just to pick it up online?" I would ask myself.

A W
 ".GABRIEL"

Great. Then I could spend even more time working - at my computer, of course!

The power of the Internet is undeniable, virtually unregulated and growing at an unprecedented rate. It has quite simply become too big to be ignored.

- Robert J. Bradshaw

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What are the purely artistic and aesthetic goals of "Gabriel"?

What a wonderful way to begin! Let's take each term in turn. I am fascinated with the meaning of words and the English language, in general. Words play an important role in many of my compositions, whether or not the work includes lyrics.

Artistic is defined by Merriam-Webster as "showing imaginative skill in arrangement or execution". Although I believe it is for listeners to determine whether or not I have successfully reached a significant level of artistic achievement, or demonstrated imaginative skill in the execution of a particular composition, I will say that I take the art of composing very seriously. Music is not merely a part of my life but rather, it is so fundamentally integrated that it would be impossible to say where music ends and the rest begins. Virtually every aspect of my daily existence influences, or serves as inspiration for, my self-expression through the creation of music. Composition is not a job in the traditional sense. Yes, I have to earn a living by selling my works in order to support my family. And yes, I must find enough time to realize my ideas on paper so that they may be rehearsed and performed. However, composition is a great deal more than purely transcribing one's thoughts and selling the result.

I do not compose because I want to, I compose because I must. As all who know me can attest, I have no choice but to write down my thoughts. If anything interferes with this process, it affects me quite dramatically - almost like a bottleneck in a river. I can feel the music piling up, desperately trying to get out. I tend to develop an intense need to express it in order to make room for more. This flow of musical ideas is enhanced by daily experiences (musical or not). As a writer uses words, a ballerina uses movement, or a painter uses paint to express their inner feelings and views of the world, I use music. I'm sure most artists, regardless of genre or medium, readily understand this point of view.

As for the "execution" part of the definition, I have dedicated my life to the study of the art. I have earned degrees in theory and composition, but more importantly, not a day goes by where I am not listening, reading and studying music by other composers. I am fascinated by the construction of well-executed music - the study of which requires constant attention to the most minute detail and diligent exploration. Consequently, I cannot foresee a time when I will stop learn-

ing. There is simply too much wonderful music out there to listen to it all. I strive at all times to construct the most effective expression of my thoughts and emotions as possible regardless of tonality, form, ensemble, level or venue.

What about your aesthetic goals?

Merriam-Webster defines the word *aesthetic* as: "a particular taste for, or approach to, what is pleasing to the senses...."

Although I do not believe that all music, or any art for that matter, must be pleasing to be at the highest level of artistic endeavor, I certainly hope that the overall effect of *Gabriel* is a pleasing experience for both the audience and performers. It is true that the work is a tragedy but the experience can still be pleasing in the sense of entertainment.

Speaking of which, I must disagree with the now popular idea that art music should never be considered entertainment and that thinking of "serious" music in this way somehow demeans the art. Yes, I believe art music, and many other arts, represent something far greater than the most rudimentary interpretation of what popular culture deems entertainment. However, why would you attend a concert if it wasn't entertaining? Would you rather be bored or disinterested? No. You want to be entertained which, by the way, is defined as much more than just "amusement" or "enjoyment". Merriam-Webster also defines "entertain": "to keep, hold, or maintain in the mind" or "to receive and take into consideration". If that is entertainment, I want my music to always be entertaining!

Along the same line of thought, I do not equate the idea of "success" (as defined by financial gain or popularity) with artistic achievement. I have been blessed with works that have been commercially successful and others that have not. I do not alter my artistic goals based on my own, or anyone else's, financial successes or failures. There is something to be learned from all experiences. If this is forgotten, artistic goals are sacrificed in favor of commercialism or repetition. Although I do not condemn this path for those who choose to create for this purpose, I do not walk this path myself with my art music.

Why should opera companies, musicians and ultimately audiences be interested in "Gabriel"?

Because looking forward is just as important as looking back. I would ask that everyone give modern art music a



chance. I firmly believe, with the vast diversity of music, there is something out there for everyone. Not to mention, I feel it is our responsibility to support and nurture the arts. Living in the time of creation makes it impossible to deem works great or not. Think of how many times critics have been wrong in the past! Therefore, we should stop trying. Instead, we should embrace the new and explore it. If a new piece of art, from any genre, touches someone it's a success. Preventing new works from being performed, or always performing works from the past because it is safe, is of no interest to me. I want to see what is next. *Gabriel* is relevant, accessible and emotionally charged. I hope that these qualities will make a connection with those you have mentioned above and the work will see the bright lights of the stage!

In America, there is a common view that opera is for the elite or elderly. What makes this work appealing to a larger audience?

First off, let me state unequivocally that I do not share this admittedly widespread view of opera. I have always loved the art form and teach about it whenever possible. Interestingly, the majority of my students, regardless of their background, quickly grow to enjoy opera. This leads me to believe that the general public hasn't had enough exposure to the genre or haven't been introduced to it properly. Yes, there are some barriers to enjoying opera for the inexperienced but the rewards are great and I am willing to help anyone find the joy

in watching/listening to opera whenever possible. There are so many different types of opera and opera composers out there that I am sure everyone can find something they will enjoy. Hopefully *Gabriel* will help bridge that gap for some people.

As for the composition itself, the story is relevant, the tonality is accessible and its length is manageable for most audiences. Additionally, the staging (although simple) is very engaging.

Do you really believe this centuries old musical form can be relevant to 21st century audiences?

Absolutely! Opera has always dealt with both real and fanciful issues, albeit in a typically melodramatic way. Then again, what do we ever watch on TV, or in the movies, that isn't melodramatic (or as MW puts it "appealing to the emotions")? Modern opera is no different and this is exactly how it will relate to contemporary audiences.

As is common to opera, the situation that forms the basis of this story is rather outlandish. Principal is in a predicament much more serious than the vast majority of us will ever find ourselves - but the door is not closed on the possibility and that is what draws us in. Even if it is highly unlikely that someone would become this dependent on social networking sites, the possibility remains. The more that tech-

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Photograph by Emilio Mercado





BRIAN EVANS is Principal 3rd trumpet/cornet with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra and since joining the AOBO in 1975, he has played every chair in the section, covering a majority of the major opera and ballet repertoire. Brian has appeared as soloist with Gosford Philharmonia, Waverley Bondi Beach Band, Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic and Honolulu Community Concert Band. He toured China in 2006 and Europe in 2009 as featured soloist with the Hornsby Girls' High School band.

Brian Evans is a highly sought after teacher and clinician. His private studio (www.thebrassstudio.net/firms.com) can include as many as 24 students, ranging from beginners 4 years of age to post graduate. He has presented master classes and lectures at International Trumpet Guild (ITG) Conferences (2003, 2005 and 2009) and the Australian Trumpet Guild (ATG) 2004 conference as well as at the Beijing Central Conservatory (2006) and the China Trumpet Conference, 2008, where he was also a judge for the finals of the Asia, International Trumpet Competition. In May 2009 he presented lectures, master classes and recitals at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Wright State University and Ohio University. He is a regular contributor of brass and trumpet-related articles and interviews to journals including the ITG quarterly journal, ATG's Journal "Mouthpiece" and The Brass Herald.



In addition to his trumpet playing and teaching, Brian Evans has extensive experience as a classical singer (lyric tenor) and has performed both traditional and modern opera and oratorio with many companies in the Sydney Region, including Opera Australia and in the USA.

Brian Evans serves the ITG as director (2001-2007) and Secretary (2007-2011). He is founding President of the Australian Trumpet Guild, ITG's largest affiliate chapter and is the host of the 35th Annual ITG Conference, Sydney, July 6-10 2010.

ITG2010 will be a Festival of Firsts! There will be approximately two dozen premieres including the 2009 ITG Commission by Liza Lim to be performed by Tristram Williams (trumpet) and Peter Neville (percussion) during one of the two New music Recitals. In other sessions there will be first performances of works by Margery Smith (TrolCa) and Barry McKimm (US Professors' recital led by Alan Siebert). In a double first, ITG2010 will present ITG's first chamber opera with the world premiere performance of Robert Bradshaw's *.Gabriel*. Delegates will be able to delight in a full workshopping of *.Gabriel* followed immediately by its premiere, all with the participation of the work's creator.



JOSHUA CLARKE began his trumpet studies at the age of ten under the tutelage of Valentin Malkov (formerly principal with Leningrad Philharmonic). During Joshua's high school years he was accepted as a member of the Sydney Youth Orchestra and later was invited to perform with the SBS Youth orchestra, touring many countries and performing as a soloist. At the age of 16 he began studying with Gordon Webb (formerly principal with the London Philharmonic) and two years later, began a bachelor of music degree at the Sydney Conservatorium of music.

During this period, Joshua was given a scholarship to the Australian Academy of Music in Melbourne and was accepted as a founding member of the Sydney Symphony Sinfonia in which he successfully auditioned throughout the next three seasons. Working as a casual musician with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra as well as the Sydney Symphony Orchestra during his university studies, allowed Joshua a very rare exposure to professional music at an informative age. Having completed his Bachelor of Music Degree, Joshua moved to the Canberra School of Music (2001) where he completed a graduate degree under the guidance of Daniel Mendelow (currently principal with the Sydney Symphony).




Following his graduation, Joshua was accepted to attend a summer course in Banff called 'Forging a Career as a Soloist', and was accepted as one of only three brass players internationally.

Recently Joshua has continued to perform regularly with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Western Australian Symphony Orchestra, Oz Opera, the Philharmonia, the Canberra Symphony, Malaysian Philharmonic and as a guest principal trumpet with The Queensland Orchestra. Joshua has performed as a soloist with the Sydney Chamber Orchestra, is the Director of BrassFusion, and has become a proud founding member and soloist with the Australian Baroque Brass.

Relishing the challenges of teaching, Joshua is the founder and director of the New South Wales Academy of Music where he has established an extensive teaching studio and considers sharing his love of music with young people one of his true passions.

In 2007 Joshua achieved one of his life dreams and was appointed the Principal Trumpet position with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. Joshua is also proud to be sponsored as a Yamaha performing artist.

A close-up portrait of Tina Miller, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling slightly. She is wearing a dark blue or black top. The background is a dense thicket of green bamboo leaves and stalks, with some light filtering through. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting her features.

Photograph by Jeannie Kahle Brown

AN INTERVIEW WITH SOPRANO

TINA MILLER

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF VOICE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

What influenced you to become a vocalist?

I simply enjoy the act of singing, regardless of the venue. As a child, I would give sold-out “concerts” in my bedroom each night. At that time, I dreamed of being a country singer. I would play a cassette tape of my then-favorite performer, Barbara Mandrell, and pretend to be her on stage. As years passed, the performing venue changed from bedroom to church to the concert hall. To this day, I enjoy the act of singing, whether as a member of my church choir, singing a program for senior adults, or performing in a hall with orchestra. I appreciate the power of words and music to transport both the singer and listener to another place and time.

Where did you go to school?

When it was time to select a college, I wasn’t sure where to begin. Neither of my parents attended college, so the process was new to my family. At the suggestion of both my high school choral director and pastor, I selected Belmont University in Nashville. Initially, I was a church music major but I eventually received a degree in Music Education. I can’t say enough positive things about my time at Belmont. A small liberal arts school in the heart of Music City, Belmont has a fantastic music program. In those formative years, I was surrounded by talented and knowledgeable faculty who nurtured me musically and personally. Not only did I begin to establish a healthy vocal technique and improve my musicianship, I learned how to perform. In particular, my relationship with voice teacher and mentor Marjorie Halbert had a profound impact on me. Upon graduation, I knew I wanted to pursue a graduate degree in music but was not sure in which area I should focus. I have always had a strong interest in choral conducting and had studied conducting privately during my undergraduate years. As the singing voice needs to be nurtured while one is still young, I chose to pursue a master’s in voice

vocal development. At the time, I was a mezzo-soprano. As my voice continued to develop, my range extended. After a few years of young artist programs and educational tours, it was apparent that I needed to make the transition to soprano. I took some time off and began studying privately with Barbara Honn at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and later entered the DMA degree in Voice with a cognate in Choral Conducting. Needless to say, the conservatory environment sharpened my academic, musical and technical skills immensely. Barbara Honn is an extraordinary pedagogue. I am rather detail oriented and Barbara’s teaching style is very direct and deliberate, so we worked very well together. During my time with her, I became acutely aware of every nuance of my vocal technique, from the shape of my tongue, to the position of my soft palate, to specific tuning and placement within the resonating bodies. I also greatly benefited from the coaching staff at CCM, all of whom have unique strengths and styles. The degree is very intense, for which I am grateful. I know I am a better singer and teacher as a result.

Has your education influenced, or had a large impact on, your career?

I love the academic environment, particularly at the graduate level! The opportunity to focus solely

L H O R N S T A L L A R D

at the University of Kentucky. I had the privilege of studying with Stephen King (now at Rice University) who also took an interest in my personal and

on your craft is such a luxury. At no other time is one able to hone their skills with minimal distrac-

tions. In the formative years, the ability to have a weekly lesson with a teacher is invaluable, as the young singer is establishing a vocal technique and seeking consistency in the singing voice. Forming friendships with those in a similar set of circumstances is also refreshing and engaging. There is (usually) a healthy sense of competition that prompts one to work a bit harder. It can be a

DEGREES

The Voice Department at USC offers the following degrees:

Bachelor of Music in Performance
Bachelor of Music in Music Education
Bachelor of Arts in Music
Music Minor
Master of Music in Performance
Master of Music in Opera Theater
Graduate Certificate in Voice
Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance

The curriculum includes courses in diction, vocal pedagogy, vocal coaching, opera history and song literature.

time of great humility as well, as your “competitors” are also those encouraging you to succeed. I am so fortunate to have received a phenomenal education. While it is impossible to define exactly how my education has shaped my career, I am confident that I would not be successful today without my combined educational experiences.

Could you tell us a little about your daily routine? Do you practice at the same time every day? What types of exercises do you like to use? Do you practice all at one time or throughout the day?

With a full-time university teaching position, I have had to learn how to manage my voice usage in order to sing and teach effective-

ly. I try to spend a short period of time vocalizing before I teach each morning. This enables me to prepare my voice for a long day of speaking ahead. I try to be aware of my volume, pitch and rate of speech, so that I am using my speaking voice in a healthy manner. What works best for me is to teach for a few hours in the morning, then take a long lunch break, during which time I practice. In the late afternoon, after I’ve finished teaching, I have a bit more time to rehearse before going home. In the evenings, I often do my “kitchen table” work—translating, research, interpretation, etc.

The German soprano and teacher Lille Lehman stated, “There is no art without technique.” What a true statement! I am a firm believer in vocalizes, as they are the foundation of technique. I feel it is important to exercise the entire instrument every day, even if the literature I am singing has a somewhat limited range. I begin by ensuring that my breathing mechanism is functioning properly. While I do not have an ordered set of vocalizes, I begin in the middle voice, then gradually extend to the extremes of the range. My exercise regimen contains a variety of melodic shapes, rhythms, registers and articulations. I make a conscious effort to contrast exercises--staccato and legato, fast and slow, high and low. The Italian term *chiaroscuro* refers to the ideal balance of light and dark, or “ping” and warmth, within a tone. Similarly, I feel the voice is well-balanced when it is capable of a myriad of gestures and articulations.

Though delivery of the text is vital to successful singing, when working on new repertoire, text is the last thing I add to the equation. I begin with rhythm. I am a rare singer that actually uses a metronome. While I do not promote rigidity in the vocal line, it is imperative to have a firm grounding in the rhythm prior to making choices regarding phrasing. Singers are notorious for being behind the baton! Learning a piece with the metronome (*come scritto*) is the first step toward a successful collaborative performance. I typically learn the melody on various vowel sounds and eventually “scat” the line with nonsense syllables prior to adding text. This enables me to obtain a sense of musical phrasing and utilize various vowels and articulators. Once rhythm and melody are in place, I add text and begin shaping phrases in earnest. I speak the text quite a bit, which aids in achieving natural inflection, color and resonance. By the time the individual components are combined, the piece is practically performance ready. My goal is for a performance to appear effortless to the audience and this methodical approach serves me well.

What deeply motivates or inspires you to keep singing and to always strive to get better?

Great question! For me, it is a matter of faith and upbringing. Singing is a God-given talent. It is my responsibility to faithfully nurture that talent through diligent study and practice and use it in a manner that is glorifying to God. I grew up in a “do it right the first time” and “always do your best” atmosphere, so it is in my nature to strive for excellence in all endeavors. Randy Adams, my high school choral director to whom I am deeply indebted, had a motto that he also instilled in me: “Take what you have, do something with it, and never be satisfied.”

them in a long while. I have been very blessed at USC to meet some extraordinary musicians who have become good friends as well. We have more than music in common; we share interests and ideals. Now that many of us have become parents, we enjoy catching up while our children play together.

Part of the joy of music making is the collaborative nature of the art form. It is the combination, not only of instruments and voices, but also individual personalities that make the interpretation and

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- TINA MILHORN STALLARD

What goes through your mind when you perform?

In an ideal setting, I am solely focused on the text. Preparation is paramount to successful performing. If I have done my job properly, I should be so well prepared that I give the majority of my attention to extra-musical factors, such as vocal color, interpretation, etc. Of course, there are always moments where one must focus on the ensemble or technical aspects but the voice is a vehicle for the text and its delivery should be of utmost importance in performance.

Do you have music colleagues with whom you feel a strong personal connection, beyond your professional work? What makes these connections special to you?

Absolutely. There are a number of folks from college through professional work that remain some of my closest friends. They are the type of comfortable relationships in which you can pick up right where you left off—even if you haven’t seen or spoken to

performance of a work unique. Call it chemistry, if you will. My favorite performance memories throughout my musical life—from high school to present—are those involving dear friends who helped to shape not only the artistic work, but my personal enjoyment of the experience. Generally speaking, musicians are a gregarious lot. The recording sessions for *Gabriel* were so much fun, thanks to the playful nature of all involved. (Some of the outtakes could end up on late night television!)

Do you have time in your schedule to attend concerts besides the ones in which you are performing?

Not as often as I would like. Of course I attend student and facul-

ty recitals and choral/opera performances at USC. My husband and I also try to attend the local music theatre productions in Columbia. I used to attend everything, then I had a child. Nathan is a music lover and, though he's only two and a half, we are exposing him to live performances. He recently had a grand time at a percussion ensemble concert and sat quietly and attentively during a dress rehearsal for a production of *The Light in the Piazza* in which I was performing. As his attention span expands, so will my concert attendance.

entitled *Songs of Time and Tide*. As Lynn and I were both new mothers, the texts (by Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore) revolve around motherhood and children. It is a fantastic work and I encourage other sopranos to program it on recitals.

I enjoy the challenge presented by new music. Certainly some new music contains musical challenges, which I find quite engaging, but I also relish the task of breathing life into something new. It is special (and quite humbling) to work directly with the composer on a new work. While musicians should always strive to adhere to the composer's intentions, the onus is even greater when in the presence of the composer.

Let's talk about recording "Gabriel". How challenging is it to interact with the character "Gabriel"?

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- TINA MILHORN STALLARD

There is such a wealth of wonderful music that has been written for voice, what role does new music play in your musical life?

The amount of vocal music in existence is mind-boggling; one cannot even scratch the surface in a lifetime. I am a big proponent of new vocal music. I often program newer works along with standard recital repertoire, and also present programs featuring solely music by Living American Composers. My doctoral dissertation focused on several song cycles by Libby Larsen. In addition to Larsen's music, I have performed a lot of Lori Laitman's songs. In 2007, John Fitz Rogers wrote a lovely cycle for me and pianist Lynn Kompass

Robert's vision for the work is that the characters do not actually interact with each other physically. This helps portray the isolation in which Principal lives. Her relationships are primarily via internet, so ideally, a scrim serves as the computer screen behind which the other characters are revealed. The difficulty lies within interpretation. Gabriel has purposefully been portrayed as an enigmatic figure. Never is the true identity or spirit of Gabriel revealed. The listener must devise his/her own interpretation of the libretto and music. Likewise, it is incumbent upon me to infer text to the trumpet line for the dialogue between Principal and Gabriel throughout the score.

How would you describe the vocal line, in regards to shape, tessitura, and range?

The part is well written for the soprano voice. Neither extreme of the range is tested and the tessitura is quite comfortable. There are a number

of rhythmic and melodic themes throughout the opera that appear in both instrumental and vocal parts. In my preparation of the role, I found the return of these motives imparted a musical grounding. As the piece primarily is not tonal, the motives served to tonicize certain sections for me. Though challenging tonally, the singer is able to reference pitches harmonically without much difficulty.

Considering how well known the great operas of the past are, how do you interpret new works not having heard or studied them before?

I enjoy the freedom and creativity afforded to me by working on a new piece. When singing standard operatic repertoire, there is a certain expectation in the ear of the listener (and performer) based on performance practice and a myriad of available recordings. While it is certainly convenient to study a piece by logging onto YouTube or Naxos and hearing multiple recordings by well-established artists, there is something special about being in uncharted territory. It may take longer to prepare, but I am partial to preparing a piece without the ghosts of performances past ringing in my ears.

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Active as a concert artist, soprano Tina Milhorn Stallard has performed solos in works such as Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Haydn's *The Creation*, Bach's *St. John Passion*, Poulenc's *Gloria* and Handel's *Messiah*. She has performed with the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra, Johnson City Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, South Carolina Philharmonic Orchestra, Bowling Green Western Symphony and the University of Arkansas Orchestra. Most recently, Stallard appeared as Margaret Johnson in Opera at USC's production of *The Light in the Piazza*. Her opera credits include roles in *Così fan tutte*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Little Women*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Crucible* and the Italian premiere of *Casanova's Homecoming*. She has sung with Opera Omaha, Central City Opera, Opera Theatre of Lucca (Italy), Cincinnati Opera, Kentucky Opera and The Palmetto Opera. As part of the cultural prelude to the 2008 Summer Olympics, Stallard performed the soprano solos in Vivaldi's *Gloria* with the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra and members of the Beijing National Ballet Orchestra. A frequent recitalist, Stallard has presented programs in Puerto Rico, Hawaii, New York, Indiana, Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Tennessee and throughout South Carolina. In 2010, Stallard will join the faculty of the Varna (Bulgaria) Music Academy.

Stallard also serves as a clinician and researcher, with special interests in the music of living American composers and voice pedagogy. She has written a chapter on Libby Larsen to be published in a book on 21st Century Women Composers (Scarecrow Press). Stallard premiered Lori Laitman's song cycle *The Perfected Life* at the 2008 College Music Society National Conference (Atlanta). Later that year, she premiered *Songs of Time and Tide*, a cycle of songs written for her by composer John Fitz Rogers. 2010 performances include recitals of American music in Bulgaria, recitals in Texas, the premiere of William Averitt's *The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ According to St. Matthew* in Memphis, TN, new music concerts in Palm Beach, FL and numerous chamber music concerts in the Columbia area.

Stallard won the Annemarie Gertz Prize in the national finals of The Artist Award Auditions of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, was district winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, semi-finalist of the Eleanor McCollum Competition sponsored by Houston Grand Opera, and winner of the Grace Moore Vocal Competition. She holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and is an alumnus of the University of Kentucky (Haggin Fellow) and Belmont University. She is a student of master teachers Barbara Honn and Stephen King. She is Assistant Professor of Voice at the University of South Carolina, where she teaches applied voice and vocal pedagogy.

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you to keep playing and to always strive to get better on the trumpet?

I try to make time off the horn as much as I can. I will practice early or late depending on family obligations, so I can have that time with family. I also try to take off one day a week. That's usually on Sundays. This helps me stay fresh and rested. Mentally, it's beneficial if I can take some time off. It's during this time that I'm the most motivated. The trumpet is never far from my mind, I'm always thinking about how to improve, how to teach a certain student, performances coming up, etc... I also listen to many wonderful musicians - classical and non-classical. I love Latin music and listen to it regularly. I also love orchestral music and listen to it on a daily basis. This is all the inspiration I seem to need! I just love what I do. Sometimes, I can't believe they actually pay me to do this!

When you are playing, do you think about these things? What goes through your mind as you are performing?

Sound. Sound goes through my mind while I'm performing. I take it from there but sound is my primary concern from the first note to the last, from the beginning of the note to the end and from the beginning of a phrase to its conclusion. I listen for my sound quality and how it fits with the ensemble. I adjust

intonation and phrasing along with the ensemble. I try very hard to incorporate what I do with the

ensemble. I honestly do not think as I play - not in the way you would think about an algebra equation or directions when you are driving. It's all based on sound and "feeling" (music making) rather than analytical thought. I constantly tell myself and my students, get to the place where you exude music and not questions. Playing is much more enjoyable and consistent this way. For me, the analytical side comes before and after I play, not while I'm playing.

Musicians tend to work many extra hours in their week and you are obviously no exception! How do you balance artistic fulfillment with paying the bills and making time for your family?

I allow my wife to determine that. Sometimes I get a little crazy and my wife lets me know when to cool things down! No, really. Sometimes you get lost in it all. It's very easy to do. I am lucky I have someone in my life that understands what I do and reminds me of my other obligations! Any time on the horn is fulfillment, so it's more about what I do off the horn!

My parents believed that music was an important part of our education growing up and made my brother and I choose an instrument. My older brother, Todd Boren, chose the trumpet and, being the stereotypical younger brother, I had to do what he did. I would hear him practicing in his room, and I would knock on his door to bug him until he let me play too. He showed me how to play my first notes. The irony is that, although he appreciates listening to music, he hated playing the trumpet and then had to listen to me practice all those years later! I am so glad he decided to humor his little brother by letting me play his trumpet!

Gary "Chip" Schutza, Principal Trumpet of the Kansas City Symphony, was my first private lesson teacher and was the person who inspired me to pursue trumpet/music as a career. He has been a big influence in my playing and I am very grateful for all the extra lessons and time he spent with me. Chip is a very musical trumpet player and he taught me a tremendous amount about musical style and phrasing.

There are, of course, many other teachers who have influenced me throughout my career as a student and a professional. I am very grateful for their patient guidance and persistent encouragement. As a teacher now, I appreciate everything they did for me more and more each day. Even now, I have colleagues, mentors, friends, family, etc. who I learn from, draw inspiration from, and receive guidance from every day.

- Mark Boren

It's hard to explain the nature of the trumpet community (and the music community in general) to people who aren't musicians. Do you have music

colleagues with whom you feel a strong personal connection, beyond your professional work? What makes these connections special to you?

Seeing and hearing the excitement and showmanship of Maynard Ferguson in a mall parking lot when I was a freshman in high school (after having played for 4 years) was one of the main things that influenced my decision to major in music and become a professional musician.

- Peter J. Wood

I am lucky to have several people in the business that have mentored me and have been close friends throughout my career. There are people that I never took a lesson with, that have been and remain very influential in my musical life. Gene Young, a former trumpet player/teacher and now a conductor at Peabody, has been a musical confidant and friend. His musical talent is amazing and I have a "lesson" every time we talk on the phone. Alan

I picked the trumpet at the start of 5th grade, as my parents wanted me to join the 5th grade band. My parents had played in band during their school years and actually met each other while in high school marching band. They had their old instruments and the choice was flute or trumpet - so I picked the trumpet!

- Joseph Bowman

Siebert, the trumpet professor at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, has been a great friend and mentor through the years. I also share a connection with past colleagues. There are several more instances, but in each, we share a love and respect

for the art and everything it takes to get to that level of performance that we all strive for. Also, it's not just music and trumpet, but often politics, religion, and sports, among other things, that tie us to each other as human beings - the intrinsic points of life. Looking back over the years and the present, I have truly been blessed with friends, colleagues and family that go beyond the call of duty.

Do you have time in your schedule to attend concerts besides the ones in which you are performing?

MUTES

James uses many different brands of mutes but he favors Trumcor whenever possible.

As a member of Tromba Mundi, I am sponsored by Trumcor mutes. Their sound is pure and the playing ability is unprecedented. They have several straight mutes to choose from, as well as various styles of cup mutes. The new "bowl" mute is fantastic - an aluminum cup provides a full, free-blowing sound. Truly an amazing company with exceptional mutes.



I may use different mutes for different situa-

At times, yes. I even take my family to concerts. We make it a family night out. Listening to live music is inspiring and educational. There is no substitute.

What are your thoughts on the ever-changing state of the music industry? Does popular culture affect the number and quality of students attending university who are majoring in trumpet?

Like the question suggests, this business is always changing. However, there will always be quality students. If you look at recent audition activity in orchestras, important artists emerging from the jazz world, and the exceptional studio talent from

the movie music industry, you notice that there are even more great players surfacing today. There will always be great players and great students. Music is too important, touching so many people in a variety of ways, that I don't ever see that changing.

Why are Haydn and Hummel trumpet concertos still so performed? Aren't there other works out there for trumpet players to play?

The simple answer would be because they are great pieces of music. But, they also represent literature from an era from which we do not have many works. These two pieces are historic. In fact, they were written for the same person, Anton Weidinger, who was playing a revolutionary trumpet (chromatic) at the time. Although there are many works in our literature (especially from the 20th century), these two concerti remain staples of our repertoire - often as an indication of a player's musical and technical proficiency.

What type of music do you program on recitals? Do you program new works or primarily staples of the literature?

I program many different types of music. Personally, I try to either premiere a newly composed work, or play a work I have never seen or heard of before, on every recital. For my undergraduate students, we stick mainly to well-known compositions from the standard trumpet literature. At the graduate level, I am much more relaxed about repertoire choices.

We all frequently hear, in the news, that classi-

cal music is dead. And yet there is a tremendous amount of art music being studied and performed at institutions all over the world. Do you see classical music as a "museum art"? Should classical music reflect current trends in order to remain relevant?

Music will never be dead. Classical music doesn't seem to be enjoyed by the public at large until later in life, but I don't see so much of a decline in attendance as to be alarmed. I've heard this for years but don't see this trend. What I do see is orchestras and other groups being innovative in their programming, reaching out to a wider range of people. I don't see classical music as "museum music", but I do believe current trends ultimately affect every aspect of our life and music is just another aspect that it touches. Trends might be fleeting or possibly create something completely new - time will tell, I guess.

Do you have any final comments you would like to share with everyone?

One final word of advice: As a self proclaimed trumpet geek, I'm always interested in the newest gadget, the latest model of trumpet, the newest mouthpieces, etc. It's all good and fun, and it peaks my child-like interest, whether I'm into it or not. But the best advice given to me by both

James Darling and Mike Sachs (former teachers), is that no matter what, nothing replaces hard work. This often comes with sacrifice and a never die attitude. The old saying, "You didn't chose music, music chose you!" is not far from the truth.

Originally, tenor horn (or peck horn) picked me on the first day of high school (7th grade - 1966). Later that year, it was clear that we would need cornet players as we were losing 7 senior players, including my brother who played lead cornet. Cornet in the band at school meant trumpet in the orchestra. Moving to soprano cornet that next year, helped the learning curve and by my third year at high school (aged 14) I was lead cornet in the band, 1st trumpet in the orchestra and 2nd chair solo cornet in the state D grad champions (Waverley Band). It just seemed the right thing for me to do and I enjoyed the roles that came with the instrument. People saw something in what I was doing, despite not having a private teacher until year 11, so they kept encouraging me. In fact, I was determined NOT to become a trumpet geek when I was in HS (it was a "hobby"). However, in recent years and since becoming a card carrying member of that club, I know it is probably the best thing that a trumpet player can do if they really want to improve and succeed. Ending up playing trumpet as a career for the past 36 years seems at times to be accidental. It is not the path I set out on in 1966.

- Brian Evans

If music chose you, the talent is there. Besides, we are not in this business to become wealthy. Rather, we are in the business because it brings fulfillment into our lives. Music, like love, is one gift from God that is universal and doesn't have boundaries. It brings joy to both the performer and the listener, regardless of race or affiliation. Hard work and determination are the keys to success in this business, more so than tricks or gimmicks. Find what works and stick with it. And when you dream, dream big. That's what we're here for! Now, go and get the job you want.

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Classical trumpeter, James Ackley, is a native of Cincinnati, Ohio and an internationally acclaimed trumpet solo artist with numerous appearances that have included orchestras, wind ensembles and chamber groups that have spanned the globe. Ackley has frequently performed as a recitalist throughout North America, South America, and Europe. On a tour through Venezuela, critics described him as "one of the best trumpet players in the world." The Hartford Courant described him as, "a true artist" and the Free Times called James "one of the nation's top trumpeters." James Ackley is currently under Andes International Management.

Ackley received his B.M. from Baldwin-Wallace College Conservatory of Music and his M.M. from the Cleveland Institute of Music. Former teachers include Michael Sachs, James Darling, Mary Squire and Eugene Blee. Currently, Ackley is Associate Professor of Trumpet at the University of South Carolina School of Music after holding the same position at the University of Connecticut for six years prior. Formerly principal trumpet and soloist of the Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra, Ackley has previously held positions as principal trumpet with other orchestras throughout Mexico, the United States and South America. Since 2007, he holds the position of principal trumpet with the Augusta Symphony Orchestra, an orchestra he has already performed with as soloist on various occasions, most recently performing F.J. Haydn's coveted Concerto for Trumpet in Eb during the 2008-2009 Masterworks program.

Ackley has had the opportunity to work with musicians such as Francisco Rettig, Enrique de Patron, Plácido Domingo, Fito Paez, Eddie Martinez, Arturo Marquez, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon, James Levine, Zubin Mehta, Leonard Bernstein, Christoph Eschenbach, Louis Lane, Jesus Lopez-Cobos, and Jahja Ling,

among others. He has collaborated with notable modern composers such as Karim Al-Zand (*Concertino for Trumpet and Orchestra*), Robert J. Bradshaw (*Sonata for Trumpet*) and Cherilee Wadsworth-Walk-

I was listening to a University of Florida basketball game on the radio, heard an instrumental thing with a basketball cheer and said, "What's that instrument? That's what I want to play. I like that sound." I had not been exposed to classical, jazz, band, or much of anything else before that but when I heard that basketball "Go 'Gators" cheer, I knew trumpet was the instrument for me.

- Paul Kurtz

er (*Suite for Unaccompanied Trumpet*); performing Bradshaw's Sonata at the 2004 International Trumpet Guild Conference (which he recorded on his **Recital Music for Trumpet** album) and Al-Zand's *Concertino* at Carnegie Hall. Ackley has appeared as a guest artist on the "Music for Everyone" program of the Bogotá Philharmonic and on several national television programs in the countries of Colombia, Paraguay, Venezuela, Ecuador and Mexico. He has recorded with several orchestras, most notably the Grammy Award winning orchestra, the Bogotá Philharmonic, as well as numerous television, radio and movie scores. His two solo recordings, **Recital Music for Trumpet** (2007 Claronade Records) and **Lirico Latino: songs for trumpet** (2008 MSR Classics) have both received critical acclaim. As a founding member of Tromba Mundi, an exciting new trumpet ensemble, they have just released their first CD under the MSR Classics label (2009).

Ackley maintains an active performance schedule, performing solo recitals, concerts and clinics throughout the U.S. and abroad. His musical arrangements are exclusively published under the editorial visages of Cimarron Music Press and AK Brass Press. He is a Yamaha Performing Artist, performing exclusively on Yamaha trumpets. James joined the Yamaha team in 2008.

nology dominates our lives, the more we lose control of our surroundings. We don't have to wait until we see someone, or can reach them on the phone (which is also becoming instant). We can fire off an email immediately with no time to think about the situation or to cool off. This fast-paced connection to everyone may not always prove to be the best solution. Before I send an email I always remind myself that it is much easier to tidy your house for a visitor than to control who reads what you send over the Internet.

Society, in general, is fascinated with watching people (in this case, Principal) live the human problem. Will we, as a world community, grow more humane in the new millennium? Will the Internet and technology bring us closer together or drive us farther apart? It's impossible to know. What we do know is that the Internet is filled with both wonderful and horrible information. The most abhorrent human behaviors and beliefs can be disseminated instantly throughout the entire world right along with the most benevolent. Will it be the good or the bad that takes permanent hold? We will have to wait and see.

Let's shift our focus to the work itself. It is very special to have a composition performed by members of such a prestigious organization. Are you excited about the upcoming premiere?

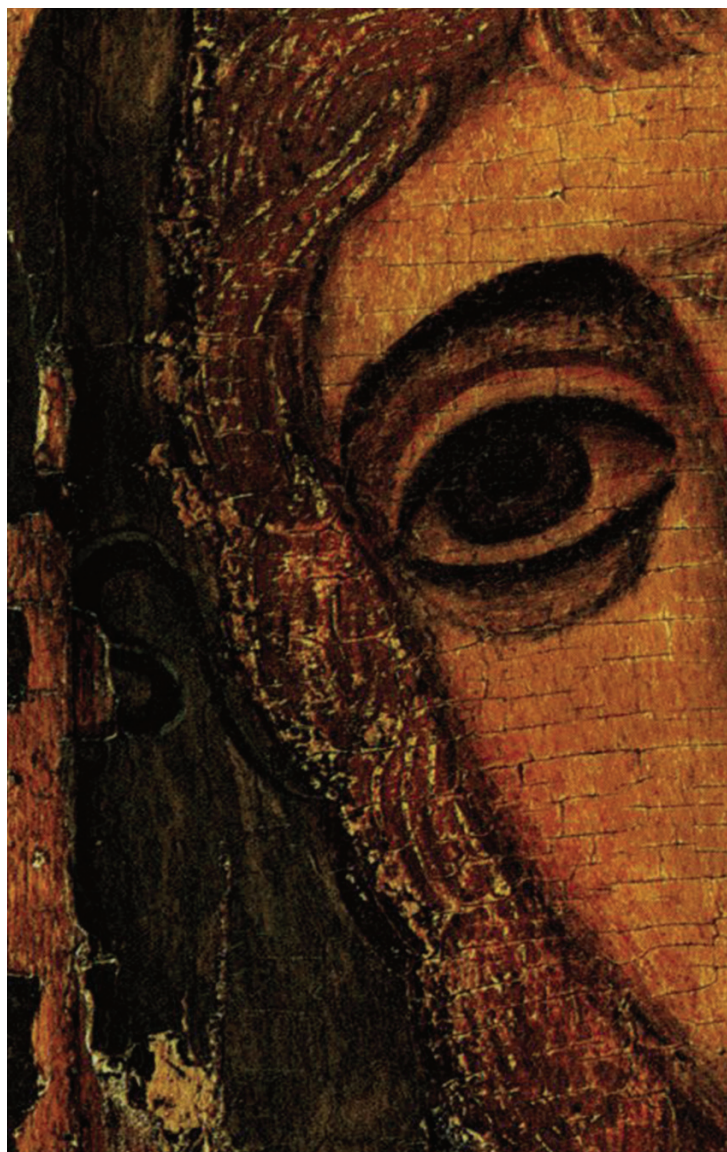
Yes, of course! I am honored to have the opportunity to work with Tony Legge (Assistant Music Director of Opera Australia). He has an unparalleled understanding of the operatic tradition and extensive experience working with British and European opera companies. Joshua Clarke (Principal Trumpet, Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra) also brings a wealth of both performance and theatrical experience. I look forward to our collaborating on the premiere of *.Gabriel*, expanding my own operatic and musical experiences through my contact with Mr. Legge, and I am especially looking forward to hearing Mr. Clarke bring the character Gabriel to life on stage.

I am also very grateful to Brian Evans (Host, ITG2010) for making this commission and premiere possible. It is not easy to stage an opera and the conference has a great many more events than just this one. I am amazed at how efficiently he has directed the organization of the conference and I am thankful for his hard work. Without Brian, and his support of new music, this would never have been possible. Thank you, Brian!

Please, introduce the readers to ".Gabriel."

.Gabriel is a chamber opera designed to be staged or for concert performance. Even a fully staged production would only require basic lighting, projection, sets and props. The characters are Gabriel (the trumpeter), Principal (soprano), Memories I and II (which can be performed by several different voice types). The pit consists of either chamber orches-

tra or small chamber ensemble. The instrumentation for the premiere and recording is clarinet, viola, bassoon and piano. Great care was taken to both effectively present the work and to make it performable without requiring unreasonable resources.



The complete work is approximately one hour in length. It is divided into two continuously performed acts that are subdivided into twelve short scenes - two orchestral movements, solo arias for Gabriel and Principal as well as duets and ensembles.

What is ".Gabriel" about?

.Gabriel is an allegory for society's increasing perception of connection to the world through the Internet, while in actual fact separating ourselves from physical interaction. The false

perception of safety and protection (and ultimate isolation) of electronic relationships promotes posting statements or images people would never consider saying (or doing) in person. Although Principal, the main character, interacts with the other members of the cast, they never come in contact with each other. A scrim represents the physical barrier



(the computer screen) that separates Principal from the living world around her.

The main character, Principal, represents society's dependency on the Internet, computers and electronic communication. We can't live without it - or so we think. *Gabriel* does not condemn technology. Certainly not. Technology is an integral part of modern life and it helps us all in many ways. However, I have been wondering, "Why are we so open with what we share online?" In times past, it would have been entirely inappropriate to do or say things that now seem not

only to be okay but commonplace online. In fact, much of what is posted is still considered inappropriate when spoken in person.

The opera is about Principal's struggle to cope with living in both real and virtual worlds - and ultimately having to make a choice between the two. When we first meet Principal, she is having an argument with Gabriel. Principal is adamant that she will not do what Gabriel is asking of her but the listener does not know what that request is. The first of two Memories appears, representing both the spirit of positive social interaction and perspective. He wants her to go out but she refuses. Memory I remembers nights on the town as fun and exciting while Principal feels differently. She withdraws and tells Gabriel how sad she is and that she doesn't understand people's obsession with watching or talking about others who are in pain. Gabriel interrupts and she becomes very angry. At that moment, a second memory surfaces, representing situations where we are forced to interact with people in person. Again, she is urged to go out and engage life beyond her computer but she can't. She is becoming reclusive.

The second half begins with Principal's seclusion. Gabriel is still hopeful but that hope is fading. She questions Gabriel, "Why are you here?" We begin to see another side of our main character. Even though she is connected to a large network of friends, she feels isolated and alone, revealing she is very glad Gabriel has come to see her. The reverie is interrupted by one last attempt to rouse her to action. She is assaulted from every direction by memories and persistently fights back until she finally realizes that the world of the Internet is equally dangerous, filled with just as much sadness, and fraught with just as many problems as the real world that she has tried so hard to shut out. In a fit of rage she makes her decision and Gabriel is left alone.

What led you to choose the name "Gabriel"? And if you never really see Gabriel, who is he?

That's the question, isn't it? This idea is at the very core of the libretto. I prefer to allow the listener to make up their own mind as to who or what the character represents. Here is an excerpt from the program notes addressing this point: *Gabriel, the character, is an enigma. Is Gabriel an angel sent to bring our distraught main character a message of hope and peace - guiding Principal's desperate search for acceptance and happiness? Is Gabriel Principal's conscience - interjecting reason and sanity into her increasingly reclusive thoughts? Does Gabriel represent Principal's communication through email, chat rooms, blogging and video conferencing? Or is Gabriel a figment of her imagination - a childhood imaginary friend reappearing in her hour of need and solitude? Although the structure and meaning of the work were carefully crafted, I prefer to allow the listener to determine for themselves what motivated its creation. Thus, the question remains. Who is Gabriel? Can you hear Gabriel's message? What is Gabriel saying to you?*

Are you commenting on the idea of constant connectedness and that it is actually driving us farther and farther apart instead of bringing us together?

At times. I think the heart of the matter is we all need relationships. People are, for the most part, very social. Unfortunately, we are so busy that the social aspect of our lives frequently gets driven lower and lower on our list of priorities. For years, television provided us with some of the connectedness we long for. However, the Internet is so much more. It's interactive! The success of social networking sites comes as no surprise. Instead of hearing sound bites about people we don't know, we can get "news feeds" right from

placing actual human interaction. It is so easy to check your email or a web site. It takes much more effort to visit a friend or attend an event. Someone recently said that instead of attending a concert with me they would, "...just dial it up on YouTube." But the event was in the town where he lived and it was free! And I know, from speaking with this person after the performance, that he spent the evening on the computer and watching television. He even said that he had been bored! I hope that is not the way of the future - an enormous world for viewing at our fingertips, from the confines of our tiny little room. Sounds like a dark, futuristic science fiction movie.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK BRIAN EVANS (HOST, ITG2010) FOR SCHEDULING THE PREMIERE OF ".GABRIEL". IT IS NOT EASY TO STAGE AN OPERA AND THE CONFERENCE HAS MANY MORE EVENTS THAN JUST THIS ONE. I AM AMAZED AT HOW EFFICIENTLY HE HAS DIRECTED THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE AND I AM GRATEFUL FOR HIS HARD WORK. WITHOUT BRIAN, AND HIS SUPPORT OF NEW MUSIC, THIS WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE. THANK YOU!

- ROBERT J. BRADSHAW

our friends' daily lives. No matter where they may be, or how much distance separates us, we know exactly what they are doing. Couple that with the ability to update your own information and the level of connectedness is remarkable.

There is one major exception: When you post, you aren't actually addressing anyone, you are addressing everyone. I have found this to be a very common misconception on social sites. I have even heard people say, "I don't know why he posted that. I wasn't talking to him." But of course, you were talking to him and everyone else that is your network "friend." And, in some ways this is a very lonely concept. Broadcasting is not the same as interacting.

The inspiration for .Gabriel lies in this gray area between connecting and relying. I see nothing wrong with using the Internet to build relationships. I do it all the time and am fascinated by the technology. The concern comes when someone begins to rely on technology for their relationships, re-

The subject matter of this work is obviously current and something that most people have familiarity with. How do you incorporate technology into the work?

As a matter of fact, there is no use of technology in the acting of the work at all. The composition is about the undeniable draw or lure of social networking sites, not the actual use of them. If news reports are to be believed, the need to constantly post your "status", or read about what other people are doing, pulls at people so much that some are less productive at work, ignore teachers during class and are tied to their handheld devices and phones. I have witnessed all of these things regularly and used them as the basis of the opera. Principal is always turning to her computer. Every spare moment is spent logging on and reading what is happening in her small (although she believes large) world. It is a subtle mannerism that is so common in all of our lives I expect most people won't even pay attention to it during the performance.

Who wrote the libretto?

Although I wrote the libretto, it was inspired by real life: actual online experiences with social networking web sites, instant messaging, chat rooms and email correspondence; and comments made by people in my circle of friends, family and colleagues. I spent years paying attention to how people interacted with me and others on and off line and this formed the basis of the libretto. It is both very straight forward and complex at the same time, much like spending time online. Although most of the conversation seems commonplace, we are continually dropped right into the middle of something with no warning or resolution, just like surfing the web. You never know what you will see or hear next.

Should we watch what we say around you? Might we become a character in one of your future works?

No, of course not. I simply relied on a lesson I learned many years ago in Creative Writing class: "Write what you know." So, I did. My life as a composer is intimately tied to technology and the Internet. I live in the world of cyberspace and found it interesting to step back and try to look at the experience objectively. Sometimes, it wasn't a very pretty sight!

We, meaning society in general, used to go outside and play a game, read a book, turn on the television or go to a movie or show to escape reality. Now we are beginning to hide in the mundane world of hourly posts. Frequently, I see posts like "I'm late. Spent too much time on FB." But what are we really spending time reading? Much of the information we are inundated with these days is really quite useless. Sherlock Holmes (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle) said, "I consider that a man's brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose....It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones." Yet, this is exactly what we are doing every time we log onto our computers. Do we really need to fill our "attic" with posts like, "I'm having coffee in the kitchen."? No, not really.

But then again, it's not about the post at all. Unlike watching a news broadcast where we are told what is going on, this experience is interactive and we are not only broadcasting but trying to illicit a response. The responses I saw to the statement above were things like "Ooh, that sounds yummy." and "Hey, can I have some?" On the surface, none of this prattle seems important but in actual fact, we yearn for it.

The more connected we become, the more isolated many of us feel. Sometimes, just knowing someone is out there listening can be the most important thing in the world. But other times, it can become a dependency. I recently saw a post that inched very close to that line. A woman had sent her child off to college for the first time. At the same time she had starting taking classes, too. Instead of posting "How was your first day?" or "The house is so quiet without you."

or other typical things mothers say, she posted to her child's page (and right in the middle of another discussion, too), "You didn't call me to ask how my first day of classes went."

I think this exemplifies the fact that posting is not always about sharing information but about trying to get people to pay attention to you. And when those updates stop being broadcasts and become pleas for interaction, something may be going wrong. I can see how connecting with people can be very positive and engaging but it can also be harmful if the person begins to become addicted to this type of constant attention.

Have you ever sent an email or posted something and been so disappointed by the fact that no one responded, that it interfered with your thoughts or daily activities? Then you have an idea what Principal is feeling. Only she feels that way every waking moment of the day.

Let's talk about out how you translated all of this into music. It can't be common for an instrument to take one of the lead roles in an opera from a singer. Tell us about the composition process. Was it challenging to write for a character who can't speak?

In words, no, but in emotion, yes, Gabriel can speak! I began by composing a series of motives (leitmotif) that depicted certain emotions or ideas to be used throughout the composition. These motives, although at times stated outright, formed the basis for all of the melodies, and much of the harmony. By using predetermined musical ideas, I was easily able to move beyond the strict pitch sets that my music is generally based on, and explore a more dissonant and, at times, more tonal style of writing. The work even strays into the use of chords built on thirds for a couple of key moments.

I'm afraid you may have lost some readers with that statement. If the work doesn't use "chords built on thirds", is it "a tonal"?

Even though I use pitch sets, which remove many of the basic tenets of true tonal music, they are based on diatonic scales. This lends a tonal sound to the harmonic and melodic structure. The result is an accessible tonality without being tied to thirds, traditional cadences or typical chord progressions. The elimination of the tritone allows me to explore different ways to control dissonance and climax. Rhythm, directly influenced by years of listening to jazz and popular styles, is also a vital aspect of my music. In many cases, rhythm replaces, alters or augments the role harmony would normally play in the structure of a composition. So technically it isn't really tonal music, but rather, inspired by tonality.

.Gabriel goes beyond basic pitch sets with extensive use of suspension (allowing notes from previous sets to continue over new sets), polytonality (the use of multiple sets, simultaneously), pedal point (repeated or sustained single bass

note) and ostinato (the repetition of a musical idea while the music above changes). Additionally, tonal centers are used throughout, giving both the listener and vocalists a strong pitch reference.

Unlike other works, there are certain scenes that intentionally use chords built on thirds. I knew before I began the composition that I was going to use this device to emphasize a particular moment in the work. I carefully thought how I would transition from my normal style of writing to traditional chords fluidly. Once defined, I then incorporated the transitional ideas into the structure of the greater work and let these same techniques influence the entire opera. In this way, I could control the harmonic structure throughout the opera and make everything sound intentional. Nothing is ever left to chance. Even if it is supposed to sound that way in the end. Craft is very important to me.

It sounds as though your compositional process is very carefully defined before you even begin composing. How did you begin to pare down the multitude of ideas and possibilities available to you?

I spend a great deal of time organizing and planning the structure of my compositions. The visible side of composing looks like I am taking dictation but there are hidden aspects to the process, as well.

The first is my study. I am not referring to my years at university or even studying scores by great composers. I am referring to the study of my own compositional style. People regularly ask how I am able to write so easily using pitch sets? I completely understand this question as most musicians, who are not also composers, experience writing through theory class where they're given a set of rules to then create a short piece. Not much composition there! That is more like a math equation than composing.

When I decided to move to pitch sets, I studied them until it became the vocabulary in which I think. I don't sit around determining what note should go next or follow a matrix of some sort. I simply think of the music and it is created within the rules I have previously defined. If it didn't work that way, it wouldn't be expressive enough for me. If the rules are too present in the process, you can hear it in the composition. Sometimes that can be interesting but in my own music, I don't want anyone to be able to hear the rules. I just want them to hear music that expresses a particular emotion.

Form is also extremely important to my composition. Nothing is ever arbitrarily laid out or stream of consciousness. Again, these can be interesting at times but for the most part structure plays a significant role in everything I write. From looking at the entire work as a whole, to sections, movements, phrases and even motives, shape defines my work from start to finish. I want the listener to follow my path. If they get lost along the way, I haven't done my job. Does that mean that

everyone will enjoy, understand or follow my thoughts? No, of course not. All music requires some amount of study to understand and mine is no different. My hope is that if you give the music a chance, you may hear my unique voice and enjoy the experience.

While we are still talking composition, I would like to comment on transitions - another important aspect of my music. Whether abrupt, drawn out (even as long as through and over movements) or anything in between, how a work transitions from idea to idea is very important to me. The concept of transitioning is at the very core of my compositional style and process. It is never far from my thoughts and is the single greatest reason I will rewrite something already on paper.

People who know me are very familiar with the fact that I like to rewrite. No aspect of my music is sacrosanct. I frequently attack my compositions as if I am a teacher going through a student's work (only much more so, as I am ruthless with my own compositions). The idea of "wasted time," because I throw something out that I worked very hard on doesn't exist in my world. If it isn't right, it gets fixed. No matter what that entails. No matter how long it takes. No matter how much I throw out or keep. This can happen immediately or years later.

Now that we understand the process, how did things take shape initially for ".Gabriel"?

Honestly, I can't draw a straight line to neatly answer this question. I have been composing for so long, most of the process happens subconsciously. I know that I am thinking about a work but it isn't in the front of my mind in that way. I simply sit down and write out what has been written. Then, the process above takes over and I go back and review the work, rewriting constantly. This may, on the surface, seem to contradict the practices I outlined above but it really doesn't. The ideas of harmonic structure, form, transition, etc... are so ingrained in my thought process that they are always present in my composition. They define my thoughts before I even have them, so to speak.

I like rules. A blank page is inspiring but it is a defined set of rules that energizes the writing process for me. In this case, I knew I wanted to write an opera. The first plan was for it to be 30 minutes but the opportunity presented itself to expand it and I jumped at the chance. I enjoy writing works that give me the breadth to really develop a thought. All too often, modern composers are forced to write short compositions. I just don't see how this benefits anyone. Development is the key to enjoying a great composition. It's nice to hear a pretty melody but what a composer does with that melody is what I want to hear and that takes time.

What led you to make the choices you did and how did your compositional time-line evolve?

Inspiration! That furtive, ambiguous and elusive entity that defines art and artist. As with many of my works, I knew that I wanted to make a chamber version and a full version. The chamber version would be easily performable with limited resources. That would mean no chorus and a restricted number of voices and instruments. Why did I choose soprano? No idea, except that every single thought I had about the work revolved around a soprano singing the lead role. For me, three is a magic number in composition. Therefore, there was no question in my mind that there would be two additional vocalists, supporting the lead role. As for the chamber ensemble, I knew I would make the work performable by many different configurations but that I would focus on clarinet, viola, bassoon and piano. The piano would be the same in the orchestral version but the other parts would be different.

I knew from the beginning that I didn't want any names, except for Gabriel. Although, names are mentioned in the libretto, they aren't necessarily the people singing. The memories are a bit jumbled in Principal's mind. The entire premise of this opera is the anonymity of the Internet. You never know if you are really talking to the person you want to, whether other people are viewing your work surreptitiously, or if it is being interpreted the way you originally intended. The Internet really is the "Wild West" of our modern day and the idea of anonymity is right at the center of that world.

As for the compositional time-line, I do not write any single work at any given time. I frequently keep several works going at the same time and this was no exception. While I worked on *Gabriel*, I also wrote works for orchestra, wind ensemble and concertos. I find it easier to compose multiple works simultaneously rather than focusing on one. One seems limiting somehow. However, I should note that the summer of 2009 saw the opera almost exclusively. This wasn't due to composing but orchestrating, making changes and printing multiple versions of the work. There is a tremendous amount of editing, extracting and printing that accompanies composing. Most people don't think about the other side of the art - lots of paperwork!

Looking at the score, the resources needed to perform "Gabriel" are very flexible. How will a conductor know which is the best configuration?

I spent quite a bit of time thinking about this and then working it out on paper. There definitely is no "best" configuration. It is already challenging enough, getting a modern opera staged. I didn't want the instrumentation to get in the way of programming.

It should be noted, however, that there are several elements of the score that are not interchangeable. I decided to make optional parts only where the integrity of the composition wouldn't be adversely affected. Gabriel, Principal and the piano part are the same throughout every version. Beyond

that, the two Memory roles are available for performance by a number of voice types and the chamber version of the score can be performed by variety of wind/string combinations.

While we are discussing the role of instruments in the score, is the trumpet the main character, or the trumpeter?

Neither, actually. The role of Gabriel is one of two main characters and it is performed on trumpet. The trumpeter expresses Gabriel's emotions and the trumpet is the vehicle for that expression. I understand that without seeing or hearing the opera this may sound like a circuitous answer but it is not intended that way. Gabriel is an anti-main character, if you will. He is never revealed to the audience and we never really know what he is saying. Motives help us follow his emotional state and Principal's reaction helps guide us but we aren't even sure if she understands him correctly.

What reasons did you have for choosing trumpet to play the role of Gabriel?

I never considered any other instrument. The entire concept for the opera was based around the idea of Gabriel's Trumpet. Which is very interesting, as the Bible never talks of Gabriel blowing a trumpet. It does mention the angels "who stood before God" playing trumpets, heralding the judgments. I've read many interpretations of this, connecting Gabriel to the trumpet, and it seemed only fitting that Principal's path should also be heralded by a trumpet.

Equally important to the decision was my interest in the interpretation, or misinterpretation, of the Bible. As an avid student of history, I am always amazed by how differently the words of the Bible are interpreted, or translated, by different cultures, religions and people. No one can agree on what the oldest and greatest book ever written contains. Fascinating! This ambiguity of message, lack of understanding, or translation amazes me. If we as a single society (meaning all people on the Earth) cannot figure out what the Bible is trying to teach us, in one voice, how can we possibly hope to fully understand anything else around us.

How often does a person say or do something that is completely misunderstood? All the time. We are destined to continually upset the people around us through simple miscommunication. The character Gabriel embodies this idea. We never know what he is saying. It is up to us to interpret his message without anything more than what lies around us in our daily lives. An impossible task? Maybe. But that is the reality of the circumstance in which we find ourselves every single day.

One last thought. I feel that I should include a statement from the original proposal for the composition: *I have been aware of a steadily increasing interest in utilizing trumpet in a more inclusive manner rather than strictly as a soloist. I under-*

stand this perspective and agree with those wishing to present the trumpet in alternate musical roles. I propose composing a chamber opera where the trumpet becomes an equal part, or main character, alongside the traditional vocal roles. This will provide many interesting opportunities for the soloist, including: solos, duets, trios and ensemble playing with various combinations of vocalists and instrumentalists. This wide spectrum of playing for the trumpeter will give the audience a unique opportunity to hear the trumpet in less common situations. I can't think of a better place to break new ground than at an ITG conference!

Does the trumpeter actually act?

Not exactly. Although Principal interacts with the other members of the cast, they never come in contact with each other. Scrimms represent the physical barrier (the computer screen) that separates Principal from the living world around her. Therefore, as with Memory I and Memory II, Gabriel is behind a scrim. That doesn't eliminate interaction between the characters but it does make the focus on Principal and the music.

It is conceivable that a staging of the work might include Gabriel and the Memories joining Principal in front of the scrims but this is not the original intent. How visible the characters are, and consequently how much acting is required, would be determined by the placement of the scrims, lighting and direction.

Does the trumpet player speak during the production?

No. Gabriel does not have a single line of spoken dialog. The part is entirely performed on trumpet.

How did you navigate interaction between characters being represented by opera singers (who can, of course, speak) and another being represented entirely through music?

Although it may sound difficult when discussing it, I think that listeners will not have trouble adapting to the conversational style of the musical dialog. Opera is so rooted in music to begin with, it really isn't that far of a leap to have a character portrayed by music. In fact, as the work was taking shape I never thought of Principal as having one-sided conversations due to the lack of spoken word responses. It always felt very natural. At no time did I say to myself, "I wish Gabriel could say something." Quite the contrary. Nothing like it ever even entered my mind.

Who will be originating the role of ".Gabriel"?

There will be two trumpeters bringing the work to life. For the premiere, Joshua Clarke, principal trumpet of the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, will be performing the role. I have had the pleasure of working with many wonderful

trumpeters over the years and this collaboration is no exception! Mr. Clarke brings a wealth of experience to this performance and I am looking forward to hearing him interpret the character on stage.

James Ackley, Associate Professor of Trumpet at the University of South Carolina, made the first recording of the opera with an exceptional group of University of South Carolina faculty members, including the incomparable Tina Milhorn Stallard singing the role of Principal.

In what way does the staging contribute to the meaning?

Although very minimalist, each set and prop is carefully placed to accentuate Principal's isolation. For example, there is no clutter. She is continually cleaning, to prepare for visitors, but the visitors are online so no cleaning is technically necessary. Her wastepaper basket lies empty on the floor. Where there is no paper, there can be no waste. Her life is entirely online. The scrims are placed for reasons pertaining to both the story and for musical effect. Each actor is separated in one of three zones, tied to their scrim while Principal moves around. This represents Principal's constant web surfing. In her mind she is always "visiting" people, although she is really only sitting at her computer.

The scrims themselves represent her computer screen. She can see the people she is talking to but cannot touch. This is a very important part of the story as Gabriel, we think, is desperately trying to get her out of the house to interact with people in person but that is simply too scary for Principal. She has been hurt too many times. Of course, with so little acting, sets and props, a great deal of responsibility falls on the character roles - especially Gabriel, who only has music to represent his part of the story.

How does the trumpet show us what the character is like? Is there any back-and-forth between Gabriel and the other characters, like a conversation? Or is the part comprised entirely of the motives described above?

On the whole, the trumpet part is very lyrical. All of the arias are influenced by vocal writing and consequently, are song-like in many ways. However, there are sections of idiomatic trumpet writing, as well. The part is full of interplay with the vocalists and is quite conversational. Except for a few moments, the part could easily be sung which was the original intent. I wanted the trumpet to fit seamlessly into the vocal style of the composition. Trumpeters who are familiar with my music will certainly find many similarities but will also enjoy new solo and ensemble opportunities to explore.

Trumpeters are probably wondering how difficult it would be to perform an hour-long composition. Did you take this into consideration when creating the opera?

When composing a work such as this, requiring soloists to

perform almost constantly for an hour, you must take endurance into consideration. The ebb and flow of the drama has to be carefully choreographed so as to not exhaust the performers but still be entertaining for the audience. Additionally, many of the parts are designed for a variety of voice types and instruments. All of these compromises, as all compositions are a compromise of one kind or another, produce a work that is eminently performable by a wide range of musicians and circumstances from fully staged performances to a concert setting.

How did the opera get scheduled for performance at ITG?

Ever since the Sonata Premiere Project, I have worked closely with trumpeters from around the world and have been lucky enough to have had many works performed at ITG conferences. I enjoy the conferences immensely and like taking musical risks. Certainly, as a composer, it is safer to write what people expect. This makes it easier to get your works programmed and commissioned but it also doesn't further the art. I like to push expectations, not like the wildly divergent paths of famous composers from the past, but to skirt the edge of what is comfortable. I believe it is in this way composers can educate listeners to branch out and enjoy a larger part of the riches that are music history.

I enjoy opera very much but didn't want to compete with the greats of the genre. That is just inviting disaster, at least in the short-term. No, I wanted to do something different. Give people a reason for taking time out of their day to listen to a new work. Incorporating an instrument as a main character seemed like the right path for me.

Of course, instruments have been incorporated into opera and musicals many times before. So what would make this production different? By making the role both an integral part of the opera and yet never revealing the character, the audience will always be questioning what Gabriel is saying. With no words to guide them, we don't know exactly what is going on. We don't know if Principal even understands. And, in fact, we find out at the end that she completely misunderstood Gabriel's message - as many of us do on a daily basis. We frequently misinterpret the emotion behind an email, a gesture, a comment, or the words we read. It is this constant off-balance feeling that drives Principal's reclusive behavior. She is always attempting to gain more control over her life but is actually losing control to the point of breakdown.

I didn't reveal these ideas in the original proposal, submitted to Brian Evans at the 2007 ITG Conference. I even considered using this idea for another project and proposed an alternate idea of an Australian Theme. But Gabriel was never really far away and there quickly became no question that this would be the basis of the opera. Any idea that sticks with you that long must be realized.

Staging an opera is a huge undertaking. For two years, I

worked on the project both compositionally and with Brian Evans. Many ideas were considered. The only difficulty was that the conference was to be in Australia which meant I was unable to help with performers. The opera had to be staged with local vocalists and musicians. Thanks to Brian, this has become a reality and the work will be premiered by a remarkable cast and ensemble from Opera Australia Young Artists and the Australia Opera and Ballet Orchestra on July 8, 2010 at the 2010 International Trumpet Guild Conference.

I greatly appreciate Brian's support of me, my work and new music in general. As I mentioned above, if you are pushing the boundaries in any way, you run the risk of never having your works performed. And what would be the point of that? I write music to be shared and that means I need champions like Brian. It is those people who are willing to take the risk and present something new that drive the art. Thank you, Brian!

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ONE FINAL NOTE...

There was one question, submitted for this article by several people, that I have not answered:

"What is the story behind the story? In other words, where did the germ for this composition come from?"

I include this question here not to answer it but to acknowledge the request. This is a very personal question and is at the crux of the inspiration behind the creation of this work. Alas, some things cannot be revealed. I appreciate the insightfulness of this question and encourage all people to be inquisitive, at all times, questioning everything around them. However, in this instance, the truth must remain concealed.

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- Robert J. Bradshaw

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