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New Opera *Demandolx* Brings Fresh, Hybrid Sound to the Operatic Repertoire

Seeks Crowdfunding to Complete Development and Recording

MINNEAPOLIS – Composer Yann Ferlaak and librettist Melissa Ferlaak are in the final stages of finishing a new opera entitled *Demandolx* that aims to create a fresh hybrid mixing classical, cinematographic structure, Wagnerian strength and moments of dark electronic music sounds. The music emulates the mixing of the story which takes a modern look at an old story. *Demandolx* is based on a true story from the 1600s of demonic possession of two nuns by a priest of the Catholic Church. The opera seeks to look at these kinds of trials through the lens of what we know today of psychological afflictions. The book and music both deftly intertwine the classical with the modern. The opera is complete and is in the final stages of recording with accomplished singers from around the globe as a first workshop through technology. Upon completion of the recording, the opera will move into workshop development. It currently has three scenes and a summary track on its website (listed below).

The story of the opera takes on some long-held beliefs in religion, specifically Catholicism and aims to explain demonic possession by looking back with an eye to the political upheavals in the church, the lack of power by women, and psychological issues of what we now know today.

The work is somewhat of first venture into the pure classical world for both creators, something they feel will benefit both the operatic world and fringe subcultures. Melissa Ferlaak is well known in the symphonic metal world for ‘metalizing’ Mozart arias and performing in clubs around the world. Often heard is an appreciation by concertgoers to bring classical music ‘to their level’ as they don’t feel comfortable going to the opera, yet love opera. Some feel the environment itself makes them feel self-conscious, others feel that the music has become so hard to understand and non-human that they cannot connect to it.

Reflects the librettist, “We both have a strong desire to see crowded audiences in opera houses and see the most beautiful art form in the world continue to flourish rather than die. To that end, we delved into this opera with that mindset. Take lush orchestrations and beautiful vocal lines, combine with hints of electronic instrumentation that people today sonically resonate with, push a few boundaries and create a story that while old, takes a bold scientific perspective in looking back with what we know now of psychology, church politics, sexual perversion, and sociopathic behavior AND tell a fully human story, one which people can truly relate.”

Demandolx is seeking crowdfunding and grant support to complete the development of the opera that includes finishing the recording and score for a final product. Vocalists Timur Bekbosunov,

Christophe Franco-Rogelio, Kassandra Novell, Justin Spenner and Drake Chrisdensen have begun recording the roles of the opera and come from the United States, France and Brazil from diverse musical backgrounds. They will then seek a theatre or film company to produce the production. The composer enthuses, “The opera could end up on a stage or perhaps as a film. Regardless, we must have a recording so we can begin to share this story and this work with the world.”

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Demandolx

Composed by Yann Ferlaak

Libretto by Melissa Ferlaak

www.opera-demandolx.com

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/development-of-demandolx-the-opera>

Synopsis: 1600’s, Aix-en-Provence, the first of a series of trials of witchcraft and possession began at a convent at the hand of one Madeleine de Demandolx. She was a very young nun with a history of, through today’s knowledge, clinical depression and bipolar disorder. She met a priest, Louis Gaufridy, who became on the outside, her confessor, but was suspected of being her lover.

A year later, she was sent back to the convent, at which time, he called off the love affair, much to her protest. She went back to the convent, concocted an enormous lie, that she was possessed by him, resulted in her performing the rites of a Black Mass upon herself and cut herself in all the right places making ‘Devil’s marks’ so that her argument against Gaufridy was truly convincing. She stated that he called Satan upon her soul, afflicted her with 666 demons. She convinced, easily, another nun (Louise Capeau, an older, but was an easily influenced nun, who happened to harbor deep jealousy for Madeleine) that by speaking to her, she is now also infected with possession. Together the two weaved a monstrous tale surrounded with deception, all because if Madeleine could not have Gaufridy, then no one could, not even God.

Louise and Madeleine are exorcised by an inquisitor with a growing reputation, Sebastien Michaelis (a monk with a deep seated resentment toward the clergy (priests) for their loose morals...a very politically charged argument at that time). Michaelis used the exorcism as a way to gain power and celebrity in the church, but also to gain political favors in the monastery. Michaelis charged Gaufridy with witchcraft. Gaufridy endured torture and eventually, Michaelis extracted a confession, albeit a false one.

The trial began. First, Louise gave a convincing argument, citing specific demons that were infected by Gaufridy. Then Madeleine gave her testimony that included such grotesque things as losing her virginity to a bull, killing people and being forced to consume their flesh. Finally, Gaufridy is brought to the stand. He recanted all that was in his confession and fought against the arguments that Michaelis put forward. The witnesses and evidence were too convincing that the judge ruled immediately for his execution by fire.

Gaufridy was walked through the streets of Aix for five hours. He was strung up atop the pyre. He was given his last words, those of innocence and devotion to God, and forgiveness to everyone for what he was about to endure. For some reason, he was granted mercy of strangulation before he was burned, perhaps by his convincing argument that in fact, he was innocent of the charges, but the crowd is too blood-thirsty...if the judgment was recanted this late, it would be chaos. The judge holds his ground on granting strangulation, however Michaelis knew this would lay doubt in people's minds. While the executioner was tying up Gaufridy's noose, Michaelis ran down to the pyre and lit it too fast to grant strangulation.

After, back in the church, Michaelis questioned the girls to see their state. Louise is still tormented, seemingly gesturing with her eyes that Madeleine is the culprit. Michaelis committed her to an asylum against her protestations. Madeleine states she is cured and that she is leaving the church. Michaelis tried to force her to stay but Madeleine said to him that if he would force her, she would charge Michaelis as the guilty one. The accuser holds the key.

We open on the final scene. Madeleine is sitting at the bench where she first met Gaufridy. A priest sits and inquires into what she is writing. She tells him of a betrayed love, a love that she should have never had. The two begin conversation, she pulls out a peach and offers it to him seductively. It begins again.

Composer, Yann Ferlaak has been a pioneer in electronic music (specifically EBM) for the last fourteen years. Originally from Marseille, France, he began writing under the group name of Ad Inferna. The group was signed to major record label, Metal Blade Records. Yann took a hiatus writing for the group, which at that time was writing metal music, and switched to writing electronic music. He began writing for Ad Inferna again in 2000, and wrote ten additional albums over the span of six years including *L'Empire des Sens* (2001), *Sexual Music for Sexual Mass* (2009), *Trance N Dance* (2009), *Heroine* (2010), *DSM* (2010), *There is No Cure* (2011), *eXsanguie* (2011), *Ultimum Omnium* (2012), *Im Mortelle* (2013), *Opus 7: Elevation* (2014). His music has been described as cutting edge, dark, extremely moving and often is created as a concept or story album.

Additionally, Yann owns recording studio, Akamaradara Studio and has been a sound engineer for numerous bands.

Librettist, Melissa Ferlaak is a singer, writer, composer, and teacher. She received her Master's degree in Vocal Performance from New England Conservatory of Music (2003) and Bachelor's degree in Music from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (2001). She found success writing and performing music of a hybrid of opera, symphonic and heavy metal that took her across the globe on tours in Europe (tour and large festivals such as Summer Breeze in Germany, Hoernerfest in Germany, Female Metal Voices Festival in Belgium, Masters of Rock in Czech Republic and Dokken Fest in the Netherlands), China (co-headlining tour), US (co-headlining tour), Mexico (tour and festivals) and Canada (tour and festivals). The biggest draw was the 'metalized' performances of Mozart arias such as *Der Holle Rache* and *D'Oreste, D'Ajaxe*. She has written and recorded seven full-length albums (*Aesma Daeva (The Eros of Frigid Beauty)* (2002), *The New Athens Ethos* (2003), *Ex Libris* (2005)), *Visions of Atlantis (Trinity)* (2007), *Echoterra (Land of the Midnight Sun)* (2011), *MY Eternal (Pursuit of a Higher Throne)* (2013) and *Plague of Stars (When Morning Came)* (2014)). Melissa has also

been a guest singer with eleven other musical groups. Melissa and Yann together wrote an album of ambient music (akin to Enya) under the group name MY Eternel and she frequently sings on Ad Inferna albums.

Classically she has performed mostly in Minneapolis with Theatre Latte Da (also served as assistant director on the production of *La Bobeme*), Thursday Musical, Coro!, Twin Cities Opera Scenes and the Schubert Club Courtroom Concert Series.

Collectively, Melissa and Yann have written a total of 17 full-length albums selling over 50,000 copies worldwide. When deciding to embark on writing an opera, though the task seemed daunting, they viewed it as writing essentially three albums of music all within one concept; a task they have experience with for 25 years.

Cast

Narrator.....Timur Bekbosunov
Louis Gaufridy.....Christophe Franco-Rogelio
Madeleine de Demandolx.....Melissa Ferlaak
Inquisitor Michaelis.....Justin Spenner
Louise Capeau.....Kassandra Novell
Domptius/Victim Priest.....Drake Chrisdensen

END