

Brian
CURRENT

Airline Icarus

Carla Huhtanen, Soprano

Krisztina Szabó, Mezzo-soprano

Graham Thomson, Tenor

Alexander Dobson, Baritone

Geoffrey Sirett, Baritone

Brian Current, Conductor



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CURRENT
(b. 1972)

Airline Icarus (2001-2005) 43:46
**Chamber opera for five soloists, chamber chorus,
nine musicians and soundfiles**

Libretto by Anton Piatigorsky (b. 1972)

① Baggage Man –	1:28
② Prepare for Departure –	3:02
③ Safety Demonstration –	3:24
④ Time for Take Off –	3:19
⑤ Absolut –	1:59
⑥ The Scholar –	1:18
⑦ Business Man and Ad Exec –	3:12
⑧ Flight Attendant –	0:55
⑨ All is normal –	4:42
⑩ Technology's Success –	1:33
⑪ Business Man –	1:06
⑫ The Airplane Shakes –	2:07
⑬ The Airplane Disappears –	5:57
⑭ The Pilot's Aria –	7:03
⑮ Epilogue	2:41

Ad Exec Carla Huhtanen, Soprano
Flight Attendant Krisztina Szabó, Mezzo-soprano
Scholar Graham Thomson, Tenor
Worker/Pilot Alexander Dobson, Baritone
Business Man Geoffrey Sirett, Baritone

Jennifer Taverner, Soprano 1 • Taylor Strande, Soprano 2
Leigh-Anne Martin, Mezzo-soprano 1 • Loralie Kirkpatrick, Mezzo-soprano 2
Charles Davidson, Tenor • Graham Robinson, Bass
Kathleen Rudolph, Flute • Anthony Thompson, Clarinet
Benjamin Bowman, Violin I • Véronique Mathieu, Violin II
Gregory Campbell, Viola • Paul Widner, Cello • Adam Sherkin, Piano
Ryan Scott, John Rudolph, Percussion
Sarah Moon, Assistant, Trigger of audio files
Brian Current, Conductor

Brian Current (b. 1972)

Airline Icarus

Airline Icarus is about the intersecting thoughts of passengers aboard a commercial airplane. It explores themes of hubris mixed with technology, the forced intimacy of strangers and flying too close to the sun. Over the course of the work, the plane becomes brighter and eventually vanishes.

In September of 1983, a Korean commercial flight was shot down over the Soviet Union's eastern coast. They said they thought it was a spy plane. Rather than hit the plane directly, the missile struck its wing, and the plane "fell like a leaf for an excruciating twelve to fifteen minutes". I couldn't help but to think about the people aboard for years after. Later when visiting with Anton Piatigorsky, I told him I was looking for ideas about theatrical works and mentioned the Korean airliner. Anton told me that he had just written a poem about the absurd little society we often take for granted aboard commercial flights and the unsettling mixture of hubris and technology: we'll make small talk and watch movies while inches outside the window is a glorious cloudscape or freezing certain-death.

He later proposed the perfect metaphor for what we were trying to do: Icarus. Icarus, you'll remember, flew too close to the sun and his wax wings melted and he fell to the earth in a blaze of light. His father, Daedalus, looked for him, crying: "Icarus, where are you!" and "Damn this art!"

To me, one of the most interesting parts of the myth is that Icarus disappears in much of the same way that people involved in airline tragedies disappear, and the way the astronauts of the Space Shuttle Columbia disappeared in a blaze of light over Texas.

Daedalus's cries of "Damn this art" are heartbreaking, not so much because Icarus has crashed and died, but more that he knows that we are doomed to keep building things – airplanes, computers, operas – in an endless cycle of trial and error that sometimes leads to disastrous consequences.

Like Daedalus, we might curse this sorry state, as does the terrified Scholar, or we can rejoice in the thrill of

our power to create wonderful things, as sings the Pilot in his aria – *No peace so great. No joy so pure* ⑮ – as soaring Icarus must have thought before the moment he disappeared.

**From notes by Brian Current made at Yaddo colony,
Saratoga Springs, NY in December 2003.**

Production History

Airline Icarus was commissioned in 2001 by *Opera Breve* Vancouver. Further workshops and excerpts were presented by Tapestry New Opera, Soundstreams, New York City Opera Vox Festival, Fort Worth New Frontiers and Opera America. In 2011, *Airline Icarus* was awarded the Italian Premio Fedora Award by a jury chaired by Louis Andriessen. It received a staged première in Verbania, Italy in April 2011 with the composer conducting. In November 2012 it was presented in concert at The Royal Conservatory in collaboration with Maniac Star, the rehearsals of which formed the basis of the present recording. Maniac Star and Soundstreams created the North American première in June of 2014, directed by Tim Albery.

This recording was made possible through the assistance of the Canada Music Fund and the Music Section of the Canada Council for the Arts.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage (Canada Music Fund) and of Canada's Private Radio Broadcasters.

Dedicated to Donna Wong-Juliani and to the memory of John Juliani.

Brian Current (né en 1972)

Airline Icarus • Inventory

Airline Icarus porte sur les pensées croisées de passagers d'un vol commercial. Cette œuvre explore les thèmes de l'*hubris*, de la technologie, de l'intimité forcée entre étrangers, et de ce qui arrive lorsqu'on vole trop près du soleil. Au fil de l'œuvre, l'avion devient de plus en plus lumineux et finit par disparaître.

En septembre 1983, un avion commercial coréen a été abattu au-dessus de la côte est de l'Union soviétique. Les Soviétiques ont dit qu'ils croyaient qu'il s'agissait d'un avion espion. Plutôt que d'atteindre directement l'avion, le missile a frappé son aile, et l'avion « est tombé comme une feuille pendant douze à quinze insoutenables minutes ». Pendant des années, je n'ai pu m'empêcher de penser aux gens qui étaient à bord. Plus tard, alors que je rendais visite à Anton Piatigorsky, je lui ai dit que j'étais à la recherche d'idées pour des œuvres théâtrales et je lui ai parlé de l'avion de ligne coréen. Anton m'a raconté qu'il venait d'écrire un poème portant sur l'absurde petite société qu'on tient souvent pour acquise lorsqu'on est à bord de vols commerciaux, et sur le troublant mélange entre *hubris* et technologie : on échange des banalités et on regarde des films, alors que de l'autre côté des hublots se trouve un somptueux paysage de nuages, ou une mort certaine et glaciale.

Plus tard, il m'a proposé la métaphore parfaite pour ce que nous essayions de faire : Icare. Icare, vous vous en souviendrez, a volé trop près du soleil, si bien que ses ailes de cire ont fondu et qu'il est retombé sur terre dans une lumière flamboyante. Son père, Dédale, est parti à sa recherche, s'écriant « Icare, où es-tu? » et « Maudit soit cet art! ».

À mes yeux, l'un des aspects les plus intéressants de ce mythe est qu'Icare disparaît un peu de la même manière que les victimes de tragédies aériennes, et que les astronautes de la navette spatiale Columbia, qui disparurent dans une lumière flamboyante au-dessus du Texas.

Le cri de Dédale, « Maudit soit cet art! », est déchirant, et ce non pas tant parce qu'Icare s'est écrasé et qu'il est mort que parce qu'il sait que nous sommes voués à continuer à fabriquer des choses – des avions, des ordinateurs, des opéras – dans un cycle infini d'essais et d'erreurs dont les conséquences peuvent être désastreuses.

Comme Dédale, et comme le Savant terrifié, nous pouvons maudire ce triste état de choses. Nous pouvons aussi trouver grisant notre pouvoir de créer des choses merveilleuses : « Aucune paix n'est aussi grande. Aucune joie n'est aussi pure 15 », chante le Pilote dans son aria. C'est ce qu'Icare a dû penser alors qu'il s'envolait dans les airs, juste avant de disparaître.

**Tiré des notes prises par Brian Current en 2003
à la Yaddo colony, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.**

Historique de production

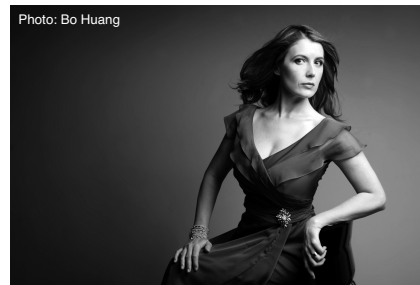
Airline Icarus a été commandé en 2001 par *Opera Breve* Vancouver. Des extraits de l'œuvre et des ateliers ont été présentés par Tapestry New Opera, Soundstreams, le Vox Festival du New York City Opera, Fort Worth New Frontiers et Opera America. En 2011, *Airline Icarus* a reçu le prix italien Premio Fedora, dont le jury était présidé par Louis Andriessen. La première scénique, dirigée par le compositeur, a eu lieu à Verbania, en Italie, en avril 2011. En novembre 2012, l'œuvre a été présentée en version concert au Royal Conservatory en collaboration avec Maniac Star. Les répétitions de ce concert servent de base au présent enregistrement. La création nord-américaine par Maniac Star et Soundstreams, sous la direction de Tim Albery, a eu lieu en juin 2014.

Carla Huhtanen



Much in demand as an interpreter of modern and contemporary music, soprano Carla Huhtanen has sung with companies such as Garsington Opera, Mostly Mozart, at the Barbican, London, and Welsh National Opera, and with orchestras including the BBC Concert Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. One of *NOW* magazine's Top Ten Theatre Artists of 2008 and 2010 Dora Award nominee, she performs regularly with Opera Atelier, Tapestry New Opera, and in concerts throughout Italy, France, Malta, Britain, Germany, and in Canada.

Krisztina Szabó



Hungarian-Canadian mezzo-soprano Krisztina Szabó's has performed with Vancouver Opera, Edmonton Opera, Chicago's Music of the Baroque, the Mendelssohn Choir, the Calgary Philharmonic and the Queen of Puddings Music Theatre, Toronto. She has also appeared with the Aldeburgh Connection, the Pax Christi Chorale, the Esprit Orchestra and the Toronto Symphony, with Canadian Opera, and the opera companies of Vancouver, Calgary, Quebec, Washington Concert and Stadtheater Klagenfurt, and with numerous orchestras in concert.

Graham Thomson

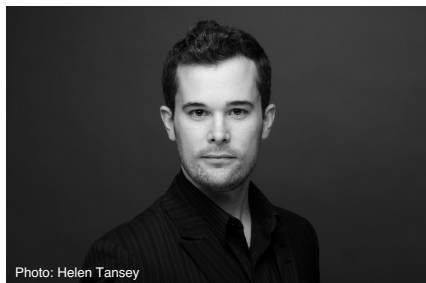


Photo: Helen Tansey

The singing of Prince Edward Island native Graham Thomson has been called “engaging, expressive effortless, and perfectly pitched”. His upcoming performances include the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto, guest soloist with the Confederation Singers, the Guelph Chamber Choir, and the Peterborough Singers. He also portrays Gus Trenor in James Kudelka’s *From the House of Mirth* (Coleman Lemieux Company), which will tour to the Berkshires (New York), Austin, Peterborough, and Toronto. Mr. Thomson is currently a DMA candidate at the University of Toronto.

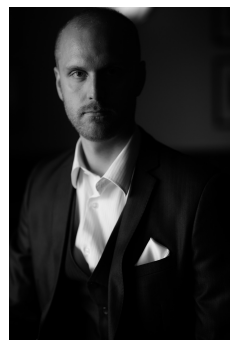
Alexander Dobson



Photo: Jimmy Song

British-Canadian Alexander Dobson has been praised for his performances in both opera and on the concert stage. Highlights include appearances at Opera Hamilton, Opéra de Montréal, Opéra de Québec, Saskatoon Opera, and Pacific Opera, Victoria, as well as his Royal Opera Covent Garden début in Brian Merriman’s *The Midnight Court*. His solo performances have included many recitals as well as concerts with the Orchestre Métropolitain, Montréal, the National Arts Center Orchestra, Ottawa, the Colorado Symphony and Edmonton Symphony, and at Vancouver New Music Festival and the Carmel Bach Festival.

Geoffrey Sirett



Baritone Geoffrey Sirett has performed leading rôles in such operas as *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Candide*, *Pagliacci*, *The Merry Widow*, *Gianni Schicchi*, and *Albert Herring*. On the concert stage, he has performed with the Kingston Symphony, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Chautauqua Symphony and the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, and in recital across Canada and the U.S., including the Aldeburgh Connection, the Bayfield Festival of Song, and the Van Cliburn Foundation. His début album, *Vagabond*, with pianist Stephen Ralls, was released in December 2011.

Anton Piatigorsky



Photo: Ava Roth

Anton Piatigorsky is an award-winning writer of plays, librettos, and fiction. He is the recipient of two Dora Mavor Moore awards for best new play, the Summerworks Prize, the 2005 Elinore and Lou Siminovitch Protégé Award for playwriting, and numerous other nominations. Born and raised in the Washington, DC area, he studied religion and theatre at Brown University. He is a dual citizen of Canada and the United States, and lives in Toronto.

Brian Current



Photo: Josh Randell

Brian Current studied music at McGill University and UC Berkeley. His music, lauded and broadcast in over 35 countries, has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Barlow Prize for Orchestral Music (USA), the Italian Premio Fedora for Chamber Opera and a Selected Work (under 30) at the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. Brian Current’s works have been programmed by all major symphony orchestras in Canada and by dozens of professional orchestras, ensembles and opera companies world-wide. He is in demand as a guest conductor and regularly leads orchestral programmes of contemporary music. www.briancurrent.com

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WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

Canada
FACTOR



A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

The sung text can be accessed at
www.naxos.com/libretti/660356.htm

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Engineer: Paul Hodge • Editor: Carl Talbot

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Booklet notes: Brian Current

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CANADIAN CLASSICS
CLASSIQUES CANADIENS

Leading young Canadian composer
Brian Current, recipient of numerous
distinguished international prizes, has
collaborated with award-winning writer
Anton Piatigorsky in an exciting work
for voice and accompanying ensemble.
Airline Icarus is set aboard an airliner
in which, taking the myth of Icarus as
the central image, the composer
“explores themes of hubris mixed with
technology”. The result is a powerful,
resonant work which won Current the
Italian Premio Fedora Award in 2011.

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FACTOR and Roger D. Moore

Booklet notes in English
Notice en français

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
43:46