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The Wanton Sublime & The Companion

NEW YORK CITY

Ear Heart Music, American Modern Ensemble & American Opera Projects | Roulette

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On Tuesday, April 22, Ear Heart Music, in partnership with American Modern Ensemble and American Opera Projects, added its name to the list of companies repaving the landscape for new opera in New York City with the world premieres of two chamber operas at Roulette in Brooklyn: Tarik O'Regan and Anna Rabinowitz's *The Wanton Sublime* and Robert Paterson and David Cote's *The Companion*.

A thirty-minute monodrama depicting the internal dilemmas of the Virgin Mary, *The Wanton Sublime* is an enigmatic work. Although Anna Rabinowitz's libretto is both sprawling and crowded, Tarik O'Regan's score provides a clearly structured roadmap for the audience to follow. The sound world of the score spins through three distinct spaces or mindsets: Mary's everyday life, her encounters with the angel Gabriel, and her internal distress. O'Regan marshals meaning from Rabinowitz's swirling text with a fluid, enticing score. Dividing the score into sections is the drone of a cello and bass, from which other sounds, erratic and mellifluous, germinated. O'Regan's vocal lines transform the asymmetric rhythms of Rabinowitz's text into compelling and theatrical music. As Mary, soprano Hai-Ting Chinn shifted easily from lyrical arches to jagged angles of anxiety and angst with a voice of reinforced steel.

In *The Companion*, composer Robert Paterson, also the music director of the American Opera Ensemble, and librettist David Cote have created an effortlessly funny, clever and deeply resonant opera, in which the music and the story fuel one another to create an entertaining and meaningful theatrical experience. *The Companion* tells a near-futuristic story of a successful career woman, Maya, and her male companion, Joe, an android programmed to fulfill her every desire. Maya is so fixated on having the perfect man that she is oblivious to the advances of Dax, the human service provider who does repairs and runs upgrades on android companions. The thirty-five minute opera is expertly structured and paced. Arias that peer into the universal psychology of each character—and received hearty applause from the audience—while recitative propels the action forward. Paterson amplifies the humor and heartache of Cote's libretto with a bright and magnificent score, replete with deadpan musical retorts and soaring melodies straight out of Bellini, Puccini or Strauss. The stellar trio of soprano Nancy Allen Lundy as Maya, tenor Brandon Snook as Joe and baritone Kyle Guglielmo as

Dax, was each completely invested in the music and the story, which in turn convinced the audience to emotionally invest in *The Companion*.

Under the leadership of Tyson Deaton, the American Opera Ensemble played these contrasting works with assurance, precision and a full sound. □

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