

Himalayas, then it occurred to me the real answer is that it originates with the human voice. This way of making sound is available to all of us. The voice is the original instrument. I'm interested in using its entire, complex array of sounds.

Where do you go from here with *The Escape Artist*?

I'm grateful to the World Festival of Sacred Music and to the REDCAT for the opportunity to perform this concert version of music from *The Escape Artist* with this cast gathered from all over the country, coming from all sorts of traditions. I would like to tour this version as well as begin the work of staging it. I'm especially interested in adding movement as a theatrical element in the story. I also envision short films being interwoven at various times within the piece.

How did you weave such a diverse group into a cohesive whole?

I have had the good fortune to work with these artists over many years, on many different projects. However, this is the first time all of us have performed together. I met Toby Newman when she was just a child starring in Meredith Monk's film, *Book of Days*. It was through the World Festival of Sacred Music that I heard Gwen Wyatt's powerful singing. Both Jessie Manno and Shamou are composers and musicians I connected with at the Bates Dance Festival. Bill Ruyle is a comrade from the downtown music scene in New York. I immediately noticed Angel Bazigou and Valecia when they were students of mine at UCLA. Mader is an excellent composer and producer who has worked with me on several projects here in Los Angeles. The multi-talented Billy Goodrum is like a brother. I've worked with the musicians individually and in small groups when we could for several months. For the past three days we literally have lived together to bring *The Escape Artist* into the world.

Thank you.

You're welcome. Thank you!

Robert Een and the International All-Star Band: *THE ESCAPE ARTIST*

September 24, 2008
8:30pm

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CALARTS



Robert Een and the International All-Star Band:

THE ESCAPE ARTIST

PROGRAM

ACT I

Before the 'hero' is born, his soul exists, waiting for the moment of birth. As a child he experiences the wonderment of his world. When he grows into a young man, this sweetness turns into horror after he takes part in murder and destruction as part of a larger force of violence. He runs away from his actions and their consequences.

Invocation

Overture: Be Warned

Waltz of Innocence

Burn It

Path of Sorrow

Take Flight

ACT II

Now far from home, the young man learns from a spiritual guide in the guise of a peasant that there is no escaping his true task in life, which is to realize his true self. Traveling further on, he becomes seduced by the pleasures of the world, until he meets his soul mate. They fall deeply in love, vowing to stay together forever. This is not to be.

All Knowing Ignorance

Ends of the Earth

Love

Irresistible You

Agony

Puzzling Mysteries

ACT III

Years have passed and he is alone, not running so much now, as searching. In a remote hill-station he comes upon a group of monks arguing over which path to truth is the right one. An Abbess loudly interrupts to remind them of life's true goal. Finally, he arrives in a distant outpost where he discovers a group of fellow searchers. There he meets One in whom he experiences great light and unity. He resolves to turn back to the world and face his past.

Waltz of Innocence (reprise)

Prairie Train

Dharma Combat

The Reward

In You I See

Reassurance Waltz

How has it changed?

The town where I was raised is the site of the largest mass execution in US history. In 1862, thirty-eight Dakota Sioux were found guilty by a military tribunal and executed in a public hanging while the entire town cheered. When I wrote 'Burn It' in 2001, I was thinking about evil unleashed in this kind of mob mentality. Growing up, when I would pass the bend in the river where it happened -- right in the middle of town -- I was struck by how other people seemed oblivious. Was there justice or consequence?

For the opera, I imagined a young recruit in the US Army having been witness to, and part of the massacre and how he was damaged by it and his subsequent personal journey. As I became more involved with his story, I realized I wanted to work more with the universal experience of a spiritual quest and less with a historical event. I decided to set the piece in an unspecified time.

There are so many parallels to the war today.

Absolutely, and I was working on this years before the current war in Iraq. War is such a big word. When we view war as an unstoppable monolith, we feel helpless, but in reality consists of millions of personal decisions being made every moment, by the leaders, the warriors, and the witnesses.

Where does redemption enter?

Redemption comes in on a personal level. I can't run from my own actions. I might be able to change locations but there is no escape—either in this lifetime, or the next, depending on your belief—until I have done the hard work of changing myself. The piece *Path of Sorrow* is inspired by the first of Buddha's Four Noble Truths: All life is suffering. Yet, the Buddha's following three truths gives one an opportunity to transcend suffering through one's own effort. There are experiences and people encountered along the way. There is love. There is the touch or guidance of a master. Some may call it good fortune or grace. And while there is forgiveness, it is not experienced personally until one is driven to the place of actively seeking it.

How do you create the music?

Each piece has its own story. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the Tibetan Buddhist who taught extensively in the West, spoke of aspirants as spiritual warriors. In 1985 I traveled to Tibet and witnessed novice monks at the Drepung Monastery outside of Lhasa engage in a form of spiritual debate one could call dharma combat. One monk makes a statement and another has a split second in which to come up with a rejoinder. This prepares, as well as eventually proves, the level of knowledge attained by an individual. The 'hero' of *The Escape Artist*, formerly a warrior of a different sort, is called upon to use the skills of ferocity and immediacy to save his very soul.

Another example is *In You I See*. I knew that at the end of the opera, the 'hero' would meet the One in whom he experienced, at that moment, everything as light, even though his journey was not over. In many traditions light is spoken of as the source of spirit. I also knew that overtone singing was right for that moment of realization.

What are overtones?

It's a singing technique wherein one sings a fundamental pitch and by using the mouth and tongue, isolates upper partials, or overtones, belonging to that fundamental. I am often asked where this type of singing originates. I used to imagine a geographic location, like somewhere deep in the

designed by architect Neil Denari, was recognized with the prestigious American Institute of Architects' National Honor Award for Outstanding Interiors in 2005. Recipients of numerous optical and design industry accolades themselves, Gherardi and McReynolds have also been nominated for an L.A. Fashion Award annually since 2006. www.laeyeworks.com

Bryan Jackson is an award winning director and writer based in Los Angeles. Jackson produced video installations for the premiere of the Long Beach Opera's Downtown Opera Project. In 2006, he co-produced video installations for LACMA Lab's *Consider This...* with artist Bruce Yonemoto. Currently Jackson is a Lecturer at UC Irvine, where he teaches digital media and video-making. His illuminated orbs that frame Robert Een's performance, were created for I.a.Eyeworks, the Los Angeles area retail stores of eyewear designers, Gai Gherardi and Barbara McReynolds.

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Most especially also:
Meher Baba

This production of *The Escape Artist* is a co-production of The World Festival of Sacred Music, the REDCAT, and Buzzbox.

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"There is no better companion on this way than what you do." —Rumi

KARIN LEVITAS TALKS WITH ROBERT EEN

Where did you get the idea for *The Escape Artist*?

I started with the idea of a person wanting to escape from his or her past, and literally going on the run, but soon discovering that until the past is confronted, there is no escaping it. I was also working with the premise that there is no locale too remote, or heart too dark that it can't be found and awakened. These were my original inspirations. How the piece evolves is a different matter. Though the ideas have remained constant throughout the years I've been working on it, the setting of *The Escape Artist* has changed.

Music & lyrics: Robert Een
Story: Robert Een and Karin Levitas
Dramaturge: Karin Levitas
Eyeglasses: I.a.Eyeworks
Light orbs: Bryan Jackson

PERFORMERS

Robert Een	cello, voice
Angel Bazigou	voice
Billy Goodrum	piano, electric keyboard, voice
Mader	accordion, electric bass
Jesse Manno	bouzouki, flutes, percussion, voice
Toby Newman	voice
Valecia Phillips	voice
Bill Ruyle	hammer dulcimer, metal water pot, Tibetan singing bowl
Shamou	cajon, djembe, percussion, voice
Gwen Wyatt	voice

"To penetrate into the essence of all being and significance and to release the fragrance of that inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others, by expressing, in the world of forms, truth, love, purity and beauty, this is the sole game which has any intrinsic and absolute worth. All other happenings, incidents and attainments can, in themselves, have no lasting importance."

BIOGRAPHIES

Robert Een is an acclaimed composer, singer and cellist. The recipient of a 2004 Obie Award for music composition and a 2000 New York Dance and Performance Award for sustained achievement, Een has performed his music on concert stages and in unusual venues throughout the world including: the Buddhist caves of Ellora, India, the Shinto shrine in Tsurugi, Japan, a theater above the Arctic circle in Norway, the Pushkin Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia, the Fringe Club in Hong Kong; as well as such New York venues as Lincoln Center, the Whitney Museum and the Knitting Factory. Known for his use of extended vocal and cello techniques, he has recorded nine albums of genre-bending original music. His scores for film and documentary include: *My Horrible Year* directed by Eric Stoltz, *Mr. Jealousy* directed by Noah Baumbach, *Trouble on the Corner* starring Edie Falco and Tony Goldwyn, and *The Rook* starring Martin Donovan. Een's music is also featured in Gregory Colbert's photography and film exhibition, *Ashes and Snow* presented in the unique Nomadic Museum which has traveled to New York, Los Angeles and Tokyo. Een's music for theater and dance can be heard in the works of Dan Hurlin, Liz Lerman, Stephan Koplowitz, David Dorfman, David Greenspan, Yin Mei, Brian Selznick, Jennifer Muller, Yoshiko Chuma, Pearson/Widrig, Heidi Duckler, Lionel Popkin, Hae Kyung Lee and Ronald K. Brown, among others. As a teacher he has been a guest lecturer and an artist-in-residence at colleges, universities and professional schools around the globe. He currently teaches in UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures and at UC Santa Barbara. His various creative projects have been funded in part by the McKnight Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Rockefeller MAP Fund, the MacDowell Colony,

Creative Capital, the New England Foundation for the Arts, the Asian Cultural Council, the Minnesota State Arts Board, Meet the Composer, the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. His long association with Meredith Monk culminated in their evening length performance duet, *Facing North*. This is his fourth appearance in the World Festival of Sacred Music and his third on the REDCAT stage.

Angel (Angelikie) Bazigou is an actress, singer, and composer. She is a graduate of the Greek National Theatre School of Drama, the Musician's Institute, and UCLA in ethnomusicology/jazz studies. Angel started her professional career at the age of 8. Since that time she has appeared in numerous productions, both in the US as well as in her native Greece, most recently at the Hollywood Bowl and the Odyssey Theater. Angel has performed with Robert Een in *Groundswell* and *My Beowulf*. She is now combining her Greek influences with American Jazz on her own recording projects. www.angelikie.com

There are no walls up in **Billy Goodrum's** musical world. Whether he is writing film scores, recording his own songs for the Farrelly Brother's off-beat comedies, composing modern jazz pieces, or collaborating with artists like Psychic TV, Jonathan Richman, Julia Fordham and Vanessa Carlton, it is always music pure and simple.

Mader is a composer, producer and multi-instrumentalist. Known for his versatility and innovative style, he has composed the music for numerous films, including the Golden Globe winning *The Wedding Banquet*, and *Eat Drink Man Woman*, as well as *In the Soup* and *Steal This Movie*. He is currently scoring *Mercy*, due out in theaters later this year.

Jesse Manno is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, teacher and recording artist who has created over 100 commissioned original scores for productions in contemporary dance, theatre, film, circus arts, and special events. He has served as music director of the University of Colorado dance department since 1991. His work has been presented in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and around the US and is available on several CDs. www.jessemanno.com

Toby Newman is a soprano who is at home singing classical music as well as new music. This is her second time singing with Robert Een in the World Festival of Sacred Music. Other performances with Mr. Een include a national tour of */Asunder*, a collaborative piece by Mr. Een and choreographer Yin Mei, and multiple performances at La MaMa E.T.C. in New York City. Her recent operatic performances include *Tisbe (La Cenerentola)* with Connecticut Opera and *Dinah (Trouble in Tahiti)* with Anchorage Opera. Ms. Newman performs frequently with Meredith Monk, most recently at Carnegie Hall.

Valecia Philips is an arts administrator, vocalist and emerging documentary filmmaker. With roots in New York, she performed in numerous venues such as Brooklyn Academy of Music, Dance Theater Workshop, 92nd Street Y, Judson Church and Wave Hill. She also produced eclectic arts programming for over a decade at WBAI Pacifica Radio. Currently she is working on an ambient dance single for release in the fall.

Bill Ruyle has been a percussionist/collaborator for new music, dance and theater in New York City and abroad for over twenty-five years. He has played in the ensembles of Peter Zummo, Jon Gibson, Peter Gordon, Bill Obrecht, Scott Johnson, Phillip Johnston, "Blue" Gene Tyranny,

The Feetwarmers, The Manhattan Marimba Quartet, Last Forever, Newband, Sequitur, The Locrian Chamber Players and the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. His own compositions have been performed domestically and internationally.

Shamou is a composer, singer and multi-instrumentalist. His musical training began in his native Iran and continued in England and the United States. He has created original scores for new works by Portland Stage Company, Sacramento Ballet, ODC Dance Jam, Prometheus Dance Company, and for choreographers Stephan Koplowitz, Robert Moses, Judith Smith/AXIS, Jose Antonio Hevia, Lucky Kele and Michel Kouakou during residencies at the Bates Dance Festival. Shamou has performed at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, Fillmore West and the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, Hard Rock Café'8e, Mandalay Bay and the Venetian in Las Vegas, The Five Spot in New York, as well as other venues across the United States. He leads the world music ensemble "Loopin".

Gwen Wyatt is a soprano, music educator, conductor and founder/director of the Gwen Wyatt Chorale. As a soloist she has received critical acclaim on world stages in the Middle East, Europe and in South America. Her passion is the singing of spirituals. She speaks of the late Jester Hairston, her mentor of the performance practices of the spiritual, as inspiring her deep love and understanding of these wonderful songs. *Rock My Soul, Remembering Jester Hairston* is a recently released CD. A Doctor of Musical Arts, she is a voice instructor at Rio Honda College. Ms. Wyatt is a recipient of a 2007-2008 award from the California Traditional Music Society as well as the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs Durfee Arc Grant.

Karin Levitas, raised in Atlanta, onto New York to dance with Sara and Jerry Pearson, film and performance with Meredith Monk, theater with David Greenspan, then to LA for an MFA in screenwriting from the AFI. Writer on *Factory Girl* starring Siena Miller. Karin collaborates with Robert Een on many projects, including their two children.

Judy Mitoma is Director of the UCLA Center for Intercultural Performance and Professor of Dance in the Department of World Arts & Cultures. The founding chair of the Department of World Arts and Cultures, she established an interdisciplinary, international and intercultural research with a performance agenda. In 1990, she was Co-Curator of the Los Angeles Festival and in 1997 she was asked by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to lead the World Festival of Sacred Music in Los Angeles in 1999. This sixteen-day multi venue festival has been held again in 2002, 2005, and 2008. She has produced numerous films and edited several volumes of essays. Her most recent film, *Songs for the City of Angeles* has been broadcast on PBS stations. On the UCLA faculty since 1975, in 2004 she received the John D. Rockefeller III Foundation award from the Asian Cultural Council for her service in support of cultural exchange between the United States and Asia.

I.a.Eyeworks has been creating original, invigorating eyeglasses since 1979. Designed by the company's co-owners, Gai Gherardi and Barbara McReynolds, I.a.Eyeworks' iconoclastic glasses have changed the way people think about eyewear. Envisioning I.a.Eyeworks as a platform for creative public dialogue, Gherardi and McReynolds have collaborated with artists from almost every discipline. The evolution of this conversation has included commissioned artworks, in-store exhibitions, campaigns for freedom of expression, eyewear designs for opera, and a singular commitment to unique architectural projects, among others. I.a.Eyeworks' most recent store,