

spring 2005

volume four
number one



Overtone Industries

6535 Wilshire Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA

90048-4905

(323) 655-2410

overtoneindustries.org

Yes, friends, even flags of imaginary countries can fly!

As many of you may remember, a few years ago we asked writers and composers to imagine a new country, what their flags would look like, what customs they would create, and most importantly, whether they'd choose peace...or war.

We presented the first workshop in November 2003, and, following your insightful comments and grand advice, we are ready to offer the new, the improved, the flying high as a flagpole revision,

Workshop #2, on Monday and Tuesday evening, June 13 and 14, at L.A.'s Evidence Room.

Songs & Dances of Imaginary Lands Workshop #2 Moves Into Gear

Workshops are very important to our process, especially when more than 40 creators (performers, writers, composers

and videographers) are involved, and we hope you'll all come to see how your input is helping us shape up the vision of this remarkable piece.

Call now to reserve your seats:
(213) 381-7118.

SONGS & DANCES OF IMAGINARY LANDS WORKSHOP #2

Tickets are \$10 each.

Monday & Tuesday, June 13 & 14, 8pm.

At the Evidence Room, 2220 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles (at Alvarado).

NOW YOU CAN DONATE SECURELY ONLINE AT OVERTONEINDUSTRIES.ORG

Peek Behind the Wall — THE WOMAN MOVES IN

December 13th, 2004, Berkeley California. Tonight is the first ever inking of what will be our newest opera, *The Woman in the Wall*. The theater is crowded and all eighteen divas and musicians are packed into the two dressing rooms at the newly remodeled Berkeley Stage. This theater had its beginning as a church and still retains the blond maple pews and the arched ceiling and good acoustics, as well as the feeling of care that the new tenants, The Shotgun Players, give it. Since this is a workshop production, a concert reading of the first of what will be a seven section opera, we are on the stage dressed for the theater's current production. Every seat is filled except for the first row of pews reserved for the musicians and singers. In they come and sit. *Continued on page 2*



A HOME OF OUR OWN

Moving into the Lap of Luxury!



Here I am in the new OFFICE of Overtone Industries — a perfect little room; all the comforts: new carpet and paint and even mini blinds thrown in. Many donated treasures: the juicy red iMac donated by Terry and Hank Adams, the sexy red leather and chrome couch courtesy of Conrad Romo with the help of Alan Gelfant's brute strength yanking it out of the garage, Jack Grapes' coffee maker still dripping with poetry, the little yellow green table from our hall closet that now holds the brand new plant. USC surplus cheap cheap good good grey rolling office chairs and big ol' utility table for Special Projects. The black sort of craftsman style desk from LACC props, the first half of a pretend "Partner desk." (Real partner desks are as big as my kitchen and we'd have to scooch around the edges.) The matching half of the desk is coming in June; right now it's performing in someone else's show somewhere. We also have a store bought computer desk and brand new with-a-warranty printer, and a phone/fax/scanner. Plus, a brand new boombox which we use mostly for loud dancing rehearsal but right now Miz Hildegard of Bingen (well, actually, one of her recent followers) is here in high soprano *extase*. *Continued on page 3*

a call to ACTION

2005 Fundraising at Overtone Industries was launched with a generous \$20,000 gift from an as yet anonymous donor. This gift (and pledge for the same amount in the years ahead) puts us well on our way toward our 2005 goal of \$60,000 in budget support needed for this year's production costs. This unprecedented show of support provides administrative stability and a springboard for us to reach out to the

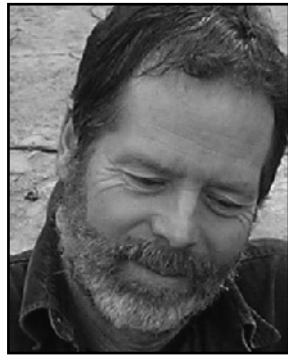
greater community of philanthropic foundations and individuals like you to help us make our 2005 goal a reality. We're

\$499 lets you adopt a musician and \$100 - \$250 adopts an artist. A check in any amount makes you a Friend! Send your check in the enclosed envelope or (we're trying to make it easy for you) you you can **make a secure donation via Paypal directly through our website:** www.overtoneindustries.org. *Overtone Industries is a registered non-profit 501c3. Thank you!*

Moving through 2005

counting on you to take us all the way! \$5000 makes you an Angel, \$1000 - \$4999 rents the Hall, \$500 - \$999 pays for a producer, a set designer, etc., \$251 -

OTONALITY by bart hopkin



in 3 Movements

Several years ago, Overtone's O-Lan Jones contacted me to see if I could contribute to the company's production of a piece to be called *The Woman Who Forgot Her Sweater*. O-Lan was aware of my work as designer and maker of unconventional musical instruments – she had seen some of my instruments in a concert production in

San Francisco and asked me if I could create some instruments that would really work on stage: large instruments, with choreographic playing gestures, instruments that could be integral to the set.

Given the musical requirements, I came up with several things for *Sweater*. One was a pair of large dipper chimes – steel tubes, five or six feet long suspended above a water trough. The suspension cords were stretchable so that after striking, the player could press the big chimes down and dip the lower end in the water causing pitch-bends in the sustaining chime tone. Another instrument was a large-scale string instrument tensioned by weights: the steel strings came down from supports above, and they supported massive weights just above the floor. When the player plucked vigorously, the weights would move and shake, causing variations in the string tension and giving rise to a peculiar sort of vibrato in the tone. A third instrument was a set of 4" tubes, several feet long, made of a semi-soft plastic. When the players struck the sides of the tubes with heavy beaters, they produced a clear tone from the air column within (the soft plastic yielded enough under the blow to excite the enclosed air). As the piece was choreographed, the players rolled these large tubes here and there across the stage while they played them.

O-Lan invited me to be part of an Overtone production now in progress: the opera *Songs and Dances of Imaginary Lands*. I'm doing a bit more composing and much of my scoring has been for the conventional instruments of the show's orchestra, but I've also included several off-beat sound sources. Among them are slide whistles, pebbles pouring from one ceramic pot to another, and a particular kind of

hand-tilling garden tool which happens to make a wonderful sound. I've also made some sound devices for O-Lan's pieces in the opera. Most notable among them (being the most difficult to design and build, and most fidgety and likely to give trouble) is a set of six low, 4-wheeled platforms which produce a sort of singing/sighing/groaning/complaining sound when the players, lying on their stomachs on the platforms, wheel around on them.

Working with the Overtone people on these two productions has been crazy and fun. OK, it has involved some hard work, too. This is a group of very smart, very funny and still serious, very high-energy people. You can see it in the productions: ambitious, off-beat, always fresh and challenging.

Bart Hopkin is a San Francisco-based composer and instrument designer. His website is windworld.com.

WOMAN

(Continued from page 1)

Now come the composer and librettist and tell the audience the story of the opera beginning with what will be heard tonight: the ceremony of the removal of the body of the former occupant and the installation of the new one who takes her place inside, and the wall is re-bricked shut, and in this cell, with one window into the church and one giving out to the world for the rest of her life, she becomes the Woman in the Wall.

The singers and musicians rise and take their place on stage, under the direction of Joshua Raoul Brody, featuring Gretchen Johnson in the principal role, perform beautifully the moving score by O-Lan Jones. The countertenor, the viola da gamba and the celtic harp lend lovely medieval touches and give a strong hint of what is to come.

The evening goes smoothly and is very warmly received. We are looking forward to hearing another concert in November, 2005 at San Francisco's Magic Theater. This one will feature three sections of the work, which has been supported by the Irvine Foundation, the Magic Theater and the Z Space, to whom we are indebted.

—Kathleen Cramer

Newsletter Staff: Halldor Enard, Gretchen Johnson, Sandra Leanza, Diana Rosen, Colleen Wainwright.

My first encounter with the Overt Ones was around 1985, when I spied a little mention of a class in musical theater offered by composer Catherine Stone. Up until that point I thought of myself as mainly a keyboard accompanist for comical musedy groups who dabbled in songwriting; Stony gave me the confidence to start sheepishly admitting I was a composer.

She brought in guest artists to help keep things lively, including her Overtone buddies, Mark Petrakis and O-Lan Jones. When O-Lan and Kathleen Cramer got their show, *Love In The Third Degree*, booked at San Francisco's Magic Theater, Catherine demurred on musical directing it and recommended me. That show changed my life in many ways, introducing me to people who have become life-long friends and colleagues, and bolstering my confidence further. Except for one night...

It was more than halfway through the run and things were running on autopilot. (The musicians had so mastered the show music that we warmed up on some of the more complicated charts from my dumb songs cover band, Theee STUPEDS; as a result, they soon became my new rhythm section, and before long O-Lan herself was

lured into the fold.) Towards the end of the second act, I stirred from a daze to realize that there was an ominous silence on stage: one of the actors had been waiting for some time for a telephone to ring, and it had been my job to play that sound cue. I lurched toward my keyboard at the exact

*Joshua Raul Brody
Moves Through the Years
with Overtone*

moment that the actor ad libbed "Well, that must be the phone. I'll get it," and picked up the receiver just a second before I made the phone ring, thus shattering the illusion even further.

I spent the next several minutes chanting "I messed up. I messed up. Gotta pay attention; can't mess up again. Gotta pay attention; can't—What's that? It's quiet on stage again? Damn, did I miss another cue?" and lurched to the keyboard again to provide a doorbell cue.



Unfortunately, the doorbell wasn't supposed to ring for another six pages; the seemingly interminable silence I had mistaken for another missed cue was only a pause of a couple of seconds. But the actress standing in the wings heard the doorbell and entered anyway, thus eliminating that tedious thrilling conclusion that dramatists seem to think is so important these days.

So, one of the things I learned from that experience was that it is actually possible to survive what at the moment feels like absolutely terminal humiliation.

Another important lesson I learned from Overtone was the notion of "Uglyville:" that phase of the development of a show where everyone knows the piece sucks and no amount of effort will ever get it to not suck. I was working with people who had been through Uglyville enough times to have learned that it, like every other town, has borders, and it's just one unavoidable waystation on the path, not the end of the line.

Joshua Raoul Brody is a longtime member of Overtone Industries. He has composed music for String of Pearls and Songs and Dances of Imaginary Lands. In December 2004, he conducted the first workshop of The Woman in the Wall at the Berkeley Stage.

SONGS & DANCES OF IMAGINARY LANDS WORKSHOP #2

Mon & Tue, June 13 & 14, 8pm. • Tickets \$10. (213) 381-7118 • Evidence Room, 2220 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles (at Alvarado).

Overtone Industries is proud to be recognized for our innovation and excellence by:



Artistic Director O-Lan Jones

Associate Artistic Director Kathleen Cramer

Overtone Industries Board of Directors

Robert J. McMullin, PRESIDENT

Ellen Blake

Eric Castro

O-Lan Jones

Louise Rodricks

Mitch Ryan

www.overtoneindustries.org

HOME

(Continued from page 1)

You know what - it's all systems GO over here at Overtone Industries!

All this luxury springs from a wonderfully generous contribution which will be arriving each year from a benefactor who wishes, for the moment, to remain anonymous. This really is a gift that keeps on giving; not only all these wonderful Things, but the wherewithal to add some amazing helpers to our roster: the multi talented Mia Torres, who is production manager for *Songs & Dances of Imaginary Lands*, and also overseeing getting the office revved up with Jessie Payo, a new performer with Overtone.

I feel for the first time we have a real chance for stability and room to breathe and a place to put down roots, spread out branches and fling seeds.

—O-Lan Jones

donors...

Virginia Arnold, Chris Allport and Susan Hayden, Steve Badeau, Xander Berkeley, Michael Birnbaum & Alicia Wollerton, Jo Bloomer, Jim Campbell, Shawna Casey & Jack Kehler, Kathleen Cramer, Halldor Enard, Colleen B. Kane, Andy Griggs, Amy Madigan & Ed Harris, Lorna Harris, Rue Harris & Richard Whittaker, Jim Haynie, Buck Henry,

Petur Hliddal & Kathleen Campbell, Leslie Hope, Gretchen Johnson, O-Lan Jones, Kabylia Inc., Jill Klein, Harley Jane Kozak, Landsberg Foundation, Ray Manzarek, Earl & Lorna Marifjeren, Robert McMullin, Murray & Christina Mednick, Gilla Nissan, JP & Irene Oppenheim, Bill & Tamara Pullman, Lucas Reiner & Maud Winchester, Steven Robman,

Mark Robson, Louise Rodricks, Stephen Root, Mark Saltzman & Walter Hubert, Mark Savage, Patricia Savoie, Diane Sherry, Sandra & Alan Silvestri, Rosemary Vail, Margaret Von Biesen, Donna White



photo: Kathleen Cramer

Joshua & orchestra • *The Woman in the Wall*, S.F. Workshop

mission statement

Overtone Industries cultivates new talent for music theater by providing opportunities for composers, writers and performers to collaborate in the creation of new musical works. By drawing on the artists that spring from our diverse community we speak to and attract a wide-ranging spectrum of people.

Our culture is enriched and revitalized not only by the differences and variety of expression, but also by the underlying experiences that connect us all.

We strive to create original myths and fables that will illuminate the eternal forces that reverberate in our contemporary lives. By exploring new relationships among words, acting, movement, and music, we seek to make the invisible visible and bring our audience and ourselves closer to understanding some of life's Mysteries.



OVERTONE
INDUSTRIES

8391
Beverly
Boulevard | PMB 325
LA, CA
90048

O-Lan Jones, Artistic Director

Music theatre is a forum for exalted language and real ideas; celebrating all types of people and voices; making the unseen forces, feelings, understanding visible.

It's also funny because we are looking at what's true.

SONGS & DANCES OF IMAGINARY LANDS WORKSHOP #2

Mon & Tue, June 13 & 14, 8pm. • Tickets \$10. (213) 381-7118.

At the Evidence Room, 2220 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles (at Alvarado).