

May 13, 2022, 3:45pm Opera Lab Micro-Operas

Opera Creation Lab

Sophie Carpenter, soprano
Donegan Moore, soprano
Vanessa Moya, mezzo-soprano
Monica Rajan, soprano
Cailin Smith, soprano
Noah Stone, piano

Composers:

Benjamin Russman
E. Isaiah Hopper
Paige Burke
Joi Harper

1. **Brimstone and Vinegar** (2022)

Music by Benjamin Russman (b. 1998)
Libretto by Vanessa Moya
Conceived by E. Isaiah Hopper
Directed by Vanessa Moya

When Cid's father, an influential CEO, is found stabbed to death holding a document bestowing the family business to a mysterious illegitimate son, Cid must prove his alleged half-brother is a fraud and murderer to reclaim his rightful inheritance.

Cast:

Vincent E. Gar	Monica Rajan
Cid Ervine Gar	Cailin Smith
Sherry Vinnie Gret	Sophie Carpenter
Balsa McVine-Gar	Vanessa Moya
Gustav Malter	Donegan Moore

Brimstone and Vinegar Synopsis:

Sherry calls for help when she finds Vin, stabbed and lifeless on the floor of his office. Vin's wife Balsa and their son Cid rush to his side, but it is too late: Vin is already dead. They mourn Vin, but soon begin to suspect one another.

Sherry notices Vin is clutching a document. Upon reading it, they discover it is Vin's will, which bestows MALT Enterprises to a secret illegitimate son, Gustav Malter. Baffled, they puzzle over this unexpected development.

Coincidentally, Gustav arrives and, upon hearing his name, enters to excitedly introduce himself. He notices Vin's corpse and grieves inconsolably.

Balsa and Sherry fling murder accusations at each other. Amid the chaos, Sherry reveals she had an ongoing affair with Vin, and Gustav is her son. Sherry speculates that Balsa killed in out of jealous rage, but Balsa claims ignorance of the affair. Balsa accuses Gustav of killing Vin to steal the secret family recipe. Gustav denies this motive, since he does not know (and cannot profit from) Vin's secret recipe. Balsa and Sherry realize that Vin took his secret recipe to the grave, and that MALT Enterprises is worthless without it.

Cid reminds them that he has been training his entire life to follow in his father's footsteps, and proclaims he can save the company, even without the recipe. As he boasts of his business acumen and trumpets his many accomplishments, Cid is haunted by Vin's ghost, who disputes each false claim with scathing scrutiny. After being berated by the ghost of his father, Cid lashes out, before confessing that he is the murderer.

Balsa joins with Sherry and Gustav to condemn Cid for his actions, exiling him from the company. Balsa tells Cid he must face take responsibility for his actions, and the three leave to get brunch, leaving the distraught Cid alone with nothing but the memory of his heinous actions.

2. **Red Death** (2022)

Music by E. Isaiah Hopper, (b. 1999)

Libretto by Sophie Carpenter and Monica Rajan

Adapted from Edgar Allen Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death*

A wealthy and selfish prince hosts a lavish ball in his castle as a plague ravages the land. The seemingly safe guests witness a death, throwing the party into chaos, and the prince into an existential crisis.

Cast:

Prospero	Sophie Carpenter
Edgar	Donegan Moore
Death	Vanessa Moya

Red Death Synopsis:

The year is 1840. The prince Prospero is holding an exquisite masquerade ball in the ballroom of his Gothic mansion. Guests spend the evening reveling in the many rooms of the mansion, away from the death that plagues the land. The ballroom erupting with laughter, giddiness, and life, is abruptly sent into a frenzy as Edgar falls dead. Prospero assures his guests that there is nothing to fear and that they should go and enjoy themselves in the adjacent room. Locking them in, Prospero barter with Death to escape his demise and sacrifice them instead. Death reminds Prospero that his timeline cannot be altered, and such is the downfall of the prince.

3. **Trio for the End of Time** (2022)

Music by Paige Burke (b. 1996)

Libretto by Cailin Smith and Monica Rajan

The night before a worldwide extinction-level event is predicted to occur, three people await their fate in an abandoned Stop & Shop on Grafton Street in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Cast:

Nico	Monica Rajan
Leah	Cailin Smith
Evangeline	Sophie Carpenter

Trio for the End of Time Synopsis:

Nico and Leah squabble about a missing bag of Doritos. Nico accuses Leah of stealing them, which she vehemently denies. During this skirmish, Nico spots Evangeline, who has gathered a cache of snacks and supplies. Seeing that Evangeline has his precious last bag of Doritos, he charges at her. Unfazed, Evangeline invites the two to join her for a "last supper" of sorts. Nico wants to leave with his bag of Doritos but is convinced to stay because the storm outside is getting worse. Evangeline invites Nico and Leah to share what they are thankful for in these final hours of humanity.

Nico responds irreverently and sarcastically at first, saying that he is grateful that Evangeline found his Doritos. After Leah admonishes him for being rude, Nico's responses become crueler and sacrilegious. If there is a God, why would He allow Nico to be traumatized by bullies in high school? And why would He take Nico's partner Morgan—the only person who truly understood him—leaving him all alone?

Leah threatens to leave. She would rather die alone than spend her final hours with somebody so selfish and disrespectful. She accepts that she will die alone in her hometown with nobody to remember her. Evangeline consoles her, saying that her friends and family who predeceased her remembered her fondly and are watching over her. As Evangeline reaches out towards her, Leah breaks down and admits that she stole money from her grandmother and other family members to fuel her heroin addiction, all while claiming the money was for her graduate school tuition, for starting a nonprofit organization, and for paying her rent while she was student teaching. Leah never had the chance to apologize, and wonders if her grandmother would have ever forgiven her.

Shocked by this revelation, Evangeline turns away from Leah and recites the Lord's Prayer. Leah believes Evangeline is just like the rest of her family, who judged her harshly and refused to forgive her. Nico guides Leah toward the exit. Evangeline stops them, admitting that she is not perfect and has been grappling with her own prejudices. She believes everybody deserves love, and once again invites Nico and Leah to stay with her.

Nico desperately wants to visit Morgan's grave and see the last sunrise at Elm Park before the world ends. When Leah says she wants to stay, Nico storms off calling Leah an untrustworthy traitor. Evangeline sets up her "last supper." She says she is grateful for food, shelter, for having met both Nico and Leah, and most importantly, for God. She lights a candle as Leah shares her gratitude that Nico and her beloved grandmother. They smile. Evangeline bows her head in prayer and Leah quietly apologizes to her Gram.

4. No Weekends

Music by Joi Harper (b. 1998)

Libretto by Cailin Smith and Donegan Moore

After receiving a huge raise and promotion with the requirement of working multiple weekends, Jamie debates with her inner voices, Ambition, Anxiety, and Compassion, over whether to confront her boss Cynthia and in turn be more compassionate with herself.

Cast:

Cynthia	Monica Rajan
Jamie	Donegan Moore
Anxiety	Sophie Carpenter
Ambition	Vanessa Moya
Compassion	Cailin Smith

No Weekends Synopsis:

At the close of Friday's work hours, Cynthia offers Jamie a huge raise and promotion with the caveat of regularly working multiple weekends. Jamie returns to her office, now overloaded with work and wondering if she can make her flight to Miami for a weekend celebration with her friends. As she tries to work through both her new responsibilities and her decision, her inner voices of Anxiety and Ambition appear and tug her in different directions. As Jamie deliberates whether she should stay in the job or quit altogether, panic sets in. Compassion finally appears and calms Anxiety and Ambition while guiding Jamie toward a calmer place where she can make the best decision for herself.