

THE SQUARE

AN OPERA IN TWO ACTS



MUSIC BY **MALEK JANDALI**

LIBRETTO BY **EUGENE ROTBERG**

A timely new opera about the quest for

**peace,
freedom,
human rights,
and dignity**

THE SQUARE

Composer Malek Jandali and librettist Eugene Rotberg have created a luminous new opera about freedom, hope, and the human cost of dictatorship. It is a historical account, which also reflects today's headline news, and foretells the unsettling political possibilities of tomorrow. Jandali's score expands the modern operatic oeuvre through his incorporation of the modalities and rhythms of his Syrian heritage.

“There is a rumbling, a murmur on the streets, some kind of hum. Not yet one of anger or despair. They call it freedom. It's in the air.” (Act I Scene 1)

At the central heart of a city is the square, at once a peaceful meeting place for the community, and a focal point for protest. It is a physical location of hope, and a site of violent civilian suppression. Jandali highlights this duality in a new work that reflects his lifelong dedication to lyricism, and the precision of his musical irony.

The Square follows the stories of The President, a dictator on the cusp of losing power; Akila, whose ardent belief in the need for change sets her at odds with her father Tarik, a retired soldier; and Hamadi, The Captain of the Guard, who is torn between his oath of duty and his love for Akila. Many factions voice their opinions and needs in the rebellion that is brewing; the Youth with their enthusiasm, naiveté and focus on media, the Pious seeking a societal turn towards religion, the Aristocrats, the Cynic, the Patriot, Poverty, and the mob that unleashes mayhem. All factions meet in the square, in a clash of hope and agenda, in a society's struggle for freedom and peace.

Demo recording by members of the
Canadian Opera Company Chorus

Sandra Horst, conductor
Canadian Opera Company Price Family Chorus Master

Rachael Kerr, pianist

Imagine Sound Studio, Toronto, Canada
Craig Kadoke, Head of Sound Canadian Opera Company
Mark Camilleri, sound engineer.

Cast

Gene Wu: The President

Leanne Kaufman: Akila

Ryan Downey: Hamadi (Captain of the Guard, betrothed to Akila); The Pious

Michael York: Tarik (Akila's Father)

Doug MacNaughton The Militant (Act 1) ,The Cynic (Act 1)

Bradley Christensen: The Militant (Act 2) ,The Cynic (Act 2)

Erica Iris Huang: Poverty

Taras Chmil: The Patriot, The Protestor

Virginia Hatfield: The U.S. Representative

Chorus

Virginia Hatfield, Leanne Kaufman, Alexandra Lennox, Erica Iris Huang,
Rachel Miller, Taras Chmil, Ryan Downey, Bradley Christensen, Doug
MacNaughton, Michael York.

Excerpts

Click to listen

Act I Scene I.2

Military Guard Quartet

Act I Scene I.3

Hamadi Arioso

Act I Scene III.6

Choir of the Protestors

Act II Scene II.11

Akila's Death Aria

Act II Scene II.14

Duet The President and the Representative of the U.S.



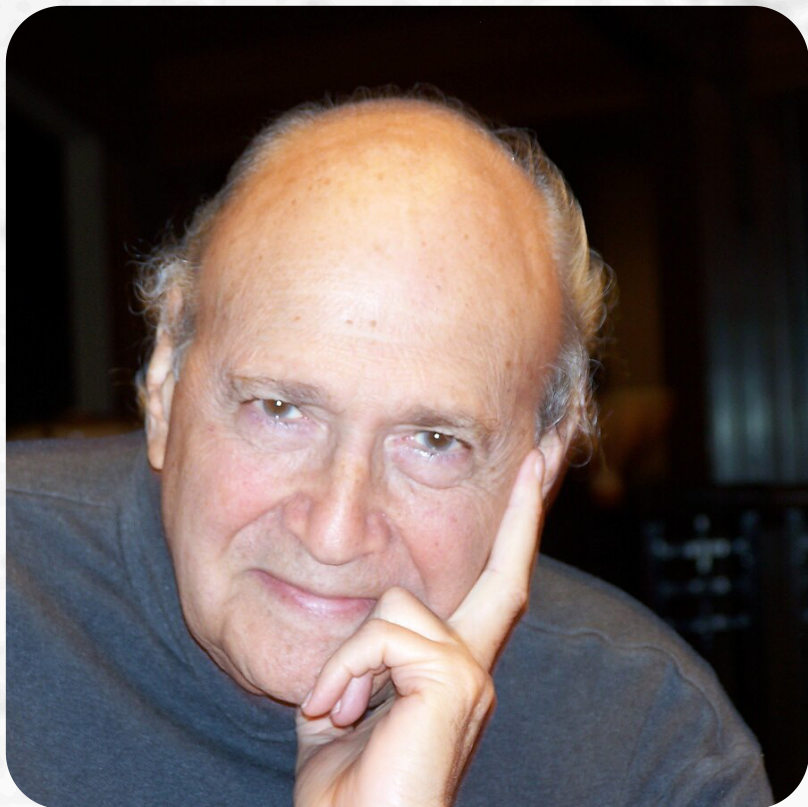
Malek Jandali

Composer

Malek Jandali is "a uniquely gifted composer" (The Washington Post) and "a major new addition to the 21st century's symphonic literature" (Fanfare magazine). His "deeply enigmatic music" (Gramophone) with "heart-rending melodies, lush orchestration, clever transitions and creative textures" (American Record Guide) spans a broad body of work that includes eight symphonies, seven concertos, four string quartets, and his upcoming full opera, *The Square*.

His works have been commissioned, performed, and recorded by leading orchestras and distinguished soloists around the world, such as the Royal Philharmonic, ORF Vienna Radio Symphony, Russian Philharmonic, Baltimore Symphony, and the Zagreb Philharmonic. His large-scale orchestral works engage major philosophical themes and integrate Arabic maqams (modes) with persuasive craft and a marked seriousness of purpose that echo UNESCO's call to preserve and protect the rich cultural heritage of his homeland Syria. Maestro Marin Alsop says "Jandali belongs among the superb composer poets of our time--a meaningful voice of quite astonishing, almost unearthly beauty."

Mr. Jandali has produced ten albums of lauded performances of more than forty of his compositions. He is the first Arab musician to have arranged the oldest music notation in the world, which was featured on his 2008 album *Echoes from Ugarit*. Jandali is composer-in-residence at both Queens University of Charlotte and at Qatar Museums. He is also the founder and CEO of *Pianos for Peace*, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building peace through music and education. Jandali is the recipient of the 2014 Global Music Humanitarian Award, and in 2015 the Carnegie Corporation of New York honored him as a Great Immigrant, a Pride of America. Malek Jandali was born in Germany and raised in Syria. He now makes his home in Atlanta and New York City.



Eugene Rotberg

Librettist

As Vice President and Treasurer of the World Bank, Eugene Rotberg's mission was to bring governments and cultural leaders the financial tools they needed to help their people fight poverty and join the international community. As a lifelong political analyst and student of the humanities, it was also his desire to remind audiences of the universal proverb, "Be careful what you wish for."

During the Arab Spring of 2011, Rotberg as a committed opera scholar and patron wrote the libretto of "The Square" in response to uprisings in Egypt's Tahrir Square and other ambitious popular movements in the Middle East. "The Square" gives voice to all the constituencies fighting power or seeking it, against the constant choral admonition that justice does not always — or even often — follow change.

Rotberg has served as a director on boards at George Washington University, the Washington National Opera, the NPR Foundation, The Theatre Lab, and INMED, a non-profit improving health conditions for children at risk. A former Executive Vice President of Merrill Lynch, Rotberg was designated by Institutional Investor magazine as one of the 40 most influential people in international finance in the last 40 years. Rotberg and his wife, Iris, have two daughters, eight grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Full score, piano reduction, and demo recording available upon request

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