

## SHORT CATALOG OF OPERAS BY COMPOSER JUSTINE F. CHEN



### COMPLETE OPERAS READY FOR PRODUCTION

The Life and Death(s) of Alan Turing • 100 min.

The Dragon • children's opera • 50 min.

The Maiden Tower • computer-enhanced opera • 40 min.

Three, Two, One- BANG! • youth opera • 30 min.

On the Origin • chamber opera • 25 min.

Letter to My Sons Upon the Death of My Father • monodrama • 15 min.

Voice for a Future Nightingale • 7 min.

Chicken or Beef? • 5 min.

Decoherence • 5 min.

### OPERAS READY FOR ORCHESTRATION

Jeanne • 75 min.

The Dragon • children's opera • 50 min.

On the Origin • chamber opera • 25 min.

### OPERAS IN PROGRESS/WORKSHOP STAGE/SEEKING COMMISSION

Twa • 90 min.

Seven Sisters • 90 min.

## COMPLETE OPERAS READY FOR PRODUCTION

### THE LIFE AND DEATH(S) OF ALAN TURING 100 min.

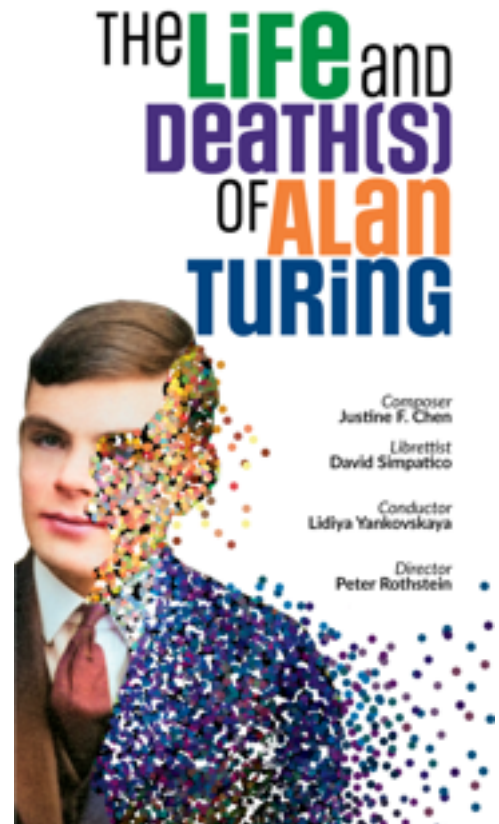
The rise and fall of the brilliant British computer scientist Alan Turing, whose work as part of British intelligence forces during WWII helped create the computer, and who was later prosecuted and chemically castrated because of his homosexuality. The opera begins with his fabled suicide, then goes on to tell a coming-of-age story following the arc of Alan's love life, beginning with his first crush (age 17) through his trial for gross indecency (38) and alleged suicide (41).

Text: David Simpatico

FORCES: Lyric Baritone, Leggiero Tenor, Lyric Tenor, Coloratura Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, SATB chorus. Full Orchestra (32-person)

COMMISSIONED BY AMERICAN LYRIC THEATER. (2012)

WORLD PREMIERE: March 2023, Chicago Opera Theater.  
Music Director: Lidiya Yankovskaya; Stage Director: Peter Rothstein.

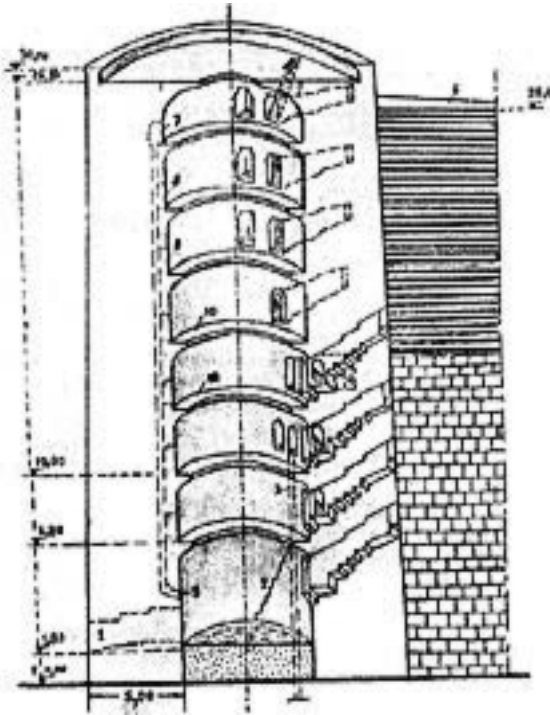


**THE DRAGON** 50 min. Children's Opera (Sung by adults. Optional chorus/audience participation)

A disgruntled monk puts a sign up and fools a town into believing an event will occur. Tensions build as his lie spreads to neighboring villages. Eventually the day comes, and the wild predicted event happens! Or did it?

Text: Justine F. Chen, based on a story by Ryunosuke Akutagawa.

FORCES: Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Bass, Piano [not completely orchestrated or premiered]  
SPONSORSHIP: North Carolina Opera



**THE MAIDEN TOWER** 40 min.

computer-enhanced opera

**A post-apocalyptic retelling of an Azerbaijani folktale. After jealousy between a father, his wife, and their computerized, (possibly sentient) home has resulted in the wife's death, the daughter is now unwittingly trapped inside the house. A visitor arrives, raising uncomfortable questions, ending in the visitor's death.**

Text: Justine F. Chen

FORCES: Basso Cantanto, Coloratura Soprano, Tenor, Actress; chamber orchestra (11-person), Computer Electronics, quadrophonic speaker set up.

HONORS: Selected for New York City Opera's 2006 VOX Showcase of American Composers.

Performed semi-staged at The Juilliard School, Chants Libres and the University of Montréal, Long Leaf Opera, and New York City Opera.

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**THREE, TWO, ONE, BANG!** 30 min.

Youth Opera (performed by teenagers)

**A 25-minute adaptation of Shakespeare's famous *Macbeth*. Set at a carnival, a young Macbeth is taunted by three ladies with disturbing visions from his future.**



Text: Justine F. Chen, based on a play by Shakespeare.

FORCES: 2 soprano, 2 mezzo-soprano, 1 tenor, 1 baritone, Speaking Roles: 1 male, 3 m/f/nonbinary; Piano Quintet.

COMMISSIONED BY LONG LEAF OPERA

WORLD PREMIERE: Local Teens. Music Director: Wayne Wyman. June 11, 2008, Carrboro ArtsCenter

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**ON THE ORIGIN** 25 min.

chamber opera

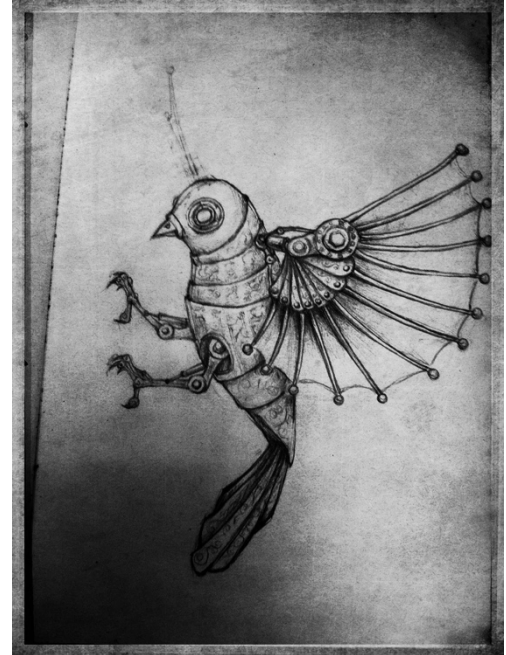
**A steampunk reimagining of the day Charles Darwin completed his most controversial novel, *On the Origin of Species*.**

Text: Rochelle Bright

FORCES: 2 Coloratura Sopranos, Lyric Baritone; Piano  
[not yet orchestrated]

WORKSHOP PRESENTATION: Symphony Space 2009

COMMISSIONED BY AMERICAN LYRIC THEATER



**A LETTER TO MY SONS UPON THE DEATH OF MY FATHER** 14 min.

Monodrama, film

**The opera celebrates the unsung heroes who help the world go 'round, the heroes who show up every day.**

Text: Jacqueline Goldfinger



A.K.A.: Letter to Our Children

FORCES: Mezzo-Soprano, string quartet and harp.

COMMISSIONED BY RESONANCE WORKS

ONLINE PREMIERE: October 3, 2021

Won Best Music Short at the 2022 Paris Short Film Awards.

SCREENED AT Decameron Opera Coalition, Aires Online, Symbiotic Film Festival, Iconic Images Festival, Anatolia International Film Festival, Golden Bridge Istanbul Film Festival, Touradeau Music Festival, Everyday Arias, and others.

NOTES: Video accessible online.

**VOICE FOR A FUTURE NIGHTINGALE** 7 min.

Based on the story of Philomel from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Procne sends her husband, Tereus, on a voyage to fetch her younger sister, Philomel, whom she has not seen in five years. On the return journey, Tereus is so struck by Philomel's beauty that he rapes her, then cuts out her tongue to prevent her from ever telling what happened. Locked away in a cave, unable to speak, Philomel weaves a tapestry that depicts the truth of her violation.

Text: Ken Gass

FORCES: Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Piano.  
[Piano Trio version available]

COMMISSIONED: TAPESTRY  
NEW OPERA WORKS  
COMPOSER LIBRETTIST  
LABORATORY 2008

PREMIERE: Tapestry New  
Opera: Opera Briefs,  
Toronto, ON. Director: Tom  
Diamond. Oct. 2008

US PREMIERE: Underworld Productions, Symphony Space, NYC May 17-19, 2014.



REVIEW: "Composer Justine F. Chen and Librettist Ken Gass give stunning voice to the voiceless victim..." <http://www.classicalite.com/>

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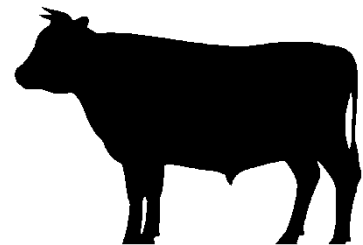
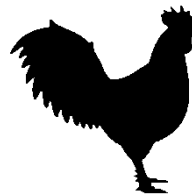
**CHICKEN OR BEEF?** 5 min.

Based on the sibling rivalry of *King Lear's* Edmund and Edgar: each of two brother bulls tries to convince the other to head to the barn. What is at stake? Today isn't just any old day: it's Slaughter Day!

Text: David Brock

FORCES: Tenor, Baritone, Piano

COMMISSIONED: TAPESTRY NEW OPERA  
WORKS COMPOSER LIBRETTIST  
LABORATORY 2008



PREMIERE: Tapestry New Opera: Opera Briefs, Toronto, ON. Director: Tom Diamond. Oct. 2008.

**DECOHERENCE** 5 min.

**Two Sisters, one tragic event. Inspired by Euripides' play Medea, Decoherence explores the relationship of two sisters and hints at a dark past that leads to a disturbing event that destroys a home and shatters lives.**

Text: Andrew Moodie

FORCES: Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Piano.

COMMISSIONED: TAPESTRY NEW OPERA WORKS COMPOSER LIBRETTIST LABORATORY 2008

PREMIERE: Tapestry New Opera: Opera Briefs, Toronto, ON. Director: Tom Diamond. Oct. 2008

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**OPERAS IN ORCHESTRATION STAGE**

**JEANNE** 75 min.

**The last few days of Joan of Arc. We meet Joan in prison, during her last trial. The libretto by the composer uses historical trial transcripts, and alternates between scenes with Joan and her Confessor and eye-witness testimonies.**

Text: Justine F. Chen

FORCES: Coloratura Soprano, Bass (also singing falsetto), Mezzo, Helden Tenor, Baritone

HONORS: Selection for NYCO Vox Showcasing American Composers 2008

REVIEW: "Lyrical, striking... balancing despair and humor" – Vivian Schweitzer, NY TIMES

NOTES: Orchestration not yet determined; excerpts have been orchestrated and performed by full orchestra.



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**THE DRAGON** 75 min. [also listed above]

**A disgruntled monk puts a sign up and fools a town into believing an event will occur. Tensions build as his lie spreads to neighboring villages. Eventually the day comes, and the wild predicted event happens! Or did it?**

Text: Justine F. Chen, based on a story by Ryunosuke Akutagawa.

FORCES: Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Bass, Piano [not completely orchestrated or premiered]

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**ON THE ORIGIN** 25 min. [also listed above]

**A steampunk reimagining of the day Charles Darwin completed his most controversial novel, *On the Origin of Species*.**

Text: Rochelle Bright

FORCES: 2 Coloratura Sopranos, Lyric Baritone; Piano [not yet orchestrated]

## OPERAS IN PROGRESS/WORKSHOP STAGE/SEEKING COMMISSIONER

**TWA** projected 90 min.

**This new opera inspired by the popular folk ballad THE TWA SISTERS, explores the eternal conflict between the opposing forces of love and jealousy; and why this ancient ballad resonates even more deeply today with the proliferation of social media and virtual sharing platforms.**

Text: Jacqueline Goldfinger

FORCES: (7 or 14 singers) 2 Coloratura Sop., 2 Mezzo-Sop., tenor, baritone, bass, piano.



PIANO VOCAL WORKSHOP: Sponsored by Maryland Opera Studio, March 2023. Stage Director: Corinne Hayes.

Video of 60-minute Piano Vocal Workshop Available Upon Request.

SEEKING COMMISSIONER

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**SEVEN SISTERS** projected 90 min.

**In this 90-minute opera, the ritual of a formal Buddhist funeral—as seen from the perspective of Maggie, a second-generation Taiwanese-American—frames a sequence of fractured family memories centering on the fate of sister #3, who was given away at birth.**

Text: Stephanie Fleischmann

FORCES: Lyric Soprano, Lyric Mezzo-Soprano, Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Soubrette, Coloratura Soprano, Spinto. Piano. [Chamber Orchestra (11-person)]

HONORS: OPERA AMERICA'S OPERA GRANTS FOR FEMALE COMPOSERS, 2020; New Works Exploration Grant 2021; WEST EDGE OPERA Aperture Portfolio 2020.

PIANO VOCAL WORKSHOP: Manhattan School of Music March 2022. Music Director: Maestro Kelly Kuo, Stage Director: Aya Ogawa. Video of 60-minute Piano Vocal Workshop Available Upon Request.

SEEKING COMMISSIONER