

volume three
number two

fall 2004



OVERTONE *express*

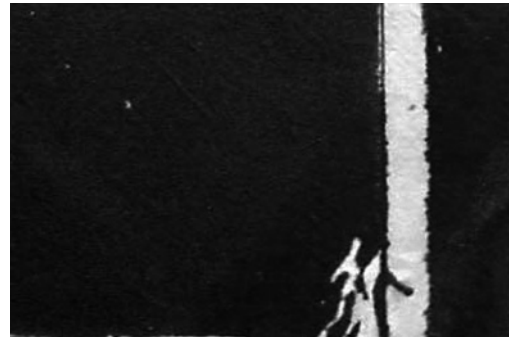


Report from
**WOMAN
IN THE
WALL**

Overtone's currently cloistered opera project will be given its first outing on December 13th at the Berkeley Stage (in Berkeley).

A former church becomes the perfect venue for the first hearing of the first section of our new Medieval opera which will ultimately comprise seven parts. You may not know that *Woman in the Wall* takes place in the 14th century and is the story of a woman immured—she is walled into a room attached to a church—for the rest of her life! Why do we want to know her? Why would one want to “shut one’s self in, not with God, but with a thousand vanities,” as Teresa of Avila described her practice. Our woman finds an intense life: alone, searching, thoughtful, studious. Alone, but not without others. As her reputation as a wise woman grows, she finds herself more and more at the center of others’ need for advice, help and direction. We see her grow from one afraid to take her place before herself, to one in the middle of a constellation of demands, temptations and occasions of vision. By day, she is the dispenser of wisdom to the surrounding villagers. The quality of the questions asked and the answers given release virtues that are, at first, only dimly seen. At night, through the same window used to answer petitioners, the stars sing to her of their views and she sees the carts carrying away the bodies of the plague dead. The King, who provides her living, asks her a particular question that she cannot at first, answer. What are your questions, dear NEWSLETTER reader?

—Kathleen Cramer



*Songs and
Dances*

Set design sketch
by
Snezana Petrovic

see page 2 for details

**SONGS & DANCES
UPDATE**



by
O-Lan Jones

What a great situation we have! A couple of months ago I was at a weekend retreat with some other recipients of a James Irvine Foundation grant that has paired up writers and producing organizations to create new works. This grant was envisioned by David Dower of the Z Space along with the Magic Theatre in San Francisco. There are around 15 groups involved so these collaborations are going on over a period of several years. The retreat was a kind of check-in to see how things were working. I was there representing Kathleen and myself as the commissioned writers of a new opera and Overtone Industries as a producing organization.

Considering the “hands on” necessities of running Overtone, I was at first envious of the writers who only had to write their piece and leave the producing worries to someone else, but as I was listening to some “control freak” horror stories like: producers inflicting re-writes by committee, or producers requiring “timely topics,” or rushing writers because of the new season’s requirements, etc., I suddenly got a sense of what a great situation we have—Kathleen and I write what we care about and we have an amazing Board of Directors and donor support group to help us get it done! It sounds so simple and obvious, but it turns out to be rare. Another wonderful thing about our situation is the luxury of time to develop our work. We don’t have to get our quota of this or that, we only have to be true to our own vision.

Continued on page 2

a call to **ACTION:** *The Woman in the Wall* Irvine Foundation Matching Fund Drive

Dear Friends:

What a wonderful year of accomplishment! With your support during the past year, we were able to conduct two evenings of workshops of *Songs and Dances of Imaginary Lands* with a live audience at the Evidence Room in Echo Park. These workshops gave us our first opportunity to showcase all of the scenes and musical elements of this extraordinary undertaking. If you attended one of those workshops, your comments have helped us to enhance this great new work. Development continues on *S&D* and in the spring of 2005, we will be conducting public workshops that will include all of the artistic elements of the work in progress: words, music and movement. We hope that all of you who have been involved in this collaborative creation so far will be there to witness these upcoming workshops.

We are pleased to announce that Overtone Industries, as part of a consortium of performing arts organizations, has been selected by the James Irvine Foundation to receive a grant to create another new music theatre work, *The Woman In The Wall*. We will receive \$26,000 from the Irvine Foundation over the next two years to create this new work, but we need your help. In order to receive the first \$13,000, the Foundation requires us to demonstrate our ability to generate support from donors like you. **We must raise \$5,000** before the end of this calendar year. We have never been in a position before where we had a real "honest to god" opportunity to match your dollars with money from another institution, but that reality exists for us today. What a great situation we have! **Every \$1 of that \$5,000 from our supporters means a**

match of \$2.60 from the Irvine Foundation! What a wonderful opportunity for you to leverage your support to Overtone Industries! We are confident that we will be able to raise this money and we hope you will consider making your contribution before the end of the year.

Thank you again for your faithful support of Overtone Industries. We promise to continue to create works of theater and music that will challenge and enlighten our audiences and add to the creative life of our city. We welcome your participation in this endeavor. A return envelope is enclosed for your tax-deductible contribution—or—for the first time ever, you can **make a secure donation via Paypal directly through our website:** www.overtoneindustries.org. *Overtone Industries is a registered non-profit 501c3.*

SONGS & DANCES (Continued from page 1)

That Foundation retreat also helped me to recognize that the overarching goal at Overtone Industries is to contribute a legacy of 6 or 7 meaningful and lasting works of art to the American music theatre repertoire, and that these efforts take time, actually YEARS to create, refine and produce. Somehow this realization has given me a sense of peace; when we have a strong idea we owe it the time it takes to grow. My commitment this year for *Songs & Dances of Imaginary Lands* is to procure the remaining orchestrations from the composers and conduct workshops during the fall of 2004 and the winter of 2005 to focus on the movement that takes place. Then, in the spring of 2005, we will present the next stage of development in a public performance at the inspiring Evidence Room. Meanwhile, just let me say thanks again for your abiding support which makes this truly rare and unique situation possible.



Set design sketch for *Songs and Dances* by Snezana Petrovic

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

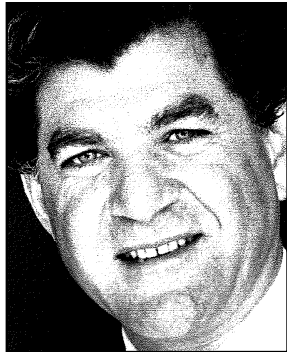
Louise Rodricks
Mitch Ryan

2004 DONORS

Virginia Arnold, Steve Badeau, Xander Berkeley, Michael Birnbaum & Alicia Wollerton, Jo Bloomer, Jim Campbell, Shawna Casey & Jack Kehler, Halldor Enard, Colleen B. Kane, Andy Griggs, Amy Madigan & Ed Harris, Lorna Harris, Rue Harris & Richard Whittaker, Buck Henry, Petur Hliddal & Kathleen Campbell, Leslie Hope, Gretchen Johnson, O-Lan Jones, Kabylia Inc., Harley Jane Kozak, Seth Landberg Foundation, Earl & Lorna Mariferen, 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, Patricia Savoie, Diane Sherry, Sandra & Alan Silvestri, Rosemary Vail, Margaret Von Biesen, Donna White

Overtone Board NEWS

Joining us in sculpting the future of music theatre is Eric Castro, Overtone's Newest Board Member. Eric became acquainted with Overtone when he saw *The Woman Who Forgot Her Sweater* in March 2001 at the John Anson Ford Theater. He writes: "I was so impressed I went to see it again the next weekend; this time with my daughter, Tate, who was then only 6. As part of her education, I wanted her to experience what I considered and hoped to be a glimpse of the future of American opera and musical theater.



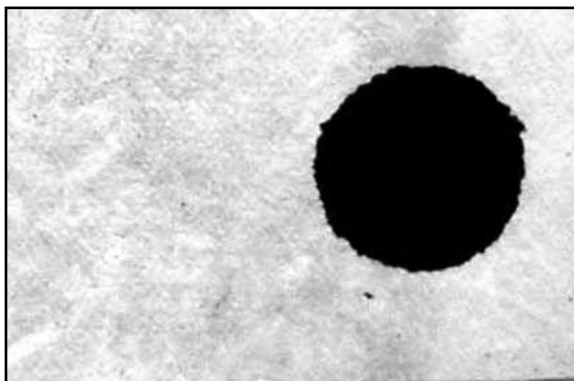
"But it was more than that: there was real magic going on here.

"Tate and I loved it all: the hauntingly beautiful, intensely rhythmic music; the wild, riotously colorful and imaginative choreography and production; and especially the way, at the end, the Woman was actually swallowed whole—leaving behind only Her Sweater—devoured by the phantasmagorical menagerie of her fears, whose magical wild beast costumes were composed of music-making materials: tinkling metal pieces and wooden marimba keys, polyvinyl chloride tubing, whirling and whistling their weird tones.

"And along with all this intense theatricality: existentialism, feminism, and mythological symbolism—What's not to love?

"I was hooked, and I've been following Overtone ever since."

A touring rock and roll guitarist in his (mis)spent youth, Eric now juggles a double life as a partner at Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith LLP and as a well-known baritone on the Los Angeles/West Coast opera scene. Locally, he has sung with Nevada Opera, Las Vegas Opera, Golden West Opera, Santa Barbara Opera and many area symphonies. Eric is also the Artistic Director and co-founder of American Shakespeare Company, for which he has directed, as well as composed original music, for productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet* and *Romeo & Juliet*. We welcome Eric!



Set design sketch for "The Land With No Answer"
by Snezana Petrovic

When O-Lan brings up a project, I say yes, then find out what it is. I've been working with O-Lan off and on for over twenty years (yes she was a little girl when we started). I've been working with Kathleen almost as long. We made drama in the dirt at the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, then at Padua. I always know that anything they propose will be challenging, invigorating, exhausting and bring me to explore places I would never get to any other way. Through Overtone Industries I continue to meet a wide spectrum of brilliant and committed artists. In regular life, I work to make money... so I can do the Overtone projects when they come. (In case you haven't noticed, if they get more money, they just bring in more people... spread the joy.)

O-Lan and Kathleen have the ability to remain optimistic in the face of what others would see as impossible odds. Do music? Hard. Do opera? Harder. Do new opera? Why don't you climb the Himalayas in your pajamas? Hey, that's an idea for a piece, in fact that wouldn't seem odd in *Songs and Dances of Imaginary Lands*, the latest assemblage of new works. I've been lucky enough to sing in *The Man Whose Brother Was Eaten By Wolves* (getting to be the slightly odd uncle wolf—I got to wear a tux, go barefoot and sniff other people—a lot), direct the Christmas demi-epic, *It's a Pretty Good Life* (can a trapeze or roller skates cause more chaos?), *Happy Hour Becomes Electra* (finally got to stage a singing chain saw attack), and later, the workshop of *String of Pearls* at Carnegie Hall (got to play Carnegie Hall!). Along the way, I've sung when the cause needed it. (Got to be a Goddess's "gone to seed" lover. Thank god(s) "new opera" is a wide tent, vocally.) In *Songs and Dances of Imaginary Lands* I got to create the land where people only have rocks to smack together to make music. Where else could I work where all this would be taken seriously? I think it's most telling that when I'm a part of one of the evenings, I always want to see the other pieces—over and over again, every time if possible. Overtone is a unique and wonderful experience. Long may it wave.

**I
ALWAYS
SAY
"YES!"**



Leon Martell as the "gone to seed lover"

**LEON
MARTELL**

Leon's newest play, *The History of Fairfax According to a Sandwich*, charmed audiences and reviewers alike at the Greenway Court Theatre in October/November 2004.



photo: Halldor Enard

O-Lan Jones, Andrea Stein, Patty Cornell • *It's a Pretty Good Life*, Leon Martell, dir.

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.

2004-2005 CALENDAR of Overtone Events

- Fall 2004 – *Songs and Dances* Movement Workshop #1
- Dec 2004 – *Woman in the Wall* Workshop #1 in Berkeley
- Winter 2005 – *Songs and Dances* Movement Workshop #2
- Spring 2005 – *Songs and Dances* Public Workshop at Evidence Room
- Spring 2005 – *Woman in the Wall* Workshop #2 in San Francisco



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.