

Georgi Sztojanov:
SINKING
– *Opera in seven scenes* –

Roles

TENOR – ‘GEO’ (*Bulgarian/Hungarian composer*) / “LOVE”

HIGH SOPRANO – ‘ZSUZSKA’ (*Hungarian physical theater director*) / “REAL”

DRAMATIC MEZZO-SOPRANO – ‘MAYA’ (*Israeli viola player/composer*) / “TRUE”

BARITONE – ‘KRIS’ (*Lebanese graphic designer*) / “CLEAR”

COLORATURA SOPRANO – ‘AUNT’ (*of the composer, expert in esoteric topics*) / “ANGEL”

*The same singers are singing the four Gods and the Aunt the Angel.

Location

The action takes place in a NS train departing from Den Haag HS to an unknown imaginary landscape, the hiding place of the Gods.

Duration 30’

Short synopsis

Four youngsters depart from Hollands Spoor in a train. They get to know each other, talk and try to guess their destination. Geo starts to chat with his Aunt on the phone, the others reflect on some topics of the discussion. The conversation draws a parallel between the Atlantis myth and nowadays civilization. Why were they destroyed and what are the similarities in the mistakes we are doing? They talk about war, change of Love, humans playing Gods etc. Meanwhile, strange things happen. From time to time they stand up and sing a choral on old German poetry by Angelus Silesius. Later on it becomes clear that these are the Gods (‘Real’, ‘True’, ‘Clear’ and ‘Love’) gathering to decide, whether they should repeat the flood (as with Atlantis) or not. After a while the Aunt reveals herself. She is a messenger, an Angel. The youngsters are chosen to be the delegates of humanity and negotiate with the Gods. Each of them can have only one sentence to convince the Gods that humanity is not just another failed experiment. In the final Choral the music reaches its climax, each singer plays at the same time a God, and interrupts the floating music with a try to say the convincing sentence. The four youngsters lie on the floor and the Angel sings the Epilogue.

Character descriptions

GEO

Sometimes smiling with the openness and happiness of a child, sometimes with all the sorrow of the world on his face. He is a control freak, uncertain and changing his opinion all the time. He is strong but weak, hopeful but desperate, loving and hating. He dresses various ways, from mainstream to alternative, but always with a touch of elegance. Big curly hair.

ZSUZSKA

Pale girl in rubber boots with long, red raincoat.

She puts cream on her hands quite often and wears glasses.

MAYA

Her character has many pairs of glasses one on top of the other.

She’s bald and has no shirt on. On her nipples she has latex noses.

From the window they watch cartoons, very 'iphone' application oriented.

When her character is not talking she’s making funny faces, but not looking towards anyone, only looking at a point in the air. Her voice is usually very low, but in the end of sentences it becomes extremely high. She’s talking usually very fast, but then suddenly very slow.

KRIS

Black pants, a one color shirt (preferably dark violet) with a special neck (maybe turtle neck), thick black glasses, short hair on the side, long in the middle, 70s style with a bit of gel, full beard, not too long. Camper shoes, preferably with different shoelaces, 2 rings, in one hand, next to each other.

REAL, TRUE, CLEAR, LOVE

Allegorical figures, the Gods, played by the same singers as mentioned above. They appear only in the chorals, should be majestic, calm. But a bit frightening and disappointed in humanity. There should be a sharp light change every time before and after they sing. They wear may be a cape above their other costumes.

AUNT/ANGEL

In her look she should resemble both Aunt like average dressing (very pretty woman in her 40's) and angelic, white, pure, light figure. She gradually shows more of her heavenly side through the piece, and at the end she is the figure who remains after the final choral.

She appears 3 times:

First she is not in the same space as others (she chats with Geo).

The second time she is in the same space, but only Geo can see her (may be she is hidden behind a veil).

The third time she is among them with all her grace.

She talks "through" Geo in the last skype chat and sings the Epilogue.

Structure

The one act opera is in seven scenes (with several smaller parts):

- I. Phones, books, messages
- II. Directions
- III. Atlantis
- IV. War
- V. Love
- VI. Becoming One
- VII. Go with the flow

The scenes are divided by smaller parts, which all have specified genre (indicating the orchestration) and an approximate duration.

Staging of the musicians

The ensemble is on stage, behind the singers. The seating of the instrumentalists has special importance. Each of the instruments have particular role.

Each of the youngsters have two personal instrument, which represent their positive and negative sides. They sit right behind each singer and create the first row (usually playing in the recitativo accompagnatos or having solistic role in the Arias, ariosos). When the same singers sing the Gods, they are supported by the second row ('baroque' sounding instruments, playing in the Chorals, and the ariosos).

The continuo is provided by the piano and percussion in the recitativo seccos and accompagnatos, and the ariosos and arias, almost throughout the whole piece.

In the chats of 'Aunt' and 'Geo' the continuo is the only accompaniment of the singers.

The furthest situated is the Trumpet and Tuba, the positive and negative instruments of the Angel, or the symbol of destiny.

4 th row Angel's (destiny)		Tr +	Tuba -	
3 rd row Continuo		Pianoforte		Percussion
2 nd row Gods' (chorals)	Ob	Fg	VI2	VIc
1 st row Personal (+ and -)	Fl + Cl -	Cor + Trb -	Sax - VIa +	Cb - VI1 +
Singers:	Soprano	Baritone	Mezzo	Tenor
(their character)	Zsuzska	Kris	Maya	Geo

Genres and orchestration

The genre shows orchestration as follows:

Recitativo secco	Only the personal + - instruments	Continuo
Recitativo accompagnato	All 1 st row (solistic personal + -)	Continuo
Arioso	2 nd row (sometimes solistic personal + -)	Continuo
ARIA	TUTTI	
Choral	Mostly a cappella and only 2 nd row	
Chat	4 th row announcing Aunt, otherwise just	Continuo

Each of the four singers have 1 Aria, 1 arioso etc... (the girls have all 4 genres, the boys only 3)

Each of them has a duet with each of the others.

The aunt appears in three chats and in the end of the opera.

Musical coherence and basic soundscape

The whole piece is based on one single scale (which contains the 12 tones through 2 octaves).

The different characters, themes and genres have all a different distinguished usage of the this scale, in which way it can depict various musical characters and still keep an overall coherence of the pitch organization.

Multimedia ideas

Each of the four characters could have an intellectual and an emotional monitor on stage (could be placed above their usual place). On the intellectual one we can read the actual text the singers say and the characters' thoughts which are unspoken (in brackets in the text). The emotional monitor could be a prerecorded video of the whole length of the opera of each singers' face close-up, where he acts out the feelings of his/her character throughout the whole of the opera.

The titles of the scenes appear on all monitors at the same time.

About the text – improvised versus poetry

The main part of the text is a real conversation created through e-mails by the four main characters (Zsuzsanna Simanyi, Maya Felixbrodt, Kristyan Sarkis and the composer.)

The sessions were moderated by Geo leading the story in a pre-decided direction.

The libretto therefore could be also looked at as a docu-opera, where each character writes his/her own words and actions, serving or going against the originally planned plot.

The chat with the aunt is also real, it is between the composer and his aunt (Pavlina Boeva)

It is a one-time skype chat, where the Aunt gave permission for this text to be used after the dialog, so it was created without the knowledge of being made for the opera.

The contrary of this free, everyday language is a high German poetry, a mysticist of the 17th century, Angelus Silesius. Some excerpts of his book provide the words to the Gods.

The editing of the text and scenario was done by the composer with the reflections of Kristyan Sarkis and Irina Smirnova, and the finalizing of the scenario was supervised by

Javier López Piñón.

Reading the scenario

Bold	title of movement (number, genre, duration)
Bold centered	title of scene (can be read also on the screens in the performance)
Normal	sung text
(In brackets)	thoughts, not to be sung, but to appear on the monitors of the singers' text
<i>Italic</i>	staging instructions

Georgi Sztojanov:
SINKING
- opera scenario -

Prologue (solo) (30'')
GEO

Gott spielt mit dem Geschöpfe
Dies alles ist ein Spiel, das sich die Gottheit macht,
Sie hat die Kreatur um ihretwilln erdacht.

I. Phones, books, trains

1.a. Recitativo accompagnato (30'')

GEO *to Zsuzska*

This is the Netherlands, don't be afraid, no one would take your phone...

May be it just fell out of your pocket?

He gets down to search under Zsuzska's seat and meanwhile touches her knees with his head

(I can't see it. But come on. We'll find it.)

smile between Zsuzska's legs, standing up

MAYA *while staring at the window, suddenly scared*

What is this big hurry thing?

KRIS

God Maya, you scared me...

Where are your huge glasses?

What furry thing?

This is just the reflection of Georgi's hair...

Now back to my emails... Yes, on the iphone...

1.b. ARIA (1')

ZSUZSKA *to all*

I feel a kind of fever if I think about our life.

I mean I'm curious about the theory of relativity or at least I would like to invent a body-fax.

Would you pass if I won't be real, just a hologram?

Forgive me the philosophy I guess I'm tired.

1.c. Recitativo secco (30')

GEO *looking long at Zsuzska to get her point,*

then suddenly turning to Kris, as if Zsuzska's whole aria didn't happen at all

Kris, hurry, not furry!

still looking weird at Zsuzska

MAYA *after long silence*

WHAT?! Why is it running so fast?

1.d. Recitativo accompagnato (1'>)

ZSUZSKA *looking for something in her bag, getting out objects*

Here is Mr. Dostoyevsky, not bad, extremely burning,

the Prophet by Khalil Gibran, could save me from insomnia,

the Seagull by Chekhov for keeping my eyes and heart open.

Hand and body lotion,

purse with photo of the pope,

the little statue of Buddha, that I got from you Georgi, remember?

1.e. Arioso (30")

ZSUZSKA *to all*

It's cold. Can I have jumper?

I forgot everything useful at home.

GEO *to Zsuzska*

Why didn't you bring anything?

You didn't know where we are going?

a bit confused, while searching for something that he could give to Zsuzska

Yes, where are we going?

II. Directions

2.a. Arioso (30")

ZSUZSKA *aside*

The train goes to a chamber, where, the moment before you die,
you can look through yourself and your memories, like in a museum.

2.b. Recitativo secco (30")

MAYA *aside*

It seems like the train is going inside, but actually its going outside.

It seems like the train is going outside, but actually its going inside.

2.c. Recitativo accompagnato (30")

KRIS *aside*

The train is going to the concentration camps where the
humans are being prepared to evacuate earth.

It doesn't surprise me.

Maybe it can heal itself from what we did to it.

2.d. ARIA (1')

GEO *as if no one replied to his question*

Mails, messages, calls. All to connect.

Phones, books, trains. All to connect.

And at the end of the day you find yourself totally isolated.

Awkward silence

15 sec. of crazy laughing of everyone but Geo after this last sentence.

III. Atlantis

3.a. Choral I. (1')

They all stand up and sing:

Stehen is zurücke gehn

Wer in den Wegen Gott's gedächte still zu stehn,

Der würde hinter sich und ins Verderben gehn.

3.b. GEO and AUNT - CHAT 1. (2')

Geo is on his iphone, he is chatting with someone. The others don't hear exactly the answers, but it's a sweet and magical sound surrounding all of them.

First appearance of Aunt: she is further from the others, not in the same space, may be close to Geo, chatting with him.

Nowadays Zsuzska is coming out in allergy so she changes mind moment by moment about opening or closing the window and she makes rhythmical noise with it.

G: oho, my dear aunt! Are you here? How are you?

A: (wave)

G: Can we talk a bit?

A: Yes. If you want.

G: I told you once that I want to write my opera about Atlantis, right?

I'm curious, what do you know about them.

A: ok, but I have a headache and I'll type slower

G: They were really developed, no?

A: I can send you a link where to download a film about it if you find that useful

G: Yes, I could do that, but I enjoy more asking you.

They could communicate with telepathy, heal with songs

A: well, I should have watched those films about Atlantis so I can answer your questions.

G: hehe

A: They were very developed: they reached the unity of the spirit and the body, they could fly, transport in time and space, but at the end they forgot about themselves

G: they thought of themselves as gods?

A: and they where warned 3 times with big disasters and floods.

And the third time they were demolished.

G: they started using their unique possibilities to conquer others.

A: to enslave others...

G: so for egoistic purposes

Well it seems we also took that direction...

to Zsuzska

would you please stop playing with the window?

Just decide if you want it to be opened or closed, ok?

Personal instructions from now on

To Geo:

Suddenly you have a strange feeling as if the train would go backwards, and the things you see in the window are just projections which remind you of going forward.

To Maya:

You hear strange noises around you.

You have the feeling someone is hiding something from you.

You feel the urge to express fear from the unknown.

To Kris:

You feel some strange warmth in the train. First you think its a breeze, but then it becomes a strange feeling - inner warmth too. A smell you remember, a taste, a feeling. You feel as if time started to go backwards. You get a bit dizzy, like as if you smoked pot. You are not comfortable with this feeling, would like to talk to others do they also feel it, but you feel very delusional to control your body.

To Zsuzska:

You have the feeling of some strange presence around you. You feel something important is about to be told to you. You feel something wants to get to you a message. You see some strange reflection of a figure behind Georgi in the window.

3.c. Duett - Recitativo accompagnato (1')

KRIS

Hey, guys, can you also see the audio waves around us, please look, it's coming from Georgi's head...

ZSUZSKA simultaneously with Kris
come on Kris! What the hell are you talking about?
I just feel that warm and cold are changing moment by moment.
stop talking suddenly, and starting to look at the wall behind Georgi as if there would be something very frightening there.

I think I can turn them into words and then letters.

I don't know if I want to know what they're saying.

Okay who is kidding me? Lets come out. Who is it?

I'm a bit scared...

Georgi, who is the man behind your right shoulder?

it's like I'm all alone (...)

Why don't you answer me when I ask you?

surrounded by these waves (...)

This is too surreal for me.

and they are isolating me from the rest of the world.

Zsuzska doesn't dare to speak it loudly so she starts whispering

I feel he wants to tell me something.

there's this gap between my soul and my body

Don't you see him?

and the waves cannot cross over this gap.

she notices that the others are chilled around her.

They are like statues but of course this is only in her mind, so she starts shouting

Hey you demon, what did you do with them?

I want them back!

What? oh Jesus, I just, I can't do that, oh my God...

this is too much what you want from me.

I'm thirsty...

What? well let it happen.. deal.

Zsuzska starts crying, the others don't know why, speak: the demon robbed your souls, and he asked my eyesight in exchange for them! so she gets blind in a psychological way because her hallucinations

3.d. Recitativo accompagnato (1')

GEO *just stopped to chat with his aunt and saw what was going on*

OK, what THE HELL is going on here?

Maya, help me! *I put down Zsuzska to lie.*

Better? I'll get some water...

The door is stuck! Help me! Kris!

It's like in the war.

Strange. ' was just talking about war with my aunt.

And about Atlantis. And ... The future?

IV. War

4.a. Arioso (30")

KRIS

War is the excuse of the human being
to unleash their monstrous nature.
The Desire of Power.
The desire to become God,
or at least what we think is God.
This is what we've been trying to do
from the moment we learned about God anyway.

4.b. Recitativo accompagnato (30")

MAYA

I actually believe in wars.
It's not a WAR where you have people dying in the streets every day.
It's more like a war state of mind:
you party all the time 'cause
we're all temporary here.
You don't think about the future,
you think about now.

4.c. Duett ARIA (1')

KRIS

I have lived the war from far,

though it used to visit me
very, very close.

From my side, it's panic,

loudness,

maybe glass shattering,

no electricity,

family,

quietness sometimes.

MAYA

War is a reality.

There's no situation in which (...)

people would exist without war.

It's not natural.

I don't think it's sad.

It's realistic.

This is how we are build.

Human race is a fucked up product that is waiting to
be changed, replaced, by a more progressed type.

4.d. Choral II. (1,5')

Suddenly they all stand up and sing in old german:

**Das Höllische brennt nur
Die Hölle schad't mir nichts, wär ich gleich stets in ihr:
Daß dich ihr Feuer brennt, das lieget nur an dir.**

*Then they go back to their places where we were before, as if nothing have happened.
They have the feeling that this doesn't happen for the first time... deja vu.*

4.e. Recitativo secco (30")

MAYA

OH! I HAVE THE FEELING THIS ALREADY HAPPENED BEFORE!

GEO

what happened before?

to Zsuzska do you feel better?

to Maya so the humans will be replaced?

to Kris 'cause we played Gods?

KRIS

What happened? Did we actually sing something?

MAYA *simultaneously*

OH! I HAVE THE FEELING THIS ALREADY HAPPENED BEFORE! 3 times

4.f. ARIA (1')

MAYA

The human race will just end.

It has reached its maximum potential.

There too many 'fuck ups' in the system

All these unnecessary feelings -

jealousy, anger, sex, hunger, shit, depression, love

they just create conflicts that we cant solve

4.g. Recitativo secco senza continuo (30")

ZSUZSKA *I'm very hungry but if I think of eating...uh. I need some fresh air.*

Kris can you open the window please?

MAYA OH! I HAVE THE FEELING THIS ALREADY HAPPENED BEFORE!

yes Kris

open the window

so we can go

GEO (Shall we not love humanity anymore?)

MAYA OH! I THE FEELING THIS ALREADY BEFORE!

(Georgi can you pass the vegetables please?)

KRIS let's not open the window, I can't do it. (they know me, they see me)

ZSUZSKA *simultaneously*

(this demon is sitting on my left shoulder)

He is whispering to me all the time. He says this is not a train.

MAYA (You know, if you won't feed the demon he will just die....)

V. Love

5.a. Chat 2. (1')

Second appearance of Aunt: She appears as strong light and makes everyone silent. She is visible only to Geo. She starts to speak to him.

A: What do you want to write about the Atlantides?

G: I think our civilization is a lot alike. We still fall in the same mistakes.

And disasters from everywhere.

A: We can do nothing in comparison, but the problem in its core is the same.

G: But who reads from that? What do we change in ourselves?

The Mayas were right then, and two-o-twelve is really the last year of our civilization?

(the end is near?)

A: well, global change comes when each of us changes individually.

G: yes, but no one changes, right?

5.b. Duet ARIA (30")

GEO and AUNT together

Love was a matter of survival before.

But now you don't need anyone else to survive, hence love changes.

But instead of changing our thoughts of love, we just don't dare to love anymore.

And like that the goal is lost.

5.c. Recitativo secco (1')

ZSUZSKA Actually it is cold isn't? (Georgi can I have the tomato please?)

MAYA I don't mean to be impolite, but who the fuck are you????

(HALLO????!! CAN YOU ANSWER ME PLEASE???)

ZSUZSKA and you? Who the fuck are you? You bald one?

MAYA I'm not fucking anything!

(I mean I could fuck something

but I can't.... so.....)

GEO Stop it guys!

MAYA how do you type bitch?

ZSUZSKA b-i-t-c-h TYPE THIS BITCH

KRIS *meanwhile*

How did this light come in?

(They shouldn't have come in!)

If the end of the world is near I'm prepared...

MAYA come on Kris, your just being lazy again... have an opinion PLEASE!

maya: TYPE THIS BITCH

maya: TYPE THIS BITCH

maya: TYPE THIS BITCH

(maya: TYPE THIS BITCH)

ZSUZSKA B-I-T-C-H oh come on stop shouting next to me, you...

MAYA thank you for the lovely spelling, B-I-T-C-H!

KRIS *to Maya*

Have an opinion? My opinion couldn't be clearer,

(much clearer then my vision at the moment at least...)

ZSUZSKA was a pleasure you...

come on Kris share your vision with us!

(The demon wants to know it....)

MAYA yes!

VI-SION! VI-SION! VI-SION! VI-SION!

5.d. ARIA (30")

KRIS

Love is an instinct. Like survival.

Survival definitely changed since our creation and adapted to every
new culture and invention.

Will survival cease to exist one day? Is that the end?

5.e. Arioso (30")

MAYA

not everybody needs love

some people don't want it at all

they feel its taking too much energy

and too little sex

5.f. Recitativo secco senza continuo (30'')

ZSUZSKA

If I know your weaknesses, and I could hurt you but I still don't do it, that is love.
The ability to control myself because of you. Or of course because of anybody.

5.g. Terzet ARIA (30'')

MAYA

Love is what makes my life better.
It makes me feel more safe.

ZSUZSKA

Love is instinctive.
Even the blind babies do it. It is instinctive.

KRIS

Love is natural.
I don't feel in pain because I'm in love. I feel ecstasy.

VI. Becoming one

6.a. Choral III. (1')

They all stand up again.

**Der Allerverliebteste der Allerheiligste
Wer ist der Heiligste? Der mehr verliebet ist!
Die Liebe macht's, daß man für heilig wird erkiest.**

6.b. CHAT 3. (1')

Third appearance of Aunt/Angel: she is visible to all of them with her full grace.

A: its true, but love isn't love these days.

G: how can you achieve it?

A: it's a behavior to everyone and everything.

Now the old is falling apart to let the new come- the Real, True, Clear, Love.

At the end of the day we shall all become One collective mind.

G: You don't say so? Do we have to?

A: it just happens.

G: so we'll all become One?

A: aha.

VII. Go with the flow

7.a. Skype - Recitativo secco (2')

ZSUZSKA listen I don't really understand: is our last moment here?
*suddenly light goes off the train and electrical stuff make strange noise
there is a continuous deep sound*

ZSUZSKA oh what is happening I can't see!? (It's getting cold...)

GEO oh stop playing blind, Zsuzska! (soo boring)

MAYA she is blind! look! *Maya pushing her off stage*

MAYA I'm sorry...

KRIS Maya! (That Bitch!)

MAYA Hey, I said I'm sorry!

GEO Hello, I'm talking about the end of the world here!!!!!!!

KRIS oh, sorry!

ZSUZSKA God! Why should I spend my last moment with you?

KRIS last moment?

ZSUZSKA MoM!!!!!!

MAYA You have no choice, sorry

GEO Is the global end near?

MAYA You're here, I'm here, THE END

ZSUZSKA I want my Mom! – Actually, now I'm acting. I would never call her...

MAYA if the end's near we can stop trying. We can pretend it was all a big joke.

GEO *from now on he speaks unison with ANGEL*

What if the gods are discussing it now?

What if knowing that the end is close would make us change
and thereby change their decision?

MAYA I'm sorry, no gods for me, only people and nature and space may be

KRIS if the world is going to end we are the ones ending it (*not god*)

GEO and ANGEL

so isn't it our duty then, us, who see the end, to change and awake others to change?

KRIS (*I don't get it*) (*what is happening now?*)

Why are we talking as if the end of the world is near?

GEO and ANGEL what if I tell you it is?

MAYA why not? It's fun to play "what if"

ZSUZSKA lets tell it!

GEO and ANGEL what if I reveal to you our mission and our final destination?

ZSUZSKA if you know

MAYA (flex)

KRIS Our mission is to end to world? (How lame!)

MAYA Are we getting paid to do that?

GEO and ANGEL what if the decision is being made now?

MAYA (puke) by WHOM?

GEO and ANGEL what if you have only one sentence to convince the gods: we are worth it!

That we want to continue, we deserve more patience!

MAYA I'm not convincing anyone, fuck them!

KRIS What if I don't believe we deserve more patience?

MAYA I can continue without their permission.

ZSUZSKA the demon says his name is Gabriel

*(you feel as the train is lifted up from the ground and is shaking from undefined moving in
space and time)*

MAYA hello Gabriel!

KRIS well, hello world (smoke)

GEO well by love.

7.b. Choral IV. (3')

They sing together with the ANGEL

**Das Meer in einem Tröpflein
Sag an, wie geht es zu, wenn in ein Tröpflein,
In mich, das ganze Meer, Gott ganz und gar fließt ein?**

*The last choral is interrupted by the try of each singer to sing his/her convincing sentence
(without text), with only his positive instruments. After the last solo they lie down on the floor.*

Epilogue (solo) (1')

ANGEL

**Es ist noch alles in Gott
Ist's, daß die Kreatur aus Gott ist ausgeflossen:
Wie hält er sie dann noch in seinem Schoß beschlossen?**