

December 14, 2017

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Pittsburgh Opera presents the world premiere of *Ashes & Snow*

A journey to a Dante-esque underworld

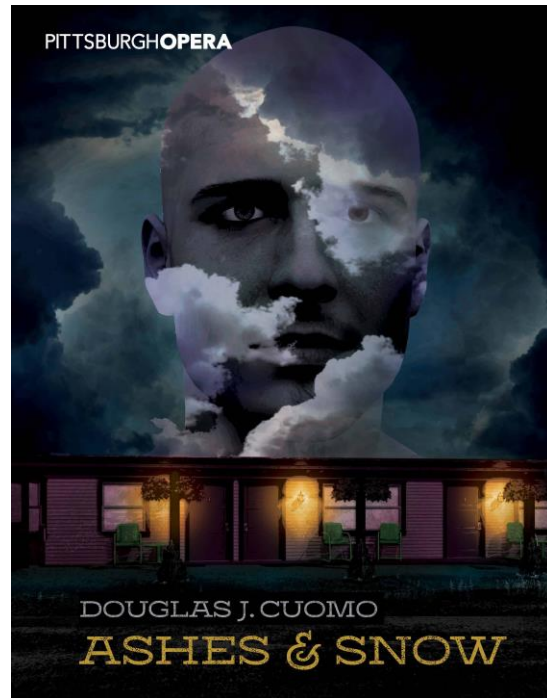
What:	Douglas J. Cuomo's Ashes & Snow , directed by Jonathan Moore
Where:	Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, 2425 Liberty Avenue
When:	Saturday, February 17, 2018 - 8:00 PM Tuesday, February 20, 2018 - 7:00 PM Friday, February 23, 2018 - 7:30 PM Sunday, February 25, 2018 - 2:00 PM
Run Time:	74 minutes, no intermission
Language:	Sung in English with English texts projected above the stage
Tickets:	Single tickets start at \$40 for all performances. Group Discounts available. Call 412-456-6666 for more information or visit pittsburghopera.org/tickets .
Media Events	<i>Please contact ccox@pittsburghopera.org for reservations</i> Photo Call (2/5/2018, 12:30 PM) – location TBA Full Dress Rehearsal (2/15, ~7:00 PM-ish) – Pgh. Opera Headquarters
Related Events <i>See pages 6-7 of this release.</i>	February Brown Bag concert (2/3) Opera Up Close (2/11) WQED Preview (2/10 & 2/16) Meet the Creators (2/17) Meet the Artists (2/20) Audio Commentary (2/20)

Pittsburgh, PA...

Pittsburgh Opera is proud to produce our second world premiere in two years. **Ashes & Snow**, composed by [Douglas J. Cuomo](#) and directed by Jonathan Moore, will premiere in the intimate environs of Pittsburgh Opera's historic headquarters in Pittsburgh's Strip District in February, 2018.

Ashes & Snow is based on [Wilhelm Müller](#)'s 24-poem cycle which was used as the text for [Franz Schubert's](#) famous [Winterreise](#) ("Winter Journey").

The 24 poems and songs of the Winterreise tell an anguished story of lost love, through what is essentially a single dramatic monologue, sung here by award-winning Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist tenor [Eric Ferring](#).



Ashes & Snow is set in the present day, and unfolds in a run-down motel room in the desert of the American West. The protagonist must confront his demons and face up to everything he has done, and all he has lost, in his life. He is searching for forgiveness, enlightenment, and atonement.

Mr. Ferring will be accompanied by three on-stage musicians, led from the piano by Pittsburgh Opera Director of Musical Studies Mark Trawka. Also included is a trumpet, an electric guitar played by the composer himself, and electronic sound effects. The musical style is '21st century art-song,' infused with acid jazz and punk energy, to create a very raw and emotional experience.

Composer Douglas J. Cuomo is perhaps most well-known for his opera "[Doubt](#)", based on the play and movie of the same name, which premiered at [Minnesota Opera](#) in 2013.

After its world premiere at Pittsburgh Opera, **Ashes & Snow** will be performed at the prestigious [Brooklyn Academy of Music](#) (BAM) in autumn 2018.

Ashes & Snow is being developed in partnership with [American Opera Projects](#) (AOP). AOP is at the forefront of the contemporary opera movement, commissioning, developing, presenting, and producing opera and music theatre projects, collaborating with young, rising, and established artists.

Interesting facts about **Ashes & Snow**

1. **Ashes & Snow** composer Douglas J. Cuomo also composed the theme music for the hit TV show *Sex and the City*.
2. Tenor [Eric Ferring](#) was recently named one of Pittsburgh's "Who's Next in Music" by [The Incline](#) in October, where he was among a vibrant list of "21 young leaders defining the new Pittsburgh sound."
3. This will be the fourth Pittsburgh Opera project involving [American Opera Projects](#) (AOP), and the third in the past two years. The first three were **Paul's Case** (2014), **As One** (2017), and **The Summer King** (April, 2017), which was Pittsburgh Opera's first world premiere.

The songs, in brief

The poems upon which **Ashes & Snow** is based "tell the story of a lonely traveller who ventures out into the snow on a journey to rid himself of his lost love. Along the way he experiences a turmoil of different emotions, mostly ranging from despair to greater despair."
- [Jeanell Carrigan](#)

The following brief synopsis of each of the Winterreise's 24 poems is adapted from [Wikipedia](#).

1. "**Good Night**": "A stranger I arrived; a stranger I depart." In May, he won the love of a girl and hoped to marry her. But now the world is dreary, and he must leave, in winter, in the dead of night, finding his own way in the trackless snow. He writes "Good Night" on her gate as he passes to show he thought of her.
2. "**The Weathervane**": The weathervane on her house creaks in the shifting winds, mocking him and showing the inconstant hearts inside. "What do they care about my suffering? Their child is a wealthy bride!"
3. "**Frozen Tears**": He notices he has been crying and chides his tears for being only lukewarm so that they freeze. They come out of his heart hot enough to melt all the winter's ice!
4. "**Numbness**": He looks in vain for her footprints beneath the snow where she once walked with him through the green meadow; he wants to melt away the snow and ice with his tears. He has nothing to remember her by except his pain. She is frozen in his heart; if it thaws, her image will flow away.
5. "**The Linden Tree**": The tree, a reminder of happier days, seems to call him, promising rest. But he turns away, into the cold wind. And now, miles away, he still hears it calling him: "Here you would find peace."

6. **"Flood Water"**: The cold snow thirstily sucks up his tears; when the warm winds blow, the snow and ice will melt, and the brook will carry them through the town to where his sweetheart lives.
7. **"On the River"**: The gaily rushing river lies silent under a hard crust. In the ice, he carves a memorial to their love. The river is an image of his heart swelling up powerfully beneath the frozen surface.
8. **"A Backwards Glance"**: He recounts his headlong flight from the town and recalls his springtime arrival in the "city of inconstancy," and two girlish eyes that captivated him. When he thinks of that time, he would like to go back and stand silently in front of her house.
9. **"Will o' the Wisp"**: The false light of the will-o'-the-wisp has led him astray, but he's used to that. Every path leads to the same goal. Our joys and sorrows are but a trick of the light. Every stream reaches the sea, every sorrow its grave.
10. **"Rest"**: Only now that he has stopped to rest does he realize how tired & sore he is. And in the quiet he feels for the first time the "worm" which stings him inwardly.
11. **"Dream of Spring"**: He dreams of springtime and love, but wakes to cold and darkness and the shrieking of ravens. He sees frost leaves painted on the window. When will they turn green? When will he again embrace his beloved?
12. **"Solitude"**: He wanders, like a sad and lonely cloud, through the bright and happy life around him. "Even when the storms were raging. I was not so miserable."
13. **"The Post"**: He hears a postal horn. "Why does my heart leap up so? There's no letter for you! But maybe there's some news of her?"
14. **"The Gray Head"**: Frost has turned his hair gray and he rejoices at being an old man. But when it thaws, he is horrified to be a youth again: "How far it is still to the grave."
15. **"The Crow"**: A crow has been following him. It has never left him, expecting to take his body as its prey. "It won't be much longer now. Crow, show me constancy unto death!"
16. **"Last Hope"**: He gambles on a leaf quivering in the wind. If it falls from the tree, all his hopes are dashed. He falls to the ground himself and weeps over the "grave" of his hopes.
17. **"In the Village"**: Dogs bark, and all the people are asleep, dreaming of success and failure, finding on their pillows what eluded them in life. "I am done with all dreaming. Why should I linger among the sleepers?"
18. **"The Stormy Morning"**: The storm is an image of his heart, wild and cold like the winter.

19. "**Illusion**": A dancing light wants to lead him astray, and he is glad to go along. "Behind ice and night and horror" it shows him a warm, bright house and a loving wife within. Illusion is all he has to go on.
20. "**The Signpost**": "Why do I take secret ways and avoid the other travelers? I've committed no crime. What foolish desire drives me to seek the wastelands?" He journeys endlessly, seeking peace and finding none. A signpost points the way: "I must travel a road where no one has ever yet returned."
21. "**The Inn**": He comes to a graveyard and wants to enter. But all the rooms in this "inn" are taken; he resolves to go on his way with his faithful walking-stick.
22. "**Courage**": He shakes the snow from his face and sings cheerfully to silence his heart's stirrings, striding into the world, against wind and weather: "If there's no God on earth, then we ourselves are gods!"
23. "**The False Suns**": He sees three suns staring at him in the sky. "You are not my suns! Once I too had three, but the best two have now set. If only the third would follow, I'll be happier in the darkness."
24. "**The Hurdy-Gurdy Man**": Back of the village stands a hurdy-gurdy man (organ grinder), cranking his instrument with frozen fingers. His begging bowl is always empty; no one listens, and the dogs growl at him. But his playing never stops. "Strange old man. Shall I come with you? Will you play your hurdy-gurdy to accompany my songs?"

Full texts of the songs, with a good translation by Celia Sgroi, are available as a PDF at http://www.gopera.com/lieder/translations/schubert_911.pdf

Tickets and Group Discounts

- Tickets to all performances of **Ashes & Snow** start at \$40
- All performances are at the Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, 2425 Liberty Avenue, in the Strip District
- To purchase tickets, call 412-456-6666, visit the Theatre Square Box Office, or buy online at https://opera.culturaldistrict.org/production/51816/list_performances
- Group discounts are available. For discounted group tickets (6 or more), contact Regina Connolly at 412-281-0912, ext. 213.

Sponsors

- [PNC](#) is the 2017-18 Pittsburgh Opera Season Sponsor
- [WQED-FM](#) is Pittsburgh Opera's Media Sponsor
- Tuesday performance sponsor: [Ambridge Regional Distribution and Manufacturing Center](#)

Cast and Artistic Team: *Ashes & Snow*

Protagonist	Eric Ferring*
Composer	Douglas J. Cuomo
Director	Jonathan Moore
Scenery & Properties Designer	Brandon McNeel
Video Designer	Joseph Seamans
Lighting Designer	Cindy Limauro
Assistant Director	Frances Rabalais*
Sound Design	Kristian Tchetchko
Stage Manager	Emily Grand

* Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist

Related Events for *Ashes & Snow*

February Brown Bag concert

Saturday, February 3, Noon - 1:00 PM

George R. White Opera Studio, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, [2425 Liberty Avenue](#)

Pittsburgh Opera's free February Brown Bag concert will include some of our Resident Artists' favorite selections. The concert is free and open to everyone. Bring a friend and bring a lunch! Meet the Resident Artists afterward at an informal reception.

Doors open at 11:30 AM. Handicapped parking is available by reservation. For more information: 412-281-0912 or <http://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/february-brown-bag-concert2>

Opera Up Close - *Ashes & Snow*

Sunday, February 11, 2018 2:00 - 3:30

Founders' Room, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, 2425 Liberty Avenue

Opera Up Close is an in-depth look at the music and story of Douglas J Cuomo's [Ashes & Snow](#), with the singer and directors from the production, in the George R. White Opera Studio at Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters.

Admission is \$5; the event is free to members of [FRIENDS of Pittsburgh Opera](#) and donors at \$50+. Handicapped parking is available by reservation. For more information: 412-281-0912 or visit <http://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/opera-up-close-ashes-snow>

Ashes & Snow - Previews on WQED-FM 89.3 and WQED.ORG

Saturday, February 10, 12:30 PM - 1:00 PM and

Friday, February 16, 7:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Hosted by WQED, and broadcast over the airwaves on WQED-FM 89.3 as well as the WQED website, the **Ashes & Snow Preview** gives listeners an engaging introduction to

the singer, music, and story of the opera. For more information:

<http://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/wged-preview-ashes-snow>

Meet the Creators

Saturday, February 17, 2018 7:00 PM

George R. White Opera Studio, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, [2425 Liberty Avenue](#)

Join us on opening night for an unforgettable pre-show event where you can meet the creators of **Ashes & Snow**.

Pittsburgh Opera General Director Christopher Hahn will emcee a lively and engaging 30-minute talk with composer Douglas J. Cuomo, who is also playing electric guitar in the four performances, and Stage Director Jonathan Moore. Free to all Saturday ticketholders, no reservations necessary.

Audio Description: Ashes & Snow

Tuesday, February 20, 7:00 PM

George R. White Opera Studio, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, [2425 Liberty Avenue](#)

Ticketholders with visual impairments are invited to use Pittsburgh Opera's Audio Description service at our Tuesday performances. Trained volunteers describe the scenery, costumes, and stage action. The listeners hear these descriptions via assistive listening devices. Those wishing to use Audio Description should reserve seats to the Tuesday, February 20th performance by contacting Regina Connolly at 412-281-0912, ext. 213 or groups@pittsburghopera.org. Braille and large-print programs are also available.

Meet the Artists: Ashes & Snow

Tuesday, February 20

Immediately following the performance

Ticketholders for the Tuesday, February 20 performance of **Ashes & Snow** are invited to remain in their seats at the conclusion of the performance when [General Director Christopher Hahn](#) interviews tenor Eric Ferring, composer Douglas J. Cuomo, and Pittsburgh Opera Director of Musical Studies Mark Trawka. This event is free to all Tuesday performance ticketholders.

COMING UP NEXT for Pittsburgh Opera:

[Moby-Dick](#), March 17 – 25, 2018

Pittsburgh Opera celebrates its 79th season in 2017-18. Established by five intrepid women in 1939, Pittsburgh Opera is viewed as one of the most vibrant opera organizations in the U.S., with a rich artistic tradition, outstanding educational programs, an acclaimed artist training program, and a progressive outlook toward the future. Its green initiative culminated in LEED® Silver certification for its Strip District headquarters, and its capacity as a true community partner has increased significantly under General Director Christopher Hahn's leadership.

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