

TOD MACHOVER

Critical Acclaim

“a musical visionary”

– **The New York Times**

“America’s most wired composer”

– **Los Angeles Times**

“Death and the Powers doesn’t point the way to a new era of opera. It’s there. Now.”

– **Philadelphia Inquirer**

“innovative, grandly imagined science-fiction opera”

– **Opera News**, on the recording of Machover’s “Death and the Powers”

“Perhaps the most remarkable thing about [the opera], however, is how seamlessly the technology and the music worked together, so that all that hardware and software was about the people and the story, not about itself.”

– **Wall Street Journal**, on “Death and the Powers”

“The ‘future’ part is embodied both in the orchestral writing, which skillfully combines acoustic and electronic music to create a remarkable range of colors and levels, and in the staging: not just the rather charming robots that grow, shrink and whiz around the stage, but the way that technology creates the playing environment, even allowing the main character's performance to influence and animate the set.”

– **Wall Street Journal**, on “Death and the Powers”

“Machover’s score is hardly mere pastiche. Whether energetice or lyrical or even in the realm of parody...Machover’s music always sounds like his own. Personal conviction, a rarity in so much contemporary opera, seems always at the center of this rangy, emotionally engaging score—never more so than at the very end when the music becomes a kaleidoscopic mach-up of lots of Schoenberg all at once.”

– **Musical America**, on “Schoenberg in Hollywood”

“The score that Machover created, however, crackles, quite literally, with electricity. It incorporates many prerecorded musics. Bach’s “Musical Offering” runs through it in gorgeous, ghostlike shards. There are allusions to Bob Dylan and to dance music. In a central section, the voice of the stunning mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt is heard in wild flights of computerized fancy. The work’s true theatricality is in the performances, where the three performers--drawn from the pool of assistants--wave their hands around sensors effecting the prerecorded music, causing it to surge in various ways, shaping dynamics, bringing out different layers.”

– **Los Angeles Times**, on “Brain Opera”

“The technological triumph of linking voice to stage, and the acoustical instruments of the excellent orchestra to the synthesized instruments is impressive... Mr. Machover and his students invented magical machines. Most happily, [Mr. Machover and Ms. Paulus] will introduce new generations of Mirandas to the Brave New Worlds of art and technological possibility.”

— **International Herald Tribune**, on “Death and the Powers”

“Blending acoustic and electronic sounds, symphony orchestra and interactive computers, classical arias and ultra modern rhythms, Machover — supported by the choreographer Karole Armitage — makes images dance and sing; the music is emotional and brilliant.... “

— **Le Monde**, on “Death and the Powers”

“‘Schoenberg in Hollywood’ works splendidly as theater, and as an opera whose score allows its clever libretto to work its magic, seems likely to follow Machover’s previous successes.”

— **Classical Voice North America**

“Ultimately, all of his work is brain opera, a vast network of musical neurons enthusiastically making connections between musical traditions, past and present, not normally joined.”

— **Musical America**, on “Brain Opera”

“Boston Modern Opera Project, under the masterful leadership of Gil Rose, gives an extraordinary rendering of Machover’s scintillating, shape-shifting electro-acoustic score.”

— **Opera News**, on the recording of Machover’s “Death and the Powers”

“Machover is a remarkable composer. [His] technological inventions in giving to sounds, through electronics, new sonorities, new eloquence, have been widely and amply acclaimed. But I’d like to stress what a good opera composer he is, bringing the ‘traditional’, necessary skills to a far from traditional work. Machover has a command of expressive vocal gesture. He sets words sensitively, with a feeling for the natural weight, stress and length of syllables rare today. Voices and instrumental/electronic sound are well balanced. The final duet is a moving modern addition to the great line of father-daughter exchanges: Boccanegra-Amelia, Rigoletto-Gilda, even Wotan- Brünnhilde. This was a grand, rich, deeply serious new opera, presented by a team with manifold coherent accomplishments.”

— **Opera Magazine** (UK), on “Death and the Powers”

“Tod Machover’s Death and the Powers could help the principality [of Monaco] regain its reputation for artistic innovation. Although a figure of post-Boulez musical abstraction, composer Machover’s music never alienates the ear. His consonant vocal lines are shown to best advantage in Miranda’s heart-rending lament. I have only praise for the production of Diane Paulus.”

— **Musical America** on “Death and the Powers”

“Machover, Paulus and their team from the MIT Media Lab used all the technical resources at their disposal to produce an evening of captivating electronic invention. Alex McDowell’s design incorporates a group of agile robots (“operabots”), as well as mobile panels and a musical chandelier that represent through sensitive software the essence of the Powers personality. Any worry that the opera might be taking itself too seriously is answered by Pinsky’s witty and at times lighthearted libretto. The singers and director Paulus found convincing humanity in this world of gadgetry, and they fully deserved the enthusiastic welcome of the public at the first night.”

— **Opera News**, on “Death and the Powers”

“You may not have heard of Tod Machover, but he has probably changed your life, and will probably do it again. You can’t say that of many experimental classical composers, but then not many of them have just premiered an opera whose lavish set is actually a complicated and unique musical instrument that can be stroked, tickled and muffled into expressing the musicality of an offstage singer in wholly novel ways...Death and the Powers is a perfect emblem for Machover’s overall project. The side effects are hard to predict, but you might well see them at every rock gig or festival you go to five years from now, or every time you turn on your smartphone.”

— **Sunday Times** (London), on “Death and the Powers”

“The fluidity between the music coming from the orchestra and the electronic soundscape was striking, a marvel, which comes as no surprise as sound designer Ben Bloomberg, an MIT Media Lab PhD candidate, has worked with Machover since 2007, and has been masterfully imagining and creating sonic worlds with him ever since, including work on Machover’s six City symphonies as well as his robot opera, Death and Powers. Subtle amplification of voices and tasteful electronic sounds revealed a fluency of ideas that in lesser hands would hardly have made a successful marriage of multiple mediums and traditions. Machover quotes Schoenberg without being too literal, quotes Hollywood without being cheesy, and employs synths and electronica in excellent taste through a portal that welcomes all these styles and genres while maintaining an identity of its own. The score breathes and grows with the narrative and acts almost as a character in its own right. Schoenberg would smile, considering his own artistic struggles.”

The Boston Musical Intelligencer, on “Schoenberg in Hollywood”