

## ***Beauté et Abandon***

Opéra pour quatre voix  
dans espace augmenté

“*Beauté et Abandon*”, *opera production, Chants Libres Montréal, 20011, in collaboration with Wajdi Mouawad, libretto, Zack Settel, /music and Pauline Vaillancourt, direction.*

*Beauté et Abandon* is a dramatic work for four singers in a 3D audiovisual space. This work situates its four singers (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) and public within the same “augmented” audiovisual space. The performance space, equipped with multiple projection screens and loudspeakers, provides an audiovisual space, through which, “*flow*” the opera’s elements: libretto text, score, electronic voice processing regions, musical accompaniment and imagery. The singers’ voices are captured and accompanied by these elements which eventually reach members of the public located elsewhere in the space.

In the “augmented” space of the opera, the projected image on screens serves as a “window” into some imaginary and coexisting 3D scenescape where audiovisual objects, audible at any location, may be seen as well. In this scenescape, complex interplay among the elements of a music composition can be rendered tangible and direct. Concepts of music in space can be revisited, where streams of music compositions can intermingle in the manner of the parade music that Charles Ives spoke of. The pervasive nature of the audiovisual content, scattered about the physical space in potentially all directions lends particularly well to dramatic forms, such as opera, where the rendering and use of the performance space is germane to the work. In such spaces, singers can be immersed in an audiovisual scenescape. Musical elements streaming by can be displayed in audio and image, and can include the text of the libretto, voice processing units which electronically modify the sound of the singer’s voice and dynamic image fields which accompany the music. The experience of this might be something like:

“You are in a large space near a 50 meter long ribbon-like projection screen that runs from one end of the space to the other. Audio speakers are located along its length and so are four singers, whose positions along the screen change during the course of the opera. On the screen you see and hear different audiovisual material stream by both you and the singer you are standing near; you hear her singing the libretto that is streaming by, and you hear her voice reverberated and echoed by objects on the screen which pass by, carrying echoes of her voice away with them downstream. At the same time you see and hear echoes from other singers “upstream” from you. You are in fact standing along the length of a multi-voice cannon, encountering harmony and counterpoint exploded in space, as did composer Charles Ives in the streets of Danbury Connecticut”.

- Zack Settel, Oct. 2007