

## **Icarus**

"Icarus" reveals the correspondence between indoor and outdoor dimensions: What is a sky opera with flying Daedalus and flying Icarus in an outdoor production of environmental dimensions, can become an indoor production, with video substituting for expanses of real space, in limited space—and can become a "laser opera" in an indoor production, with laser projections suggesting sky and sun, in a traditional stage enclosure. Technology takes the broker's role when it comes to trading intensity for breadth and speed of change for cowering reality.

Icarus whom we tend to idolize is the genius "Jüngling ohne Eigenschaften"—we only know his name; Daedalus whom we tend to despise is laden with the weight of problem-solving—a compulsive technocrat with paternal sentiment. They propel each other in an idealistic realm. Their human essence would remain uncommunicable without the mediating passion of Pasiphae.

Otto Piene

## **ICARUS**

Music: Paul Earls

Text: Otto Piene and Ian Strasfogel

Staging: Ian Strasfogel

Conductor: Richard Pittman

Equipment: Otto Piene

Illumination: James F. Ingalls

Video: Betsy Connors

Laser: Paul Earls and Otto Piene

Sun Projections: Ron Hays

CAST:

Pasiphae: Valerie Walters

Voice of Minos: Otto Piene

Daedalus: Robert Honeysucker

Icarus: Horst Pangerl

Children Choir: Hauptschule Harbach (directed by Hans Bachl)

Musicians: The Boston Musica Viva

Drums: Dean Anderson

Trumpet: Peter Chapman

Trombone and Bass Trumpet: Donald Sanders

French Horn: Richard Sebring

Piano, Alpha-Syntauri

Synthesizer: Margaret Ulmer

Clarinets, Saxophone: William Wrzesien

Musical rehearsal: Margaret Ulmer

Technical realization: Delle Maxwell, Marc Palumbo, Lees Ruoff, Walter Zengerle

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Sponsor of Icarus: SKY ART Conference '82, CAVS/MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts at Ars Electronica /Brucknerfest, Linz, Austria, 1982

## **PAUS EARLS**

### **ICARUS—A Sky Opera**

Icarus was first performed in September, 1978 in a mall in Washington, D.C., as the culminating outdoor event of "Centerbeam"—a performing sculpture and installation by the CAVS/MIT Broadly based on Ovid, the scenario incorporated additional texts which I felt were related to the theme, drawn from the writings of Gertrude Stein, E. A. Hausman, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

Otto Piene and I developed the concept further, integrating performers with the visual media and air sculptures we used in other work. We collaborated on the labyrinth scene, combining lasers, music, and inflatable sculptures for performances at the Biennale for Visuelle Kunst und Graphik in Vienna in 1979 and in January, 1982, at MIT's Hayden Gallery.

In September 1981, scenes from Icarus were performed for the first SKY ART Conference at MIT Daedalus "flew" through a combination of live performance and superimposed video images. For the SKY ART Conference '82 in Linz, Ian Strastogel created a new scenario and text; three new characters (Minos, the Minotaur, and Pasiphae) were added to the cast. Otto Piene transposed the new text into German, which I then used as the basis for the Ars Electronica production.

### **Paul Earls**

#### **Music**

Three layers of music have been written for various productions of Icarus, dating back to 1978. The present concert hall /theater production in German contains revisions of previous music as well as a great deal of new music to be premiered in Linz. The musical idioms are eclectic. They range from electronic processing of voices to jazz and folk music. Other elements are non-pitched electronic and instrumental sonorities; analog and digital musical synthesizers; aleatoric procedures; serial processes; directed improvisation; tonality; traditional triadic sonorities, and finally, a set of variations on a popular melody (including a March and Chorale Dirge).

The musical personalities differ widely, Daedalus, the boastful, self-confident composite of Leonardo, Bacon Newton, Edison (and Drs. Frankenstein and Moreau), sings lines which allow for great expansiveness of gesture. Karus' charm is represented by a children's chorus which occupies a good portion of the musical spectrum. Pasiphae, the passionate, complex woman whose identity and actions penetrate all parts of the myth, has the widest musical range, e.g. introspection, motherly love, and lust. Minos, a steely, bitter old man, is represented by an electronically processed speaking voice. The Minotaur is embodied in the trombone and the french horn, using pitched and noise-producing playing techniques. The work is one continuous "act", with nine "scenes". Each of the three performers dominates a third of the work, beginning with Pasiphae, then Daedalus, and ending with Icarus.

I create music layer by layer. First I sketch out vocal lines which are revised after consultation with the singers who indicate where they need particular instrumental help to find their pitches. From this I compose a bare instrumental harmonic /rhythmic framework to serve as a basis for more expressive, figurative elaboration. When electronic music or a tape is present, it is created first (e.g. the other elements key off of the taped speeches of Minos). However, voice, when present, is generally the musical focus. I feel that the text should be clearly understood; hence I labor at clarity and use repetition of key phrases.

Icarus is my fifth opera. My first opera, *Flight* (1965), after the novel by Evelyn Eaton, was already an indication of my fascination with the theme. In that earlier work, a commercial airline trip served as an elaborate metaphor for the Rite of Passage, a community en route to the life after death. *Icarus* also concerns a flight towards death. Ovid says that the body of Icarus was never found. We have followed this convention by having our Icarus fall when coming too close to the sun, but there is another possible interpretation which I prefer; that flight of the soul in Dantes' *Paradiso*, which seeks reunion with light, wisdom, life, and its creator—personified by the sun.

## **Ian Strasfogel** **"ICARUS"—Synopsis**

In the shape of a bull, Zeus seduced Europa, who gave birth to three sons, among them Minos, who became King of Crete. Minos tells of his punishment by the gods, caused by his failure one year to sacrifice a bull. The gods caused his wife, Pasiphae, to fall in love with that bull. Her passion for the animal leads to the birth of the frightening and pathetic Minotaur, half man, half beast.

To hide this monster, symbol of his cuckoldry and shame, Minos commissions his inventor, Daedalus, the epitome of HOMO FABER, to build the labyrinth, a maze from which no one can escape. After it is built, the tyrant, outraged by Daedalus' role in enabling Pasiphae to copulate with the bull, forces the inventor and his son Icarus to join the Minotaur in the labyrinth.

Daedalus' imprisonment inspires his inventive powers. He devises wings of feathers and wax and instructs his young son on their proper use. He must keep to the middle course, avoiding the heat of the sun and the waters of the sea. They fly from their prison. Icarus is soon completely lost in the ecstasy of flight, his troubled father exhorts him to stop ascending and join him below.

Icarus sees himself as "the golden price of the fire red sun" and soars "upwards, further, on and on" into the sun's rays. Finally, the wax of his wings melts and Icarus plummets to his death.

## **Ian Strasfogel** **A Word from the Director**

Music Theater constantly seeks a new vocabulary, a new syntax. Technology can provide such a new language, expanding the potential of story-telling through sound. For this to happen, all collaborators—musicians, visual artists, singing actors, director—all must agree on the expressive goal. Otherwise, it will be merely decorative trimming. The great challenge in our transformation of the Minos-Pasiphae-Daedalus-Icarus legend has been to use complex technology for our theatrical purposes. Laser projections, inflated sculptures, still and video projections can be merely delightful toys or ponderous industrial products. We wanted neither. We sought to tame them for our aesthetic and expressive ends.

We have used these technological elements for their non-literal, allusive qualities, to expand upon the human and narrative textures found in the Greek legend. We have constantly reintroduced and varied the story's key images of bull, sun, wings, machines. Through this, we have aimed to make the story and characters more powerful than they could ever be in a conventional theatrical format. Through intensive work with our performers, I have sought to

balance the vast images of the technology with the intense honesty of the live performer—our guide and representative in the journeys of this immensely important fable of a great inventor and his hero-fool of a son.

### **Valerie Walters**

*Mezzo-soprano*

Born: England

Education: New England Conservatory of Music, VMLTOP Massachusetts, M.M.; Mannes College, New York, Operatic Training

Major Opera Roles (partial list): in Boston with: Associate Artists Opera Company, The New England Chamber Opera, The Cambridge Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, 1974, roles as "Secretary" in The Consul, "Amneris" in Aida; with Boston Lyric Opera: "Fricka" in Das Rheingold and Die Walkure, 1981/82 Season

Major choral/symphonic solos (partial list): Beethoven's Missa Solemnis and Ninth Symphony at Symphony Hall, Boston, Massachusetts; Handel's Messiah, Verdi's Requiem, Musica Viva's Stravinsky Festival in Jordan Hall, Boston, Massachusetts (current season)

**Sky Work:** Role of "Pasiphae", Sky Opera "Icarus", by Paul Earls with Otto Piene, "Sky Art Conference '82"

### **Robert Honeysucker**

Baritone

Education: Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi, B.A. Miami University, Oxford, Chic, M.M. Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts

Major opera roles (partial list): with Artists International, Boston Lyric Opera, Cambridge Opera Company, Connecticut Opera, Concert Opera Orchestra, Monadnock Music Festival, Opera Company Of Boston, Opera New England, Opera South, Providence Opera Theater, American Repertory Theatre.

Major choral/symphonic performances (partial list): with Back Bay Chorale, Chorus Pro Musica, Concord Chorus, Concord Symphony, Eastern Connecticut Symphony, Paul Madore Chorale, Masterworks Chorale, Portland Symphony, Worcester Masterworks Chorale

**Sky work:** role of "Daedalus", sky opera "Icarus", by Paul Earls, "Sky Art Conference '81", CAVS/MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1981; role of "Daedalus", sky opera "Icarus", by Paul Earls with Otto Piene, "Sky Art Conference '82"

### **Margaret Ulmer**

Pianist, Musical Director

Born: Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1947

Education: Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, B.A., 1969 Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, M.F.A., 1978

**Sky work** (partial list): Pianist, "Flight of Daedalus", from sky opera "Icarus", by Paul Earls, "Sky Art Conference '81", CAVS/MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1981; Pianist, synthesizer, "Icarus", "Sky Art Conference '82"

### **James F. Ingalls**

## Lighting design

Education: Yale School of Drama, University of Connecticut, University of North Carolina

Current Positions/Credits (partial list):

Lighting Designer for American Repertory Theater, Cambridge Massachusetts

Lighting Design for "Geniuses", Douglas Fairbanks Theater, New York, New York

Lighting Design for "Room Service", Williamstown Theater Festival

Lighting Design with Penny Stegenga, "Metamorphosis in Miniature", Cubiculo Theater, New York, New York

Resident Light Designer, Santa Fe Festival Theater Premier Season

**Sky work:** Lighting Design, "Icarus", "Sky Art Conference '82"

## **Richard Pittman**

Richard Pittman, the founder-conductor of The Boston Musica Viva, is Orchestra Conductor and the teacher of Orchestral Conducting at the New England Conservatory of Music. He has guest conducted the National Symphony, the London Sinfonietta, the Hessian Radio Symphony and the B.B.C. Welsh Symphony. He has also conducted performances with the Eric Hawkins Dance Company. Prior to his appointment at the new England Conservatory, Mr. Pittman was an instructor of conducting and opera at the Eastman School of Music. While there he was also the founder-director of the Eastman Musica Nova. He studies conducting with Laszlo Halasz, Sergiu Celibidache, and Pierre Boulez.

Music Director, "Icarus", sky opera, "Sky Art Conference '82"