

ALEX HO

Composer

Congratulations on such an exciting year. What can you tell us about your approach as a composer to writing for voice and opera?

Thank you. I love collaboration, which is inevitably a large part of composing opera and for voices. With this in mind, it is crucial to have a good team in the 'creative room', not just with the necessary skillset and imagination, but also with personalities that will work well together and enjoy learning from each other. If this is all in place, whatever story is being told will be that much more special for the creators and consequently that much more magical for audiences.

Tell us about your commissions for the Oxford International Song Festival

It has been a wonderful privilege being associate composer at Oxford International Song Festival for the last two years, during which time they have commissioned two song cycles. This year, I worked with Elayce Ismail to create a new 45-minute song cycle for countertenor Hugh Cutting and pianist Dylan Perez.

As a theatre and opera director, Elayce brings a different kind of writing that I find hugely stimulating – one that feels as much visual as dramatic. Our commission, *The Glass Eye*, is set in a post-apocalyptic time when humans have been forced to live underground. It's a dark tale warning us of the consequences of environmental damage through themes of greed and survival. On a brighter note, I have loved working with Hugh and Dylan. Their openness and artistry have informed this piece on multiple levels.

What's the most difficult part of your work?

In no particular order: beginning a piece, ending a piece, and everything in between.

What's up next for you?

I am now composing a new digital installation opera, *Séisme*, commissioned by Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier. It's a stage work with similar themes to *The Glass Eye*, this time focusing on the physical relationship between humans and the earth. Most excitingly, we will be using various digital elements to bring to life a 4D physical dimension...! **ON**

