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Los Angeles Times

## ARTS &amp; BOOKS

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LAWRENCE K. HO/LOS ANGELES TIMES

## A NEW TRACK

Opera in L.A. may never be the same thanks to the innovative, unconventional Yuval Sharon

**By REED JOHNSON** >>> Inside Union Station, a robotic voice is barking out destinations for Amtrak's northbound Train 785, departing from track No. 9. ¶ "Glendale, Burbank Airport, Van Nuys ... Carpinteria, Santa Barbara and Goleta! All aboard!" ¶ Yuval Sharon smiles, pauses mid-sentence and brings the racing locomotive of his thoughts to a screeching halt. Twilight is settling over the downtown L.A. train terminal, where, on Saturday, Sharon and his 3-year-old opera company, the Industry, will stage the world premiere of "Invisible Cities," Christopher Cerrone's "headphone opera" based on Italo Calvino's memory-circumnavigating novel. ¶ Slowly, almost imperceptibly, strange things are happening in the station's cavernous Art Deco waiting room. ¶ A young man, seated near a sleeping passenger, suddenly breaks into a hauntingly beautiful tone poem about a city named Adelma, filled with living people who resemble our dead acquaintances. Two female singers, weaving like swallows through clumps of harried commuters, elicit a puzzled stare from a passing security guard and a snaggletooth grin from a homeless man. ¶ "For the audience, it should feel like they have a pair of goggles on, and that as the opera goes on they just get more and more and more in focus," says Sharon, surveying the existentialist-lounge-cum-artistic-intervention that he and his colleagues are rehearsing. ¶ A gleeful expression lights up his eyes. "I can't wait for [See Sharon, E4]

**YUVAL SHARON'S THE INDUSTRY** is staging "Invisible Cities" at downtown's Union Station.

OPERA



**ASHLEY FAATOALIA**, as Marco Polo, is one of eight singers in the production.



**YUVAL SHARON**, second from left, oversees rehearsal for "Invisible Cities."



**DELARAM KAMAREH** mops the Union Station floor and sings her part. Audiences will wear headsets so they can hear it all and choose which performers to follow.

Photographs by LAWRENCE K. HO Los Angeles Times

# On board for innovation

[Sharon, from Et] the Halloween night performance!

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The operatic version, performed by eight singers, seven dancers choreographed by Danielle Agami and an 11-piece chamber orchestra, will take place in designated areas of Union Station (not including the track platforms). Roughly 200 audience members wearing wireless headphones will be able to hear everything and to choose which performers to follow in and out of rooms, creating a customized experience, all while interacting with the artists and some presumably puzzled passersby.

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Yet, like Calvino's book, the opera's true domain is pure states of mind. "The beauty of the book is that it's such an open construction, and it's primarily about your own experience," Sharon says.

## At home in L.A.

Calvino's artistic stratagems, subtle yet potent, could describe the influence that Sharon has had on L.A.'s performance landscape since he arrived here in 2009 to be Achim Freyer's assistant director on L.A. Opera's production of Wagner's "Ring" cycle. At that time, the native Chicagoan had been overseeing New York City Opera's VOX, an annual workshop that under Sharon's direction became perhaps America's most influential test lab for new opera.

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"CRESCENT CITY," dubbed a "hyper-opera," at Atwater Crossing last year marked the inaugural show by the Industry.

mersing himself in Southern California's open-minded atmosphere, Sharon felt he'd found a home for the unconventional, interdisciplinary work he wanted to do.

"L.A. still feels like a frontier, where anything is really possible," says Sharon, who is slight-framed, radiates low-key Midwestern amiability and turns 34 this month. "But there's also the amazing audience that's been built here because of the great work of so many other institutions."

Like Peter Sellars, another iconoclastic avant-garde opera director who began migrating to L.A. three decades ago, Sharon has been winning friends, influencing L.A.'s creative classes and shaking things up. Peers say that his low-budget, itinerant company has been an important addition to L.A.'s maturing operatic ecosystem of large, medium and small producers and presenters. Local audiences who've experienced their fourth or fifth "La Bohème" now have options.

Meanwhile, his work is reverberating beyond the Left Coast. Last March he directed Jessye Norman and Meredith Monk in John Cage's "Song Books" as part of San Francisco Symphony's American Mavericks Festival. In January he'll be directing John Adams' "Doctor Atomic" at the Badisches Staatstheater in Karlsruhe, Germany.

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Audiences sold out the entire run. Critics were impressed. "We now have something that can genuinely be called L.A. opera," wrote Los Angeles Times music critic Mark Swed.

The production also brought together a number of artists who've begun to form the Industry's creative corps and are back for "Invisible Cities," including Lowenstein, production sound designer E Martin Gimenez and singer Cedric Berry.

"You can have someone who's a good artist with a great vision and can execute. And then someone who's a good manager. And then someone who's a good person," says Lowenstein. "Yuval's very rare in that he's all three."

Sharon says that "Crescent City" embodied one of the Industry's core tenets: that the audience's engagement "completes the work." The 70-minute, intermission-less "Invisible Cities," which like "Crescent City" had an early incarnation at VOX when Sharon was running it, will carry that idea even further.

"People have asked me, 'What would you advise people as they're starting a company?'" Sharon says. "My first piece of advice was, 'Listen to everybody.' It doesn't mean take everybody's advice, it just means listen to everybody, because everybody's got a point of view that's really valuable."

## 'Bored out of my mind'

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But one impression from the production stuck: After the ailing Violetta sang, "Farewell, lovely, happy dreams of the past," the chorus could be heard offstage, emphasizing the isolation of Verdi's tragic heroine. Then a carnival figure climbed through a window and slid, surrealistically, under Violetta's bed.

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## Yuval Sharon's the Industry makes own track with 'Invisible Cities'

Yuval Sharon's the Industry will perform 'Invisible Cities,' billed as a 'headphone opera' and based on Italo Calvino's novel, at Union Station.



By Reed Johnson, Los Angeles Times

*October 12, 2013 9:00 a.m.*

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One of those watching his work here with approving interest is Graham Vick, the founder-artistic director of Britain's experimental Birmingham Opera Company, one of Sharon's models for the Industry.

"He's bright, creative and fearless, endlessly cheerful, resilient," Vick says of his protégé, whom he mostly recently worked with on Karlheinz Stockhausen's "Mittwoch aus Licht."

"It's fantastic what Yuval's doing in Los Angeles," Vick continues. Companies like the Industry, Vick believes, herald an operatic future that's "more agile, more project-based, more flexible, more pop-up."

Sharon and a handful of creative fellow travelers started laying the financial and philosophical groundwork for the Industry in 2011. "Crescent City" was its [Mardi Gras](#), its Dionysian debutante ball.

Staged in a 25,000-square-foot Atwater Village warehouse, it unfolds in a fantasia metropolis — part Katrina-ravaged New Orleans, part Sodom — as a kind of Brechtian-biblical fable, in which a quarrelsome group of voodoo

gods pledges to save the flooded city if one good man can be found. The production played out across a skewed, sprawling assemblage set before audience members who were standing and sitting, a few in beanbag chairs in a dive-bar cabaret that was part of the mis-en-scène.

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Link: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-yuval-sharon-20131013,0,4442714,full.story#axzz2iaMdiv9l>

# Los Angeles Times

Saturday, October 19, 2013

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Los Angeles Times

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2013 D5

## Experimental track for 'Invisible Cities'

Audience will listen to the opera performed at Union Station through headphones.

BY REED JOHNSON

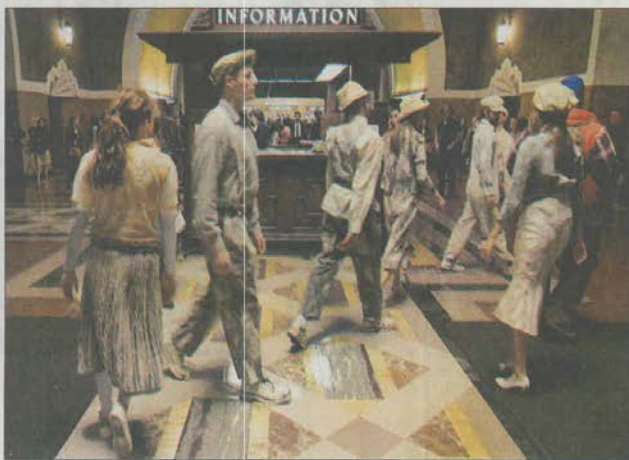
The idea of a headphone opera was hatched over drinks at a downtown Mexican bar.

The production design was partly inspired by flash mobs and silent disco. And the setting won't be a proscenium theater, but the majestically melancholy Union Station train terminal in downtown Los Angeles.

These are some ways in which Saturday night's world premiere performance of "Invisible Cities" won't be a conventional night at the opera, and why the audience it attracts likely won't be conventional either.

Written by New York composer Christopher Cerrone, with a text adapted from Italo Calvino's shimmering, philosophical novel of the same name, "Invisible Cities" is being presented by the Industry, the aesthetically renegade L.A.-based opera company led by Yuval Sharon, and L.A. Dance Project, the artist collective co-founded by choreographer-dancer Benjamin Millepied.

For the site-specific production, the roughly 200 audience members will wear wireless headphones. The eight singers' voices and the 11 musicians' instruments will be beamed directly to listeners, as if whispering in their ears. Meanwhile, the performers, including eight dancers, gradually will reveal themselves to the audience as the 70-minute, intermission-less work progresses



LAWRENCE K. HO/LOS ANGELES TIMES  
CAST MEMBERS rehearse "Cities" performance in Union Station terminal.

"It will be up to the audience to decide how they see it, if they go into certain rooms, or if they decide to just stay in one place and let the opera pass them by," says Sharon, 34.

Since it was founded three years ago, the Industry has been attracting a young, diverse constituency whose members may be more accustomed to attending Burning Man and EDM raves than an umpteenth staging of "Madame Butterfly."

Chad Smith, vice president of artistic planning for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, says that the Industry has added an important new dimension to the region's operatic ecosystem.

"Yuval is doing something that the L.A. Phil and L.A. Opera can't do," Smith says. "He is staging this work in such a unique way for a very limited audience that becomes experiential because

it's happening outside of a traditional opera company or a traditional orchestra, and outside of a traditional venue."

The Industry's signature approach combines 21st-century technology, multi-disciplinary postmodern staging, site-specific production design and eclectic, avant-garde scores.

Its 2012 coming-out production, staged in an Atwater Crossing warehouse, was "Crescent City," the voodoo-haunted "hyper-opera" by composer Anne LeBaron and Douglas Kearney that included giant video screens transmitting live imagery of the action from hand-held cameras.

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York City Opera before he moved to Los Angeles.

The "Invisible Cities" production team, most in their late 20s or early 30s, know that the opera has a technological gee-whiz factor that makes it a lure for the city's young, creative classes.

"It's going to be a collection that starts with people that have never seen an opera show in their lives, together with people that are ongoing opera fans," says Danielle Agami, the production's choreographer.

But the collaborators emphasize that their aim isn't simply to dangle hipster-bait for denizens of downtown and Echo Park.

"Opera has always been a wonderful opportunity to work with technology because it provides a dramatic rationale to do so," Cerrone says. "So we're not adding headphones because it's cool, although it is, but because

### 'Invisible Cities'

Where: Union Station, downtown L.A.

When: 7 p.m. Saturday; 7:30 and 10 p.m. Oct. 24, 26, 29, 31, Nov. 5, 8.

Cost: \$45-\$75; \$25 only for 10 p.m. Oct. 29 and Nov. 5.

Info: <http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets/>

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"Invisible Cities" came about organically through an old-fashioned, decidedly low-tech ritual: an after-work chat in 2011 at La Cita bar, the Hill Street watering hole, between Sharon and E. Martin Gimenez, the Industry's chief sound designer, following an L.A. Opera production of "The Turn of the Screw." Gimenez proposed the idea of doing a headphone opera, a concept that originated with silent discos, in which dancers wear headphones that allow them to hear DJs spinning records in an otherwise audio-free dance hall.

The technology already had been co-opted by theatrical groups such as London's Punchdrunk, which used it for an adaptation of "Macbeth." Gimenez suggested using it for a site-specific opera production at an art-friendly location such as the Getty Villa or LACMA. But Sharon proposed Union Station.

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"I know it sounds like some sort of sound bite, but I literally read the first page, thought it was gorgeous, and started playing the first notes of the overture," Cerrone says.

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Yet, as soon as Sharon began studying Cerrone's piece, with its non-linear narrative structure and falling-note harmonics that seemed to decay in mid-air, he realized that the composer had succeeded in capturing the introspective, otherworldly atmosphere of Calvino's story. In June 2012, he sent Cerrone a Facebook message proposing "Invisible Cities" as The Industry's follow-up to "Crescent City."

Sharon and Cerrone believe that Union Station, as an architectural nexus of Jazz Age optimism and high-speed-rail futurism, and with its constant ebb and flow of transient humanity, is the ideal location for an opera about real and imaginary destinations.

"What I'm actually hoping," says Cerrone with a laugh, "is that the weirdness of the audience will counteract the weirdness" of the performers.

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# Los Angeles Times

## Union Station the platform for the opera 'Invisible Cities'

The Industry opera company and L.A. Dance Project are presenting 'Invisible Cities' on a unique platform — Union Station train terminal — and beaming it through headphones.



By Reed Johnson

October 19, 2013

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# Los Angeles Times

'Invisible Cities,' the Industry's opera, adding 5 more performances



By Reed Johnson

*October 21, 2013 11:35 a.m.*

"Invisible Cities," the new "headphone opera" by composer Christopher Cerrone, based on Italo Calvino's book and being performed at Union Station, is adding five additional performances.

After selling out its scheduled run of 13 performances, the opera, which is being presented by the Industry opera company and L.A. Dance Project, is adding performances at 7:30 and 10 p.m. on Nov. 12 and 15; and at 5 p.m. Nov. 17 (including what's being described as a special closing night encore).

Directed by Yuval Sharon of the Industry and choreographed by Danielle Agami, "Invisible Cities" is the follow-up to the Industry's 2012 debut, "Crescent City." For the site-specific production at the downtown L.A. train terminal, the roughly 200 audience members wear wireless headphones, and the eight singers' voices and the 11 musicians' instruments are beamed directly to listeners throughout the 70-minute, intermission-less work.

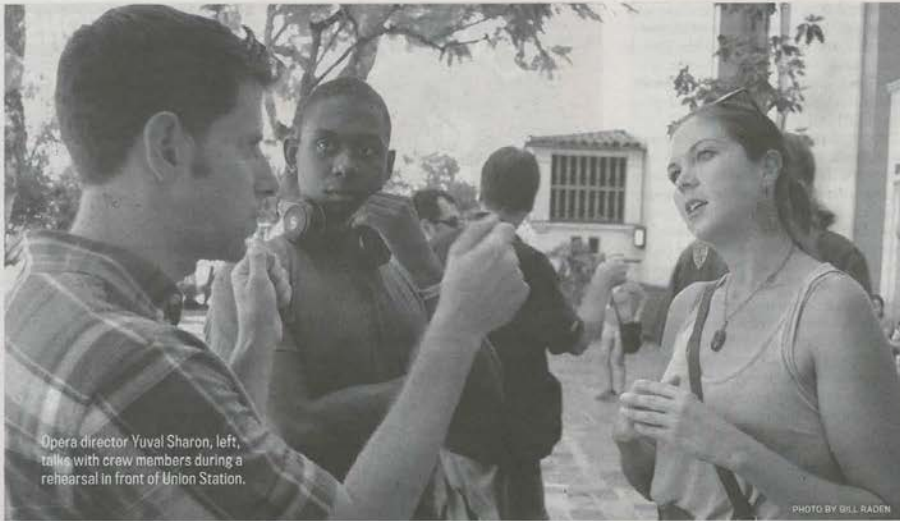
Link: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-invisible-cities-the-industry-opera-20131021,0,4048762.story#axzz2iaMdiv9l>

# LAWEEKLY

September 26, 2013

Circulation: 160,128





Opera director Yuval Sharon, left, talks with crew members during a rehearsal in front of Union Station.

PHOTO BY BILL RADEN

Arts //

# MUSIC STATION

A new, experimental opera involves 200 audience members wandering through Union Station wearing headphones

BY BILL RADEN

**O**n a blazing Sunday afternoon, the interior of downtown's Union Station provides a cool refuge from an early-September heat wave. But on this particular day, cool takes on its other meaning as, amid the bustle of arriving and departing passengers and the muttering of the odd street person, a haunting soprano aria echoes from somewhere in the station's old ticketing hall.

A puzzled teenager pauses long enough to conclude to his mother, "Oh, they're shooting a movie." A logical assumption — this is Los Angeles, after all.

The remark provokes a smile from Yuval Sharon, the maverick founder and artistic director of the Industry, a 3-year-old, upstart experimental opera company.

Sharon and a handful of technicians and singers are in the midst of testing a wireless sound system for the Industry's groundbreaking, site-specific sophomore production: Christopher Cerrone's *Invisible Cities*, which Sharon is calling L.A.'s first "headphone opera."

What that means exactly is something that even Sharon won't be able to say with much certainty until the opera opens on Oct. 19. But it does include eight singers, seven dancers (from L.A. Dance Project), an 11-piece chamber orchestra, about 200 audience members in Sennheiser wireless headphones and a lot of bewildered passers-by.

The show will begin with a prelude with the orchestra in the art deco Harvey House room. Then the audience members are released into the station and grounds

to wander freely and discover the performance for themselves before reconvening for the finale.

Sharon says he's hoping that "audience members might think that [the singers and dancers are] normal people waiting for a train or staying at Union Station or whatnot. And then, only when things become more and more extraordinary, that you realize they're carrying on this kind of secret drama."

*Invisible Cities* is the follow-up to the Industry's brash, 2012 inaugural show, Elizabeth LeBaron's "hyperopera" *Crescent City*. That show also mixed performers with audience members, who could walk the perimeter of the art installation-like set during the show, albeit in the controlled environs of an Atwater Crossing warehouse.

"I think so much of what *Crescent City* was about," reflects Sharon, who also directed that production, "was this multiplicity of perspectives that actually became content, as well as the form of that piece. And I wanted to follow with those ideas and take them to another level."

"Another level" is putting it mildly. The immersion of an audience wearing headphones and watching live performers in an active train station is a blending of public space and extreme subjectivity that breaks from traditional, big-box opera.

"That's what I think is the pleasure," Sharon continues, "which is the idea of setting it in a space that has its own rhythm, that has its own life, that doesn't necessarily have the same idea of a spotlight ... the beautiful and the tacky and the ordinary all in this one space."

Immersive theater is hardly unpre-

cedented, and neither, for that matter, is headphone opera. Sharon says he found inspiration both in *Sleep No More*, the London stage company Punchdrunk's twist on *Macbeth*, in which audience members encounter characters while wandering the rooms of a Manhattan warehouse, as well as in London's Silent Opera, which performs traditional opera in nontraditional places to a seated audience listening to the score through headphones.

Sharon says the real credit for a headphone opera that moves freely throughout a public building belongs to the show's sound designer, E. Martin Gimenez.

Gimenez says the idea came to him while working with L.A. theater company Poor Dog Group at the Getty Villa several years ago. "I was walking around and I saw that [the museum] had an audio tour system," he recalls. "And I was thinking, 'Oh, this would be a very interesting thing for us to utilize.' I was thinking about that for another [piece], but Yuval went, like, 'That's great. But let's do it on a grander scale.'"

What clicked for Sharon was the combination of headphones and Union Station as a joint solution to a show that had been nagging him since 2009: *Invisible Cities*, which he had directed that year in a more traditional but problematic workshop staging at VOX, New York City Opera's new-works laboratory.

"I thought it was incredibly beautiful, and I thought it really challenged our traditional ideas of dramaturgy and operatic structure and all that kind of stuff," Sharon remembers. "[But] Chris really writes at

extremes at that quiet register, and he loves dealing with the idea of sonic resonances and the decay of sounds and all of these things that don't necessarily play in a traditional theater."

*Invisible Cities* fits with Union Station for another reason. Its libretto was adapted by Cerrone from Italo Calvino's elliptical, quasimystical 1972 experimental novel of the same name. The book depicts a young Marco Polo regaling Kublai Khan with descriptions of 55 fantastical cities, which the Italian claims to have encountered on his journeys through the khan's empire.

The cities are literally impossible places, imaginary horizons of thought, and Polo's descriptions read like poetic koans grappling with the fundamental yearnings, regrets and paradoxes of existence. Like the city of the dead, Adema (they're all named after women), where everyone we've ever lost in our lives is reborn but as fishmongers or as grocers, and as people who no longer recognize us.

"It's such a poetic idea of Calvino's to look at these elemental, existential problems and to make them geography," Sharon says, and an equally poetic idea to set the adaptation at a transportation hub that leads to various cities.

But it's one thing to say "headphone opera in Union Station" and another matter entirely to put one on. Sharon says it took a year of intense negotiations with Metro just to get the transportation authority's nod. "Now they're very cooperative and very excited," he adds.

Equally daunting have been the technical hurdles. Gimenez says the production is stretching the ability of a consumer wireless headphone system intended for a suburban den. That stretch includes an industrial-grade transmitter and stringing a small forest of commercial antennae around the station.

The results could be startling. A test drive of the Sennheisers with sopranos Delaram Kamareh and Ashley Knight performing to a recorded test track of the musicians (during the show, the musicians will be live in the Harvey House room) revealed a clarity and sense of spatial depth that produced the uncanny sensation of a singer standing just behind the listener, singing gently into his left ear.

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"And in a way," he adds, "that's a good metaphor for this entire creative process. Because you have this image of what you want to do, and it's a vision. And you just keep walking toward it and walking toward it and walking toward it. And you have this limited time to get as close to that vision as you possibly can. To that city."

**INVISIBLE CITIES** | The Industry, at Union Station | 800 N. Alameda St., downtown, | Oct. 19-Nov. 8 | [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com)



# LAWEEKLY

## In Experimental Opera *Invisible Cities*, Audience Members Will Wander Union Station Wearing Headphones

By [Bill Raden](#) Thursday, Sep 26 2013



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Link: <http://www.laweekly.com/2013-09-26/art-books/invisible-cities-union-station/>

# LA WEEKLY

October 18-24, 2013

Circulation: 160,128

GOLA

Week of  
**OCT.**  
**18-24**

**P. 27 SAT**  
ALL-STAR COMEDY ON  
THE SANTA MONICA PIER

**P. 31 MON**  
CHILLIN' WITH THE MAYOR  
IN PASADENA

**P. 31 TUE**  
ANDREW SOLOMON DISCUSSES  
HIS NEW BOOK



**P. 31 WED**  
SHATNER DOES...  
PROG ROCK?

**sat** 10/19

**OPERA/ART**

**The Voices in Your Head**  
"Arriving at each new city, the traveler finds again a part of his that he did not know he had..." If you commute through Union Station on certain nights in October and November, expect to see more than the usual quotient of random wanderers with thousand-yard stares who seem to be hearing voices in their heads. But don't worry, it's not a communitywide nervous breakdown; it's the intrepid audience for *Invisible Cities* — a site-specific opera at downtown's Union Station performed for a free-range audience via wireless Sennheiser headphones. From the creatively fearless minds who brought you last year's avant-opera blockbuster *Crescent City* comes a new work adapted from the 1972 novel by Italo Calvino. But where *Crescent City* commissioned monumental set pieces from a group of contemporary visual artists, *Invisible Cities* takes its inspiration from the storied history and evocative architecture of the real-life landmarks where it unfolds. In Calvino's novel, a youthful Marco Polo attempts to cheer up an over-the-hill Kubla Khan by regaling him with epic tales of Polo's own travels, describing cities of the past, present and future; the real, imaginary and the longed-for. Composer/librettist Christopher Cerrone and director Yuval Sharon, along with a host of visionary collaborators and gifted musicians and performers from the Industry, L.A. Dance Project and their extended creative family, use Union Station's historic crossroads as not only the setting but also an integral part of the narrative, as audience members immerse themselves in a "private" performance in the most public of spaces. 800 N. Alameda St., *downtown*; Sat., Oct. 19-Fri., Nov. 8, 7:30 & 10 p.m.; opening-night gala \$150 & \$300, thereafter \$25-\$75. (718) 812-9159, [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com). —Shana Nys Dambrot

**FESTIVALS/OUTDOORS**

**Ein Prosit in Atwater Village**  
**Oktoberfest**, that age-old German agricultural festival-turned-beer guzzling jubilee, is celebrated with relish at the beginning of the fall season. For local brewers and sausage purveyors, it's the Super Bowl. To the rest of us? Only one of the best traditions to sport from Bavaria outside of pastry cream. Atwater Village taproom and wurst-slinger Link N Hops, which opened in August 2012, is getting into the biergarten game, hosting a two-day Oktoberfest party. Breweries Golden Road, Bootleggers, Hangar 24 and New Belgium will feature three beers apiece, which have been fine-tuned to conjure images of warm fireplaces and changing leaves, all ready to wash down Link N Hops' glorious selection of sausages, including shockingly good veggie and vegan options. Pair a pumpkin beer with a duck, fig and brandy sausage. Or add some bite: Go for the rattlesnake. It's like the Wurstküche of Atwater, but with a really convenient parking lot. And if you go to Link N Hops on Saturday, you can partake in another treat — said parking lot will be home to Atwater Village's Classic Car Show from 2 to 6 p.m. Lowriders will cover the asphalt, with live music onstage. It probably won't be authentically German music, but hey, you're going for the beer, not an ompah band. *Link N Hops*, 3111 N. Glendale Blvd., *Atwater*



P E A C E 平和

**COMEDY**

**This Is Where It Gets Funny**  
Rotund rockers Tenacious D, "The Greatest Band in the World," know the magic that comes from combining comedy and music, so they're curating the inaugural **Festival Supreme**. Among the 25 artists — and one canine, Triumph the Insult Comic Dog — are heavyweights Adam Sandler, Zach Galifianakis, Patton Oswalt, Sarah Silverman and Eric Idle, who'll be sharing the sun, sand and three stages with cult stars Demetri Martin, Reggie Watts, Hannibal Buress, Fred Armisen and Neil Hamburger Band. Tenacious D's Jack Black and Kyle Gass also know that comedy greets come in twos, which is why they've packed the day with acts ranging from Tim & Eric to The Mister Show Experience to The Mighty Boosh, the British duo of Noel Fielding and Julian Barratt reuniting and performing their first, big stateside gig. And don't forget ball busters like folk cuties Garfunkel & Oates and Prince cover gals Princess, featuring Maya Rudolph. For their most supreme offering, Black and Gass are promising a really big-name surprise guest. At 99 clams, let's hope it's not a hologram. (See our interview with Black and Gass on page 35 for more information.) *Santa Monica Pier*, 200 *Santa Monica Pier*, *Santa Monica*; Sat., Oct. 19, 3 p.m.; \$99. [festivalsupreme.com](http://festivalsupreme.com). —Siran Babayan

**DANCE**

**After the Killing Fields**  
Composed of Cambodian children orphaned by the Khmer Rouge's genocide, the **Sacred Dancers of Angkor** arrive for a week of events celebrating Cambodia's classical, folk and sacred dance traditions, as well as the powerful concept of survival. In the 1970s, the Khmer Rouge murdered millions, even as it targeted classical Cambodian dance and other performing arts, decimating the ranks of teachers and performers so badly that classical Cambodian dance was feared lost. The resurgence of this elegant art is showcased with folk dances and a performance of the rarely seen *Reoung Preah Thong-Neang Neak*, originally choreographed in the 1940s for the Royal Ballet of Cambodia by Queen Kossamak, mother of the late King Sihanouk. The dance recounts the birth of Cambodia; in

**Village; Sat., Oct. 19-Sun., Oct. 20, 1-5 p.m.; \$20 advance ticket (\$30 at the door) includes six 6-ounce beer tasters. (323) 426-9049, [linknhops.com](http://linknhops.com). —Rena Kosnett**

**Steff Geissbühler's *Beauty Overcomes the Beast* at the Celebrating the Art of Resistance Party Auction: See Sunday.**

laweekly.com / October 18-24 2013 / LA Weekly (27)

# LA WEEKLY

## Blogs

### 5 Dance Shows to See in L.A. This Week, Including a Dancing Nightmare

By Ann Haskins Thu., Oct. 24 2013 at 11:36 AM



Photo courtesy of Invisible Cities

#### 1. Just don't rush to catch a train

Historic meets high-tech as audiences equipped with the latest wireless headphones wander through L.A.'s iconic Union Station, following dancers and musicians in Invisible Cities. Described as an "invisible opera," its libretto and music by Christopher Cerrone were inspired by a novel by Italo Calvino. Choreographer Danielle Agami and L.A. Dance Project dancers contribute their talents to this innovative twist on the site-specific performance. The performance days vary. Check the schedule and buy tickets at [invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets). See (and hear) the Invisible Opera at Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St., dwntwn.; various Sat., Tues. & Thurs., 7:30 & 10 p.m.; Fri., Nov. 8, 7:30 & 10 p.m. Through Nov. 17, \$25. 213-683-6897.

See also: Our story on [Invisible Cities](#)

Link: [http://blogs.laweekly.com/arts/2013/10/invisible\\_cities\\_dance\\_project.php](http://blogs.laweekly.com/arts/2013/10/invisible_cities_dance_project.php)

# Los Angeles Daily News

Friday, October 18, 2013

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8 YOUR WEEKEND DAILYNEWS.COM

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2013

## THEATER PREVIEW

# 'Invisible Cities' tracks adventure in Union Station

By Sandra Barrera  
sandra.barrera@langnews.com  
@SandraBarrera18 on Twitter

If you happen to pass through Union Station one night and see a man burst into operatic performance while casually walking, you may have stumbled on "Invisible Cities."

The collaborative new work by experimental opera company The Industry, Benjamin Millepied's L.A. Dance Project and electronics brand Sennheiser unfolds among an unsuspecting crowd as it moves through historic 1939 portions of Los Angeles' landmark railroad terminal — a combination of Spanish Revival and Art Deco styles.

Only the audience freely roaming the station in wireless headphones is in on the performance.

"We are aiming to be a subtle, invisible layer on everyday life," says Yuval Sharon, director of "Invisible Cities," which premieres Saturday for a limited run, with some shows already sold out.

Composed by Christopher Cerrone, the 70-minute theatrical event is an adaptation of Italo Calvino's novel of the same name, which imagines a meeting between the aging Chinese emperor Kublai Khan and the Venetian explorer Marco Polo.

As Polo describes Khan's empire to him, he conjures up imaginary cities of fancy, of desire, of memory.



PHOTOS BY DANA ROSS



"It's always been one of my favorite books," Sharon says. "When Chris proposed it as an opera, my first impression was: 'There's no way this is go-

ing to work.' But Chris really won me over with his approach of turning this very internal experience of reading the book into something to be shared and communicated."

Cerrone was faithful in his adaptation of the book, pulling actual text from the pages to be sung by the eight vocalists and performed live by an 11-piece orchestra.

While the opera mirrors the structure of the book it makes no attempt to illus-

trate the cities described by Polo. Instead, it asks the audience to rely on its imagination as it roams freely through the space, following individual characters or creating their own experiences.

"The whole opera takes place in your mind anyway, which is why it's great that it's in headphones," says Marc Lowenstein, conductor of the opera. "One thing we've noticed is when you're in headphones look-

## INVISIBLE CITIES

**What:** A new, innovative opera staged in Los Angeles' iconic Union Station and experienced on wireless headphones.

**When:** 10 p.m. Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Oct. 29, 7:30 and 10 p.m. Oct. 31. All other performances are sold out.

**Where:** Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St., Los Angeles.

**Tickets:** \$45-\$75.

**Information:** [www.invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://www.invisiblecitiesopera.com)

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The opera kicks off in the old station restaurant, now off-limits to the public. From there, the singers and dancers disperse into the fabric of everyday life, weaving into the crowds in areas such as the large waiting room lined with rows of upholstered seating before coming together in the original ticket lobby — also closed to the public these days — for the finale.

Granted, people coming and going are likely to sense something slightly strange at the musical outbursts.

"We've had people in rehearsals come up to singers and say, 'Are you singing?' while they're singing," says Lowenstein, chuckling. "We hope the audience won't do that."

# Los Angeles Daily News

'Invisible Cities' is calling imagination to board at L.A. Union Station



By [Sandra Barrera](#), *Los Angeles Daily News*

POSTED: 10/16/13

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Link: <http://www.dailynews.com/arts-and-entertainment/20131016/invisible-cities-is-calling-imagination-to-board-at-la-union-station>



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www.prestelegram.com

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**Tickets:** \$45-\$75.

**Information:** [www.invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://www.invisiblecitiesopera.com)

my favorite books," Sharon says. "When Chris proposed it as an opera, my first impression was: 'There's no way this is going to work.' But Chris really won me over with his approach of turning this very internal experience of reading the book into something to be shared and communicated."

Cerrone was faithful in his adaptation of the book, pulling actual text from the pages to be sung by the eight vocalists and performed live by an 11-piece orchestra.

While the opera mirrors the structure of the book it makes no attempt to illustrate the cities described by Polo.

Instead, it asks the audience to rely on its imagination as it roams freely through the space, following individual characters or creating their own experiences.

"The whole opera takes place in your mind anyway, which is why it's great that it's in headphones," says Marc Lowenstein, conductor of the opera. "One thing we've noticed is when you're in headphones looking for the opera, you look at everyone in Union Station, not just the performers. It

dramatizes the whole space and internalizes the whole space."

The opera kicks off in the old station restaurant, now off limits to the public. From there, the singers and dancers disperse into the fabric of everyday life, weaving into the crowds in areas such as the large waiting room lined with rows of upholstered seating before coming together in the original ticket lobby — also closed to the public these days — for the finale.

Granted, people coming and going are likely to sense something slightly strange at the musical outbursts.

"We've had people in rehearsals come up to singers and say, 'Are you singing?' while they're singing," says Lowenstein, chuckling. "We hope the audience won't do that."

# Los Angeles

MAGAZINE

## Curtain Call: An Invisible Opera in the Very Visible Union Station

How the idea of whispering in your ear lead to headphones for the audience.

by Craig Byrd

October 30, 2013



*Invisible Cities* isn't your parents' opera. There's no orchestra pit. There's no stage. There's no front row. Instead, the production, which is based on an Italo Calvino novel about an imagined conversation between emperor Kublai Khan and explorer Marco Polo, is being performed in the middle of Union Station. The man responsible for staging it is Yuval Sharon, artistic director of The Industry, a company that bills itself as "a new home for opera in Los Angeles." The troupe made a splash last year with its acclaimed "hyperopera" *Crescent City*, which they staged at another non-traditional space, the creative complex Atwater Crossing.

For *Invisible Cities*, you begin your journey in Harvey House, a restaurant space that houses the orchestra. From there, you follow whichever characters you like as they walk and sing through Union Station. Along the way you might encounter other singers, dancers, and most certainly the general public. And the whole time, you're wearing headphones that amplify the musicians and the singers.

"Los Angeles is the inspiration for the work that I'm doing with the Industry in every way," Sharon explained on the phone during a rehearsal break a few days before opening night. "Doing the opera at Union Station reflects that. It is an icon of Los Angeles that honors both the architecture and the city itself."

But who stages an opera in a train station? "Composer Christopher Cerrone proposed the work when I was project director at New York City Opera's VOX. The inner life of the music had to be made manifest on a stage. Calvino's novel is more a piece of philosophy, a tone poem rather than a novel in the traditional sense. The opera is very quiet. Singers sing at low volume for most of the opera. You want to feel that the characters are

singing in your ear.” It was then that the idea of using headphones and roaming around a large physical space was born.

“What you are hearing has no connection with what you are seeing,” Sharon says. “You have the opportunity to create relationships between eyes and ears. The book is fundamentally about what happens to us internally when we face a journey anywhere in the world. How much external reality is just a reflection of what’s happening with us. This was the perfect way to realize the piece that Christopher had been trying to create.” The only thing missing was the location. “I started thinking where was a place the audience could move freely? Where could we do an intervention that wouldn’t disrupt daily life? The romance, the beauty around Union Station—you are instantly back in 1939 imagining the past in L.A. All of this speaks beautifully with the themes of the book and the opera.”

While the opera is being performed, trains continue shuttling passengers to and from the City of Angels.

“Everyday life is a crucial part of the way the piece works. The life of the station, the people, and the subtle displacement are key elements,” Sharon says. “We are used to having our physical and mental reality not necessarily reinforcing each other. We carry so much in our phones. As our lives get so digitized, these experiential type of performances resonate very deeply because they are something that our phones can’t do. The headphones and the public space are not the show. They are the means to experience a really beautiful opera.”

If the day-to-day hustle and bustle of Union Station isn’t enough, on Halloween there’s another level of engagement. “The life of the station on Halloween is going to be so electric. Costume designer E.B. Brooks and I had the idea of having a costume contest. It doesn’t change the nature of the performance at all. The creative act does not reside only by the artist. It is the spectator that is doing creative work with the artist.”

*Invisible Cities runs through November 17.*

Link: <http://www.lamag.com/laculture/culturefilesblog/2013/10/30/curtain-call-an-invisible-opera-in-the-very-visible-union-station>

# The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Over train's rumble, an opera

By Daniel S.G. Wood

OCTOBER 29, 2013

The new show produced by one Los Angeles opera company is performed in a train station and allows the public to interact with performers.



Fred Prouser/Reuters

Pavarotti and New York's Penn Station don't share much, but Yuval Sharon and The Industry are bridging the gap in Los Angeles. Imagine a tenor aria soaring above the screech of the 10:30 a.m. train or chiseled dancers dashing by commuters, and you have some idea of "Invisible Cities," the opera company's second production.

Performed in historical Union Station without a traditional stage, "Invisible Cities" allows people to engage with the performers as they wander around, all while hearing the orchestra and singers via wireless headphones. For about 70 minutes, the action emerges around the station, with singers and dancers gradually revealing themselves to the audience, who may either stay in place and let the opera flow around them or follow performers from room to room.

The four-week run (recently extended by popular demand) of Christopher Cerrone's "Invisible Cities," based on Italo Calvino's novel of the same name, is a collaboration between The Industry, the German audio company Sennheiser, the L.A. Dance Project (with choreography by Benjamin Millepied), and, of course, the people of Los Angeles, willingly and otherwise.

"The opera [functions] as an invisible layer of everyday life, and every audience member will have a different, radically subjective experience of the opera," says Mr. Sharon, director of "Invisible Cities" and artistic director of The Industry. "It's an ideal way to bring Calvino's masterpiece to life and to hear Chris's quiet, haunting original score – all while celebrating a landmark of L.A.'s architecture."

Instead of expensive, elaborate sets and costumes, the level of subtlety and tailoring to a unique environment enhanced by technology may be just what opera needs to thrive in the 21st century. A sobering sign of the times: The New York City Opera, which strove to make opera accessible, filed for bankruptcy and closed its doors in October after a 70-year run.

"Invisible Cities" is not "experimental" in the fashion of Philip Glass's minimalist abstract opera "Einstein on the Beach," which recently finished a run a few blocks from Union Station at Los Angeles Opera. Instead, "Invisible Cities" embraces the grand tradition – the music may be sparse and quiet, but invites active listening and participation. The drama is subdued, but sensational and nuanced, and certainly immediately accessible if not utterly visceral.

This isn't the first time Los Angeles audience members have mingled with opera performers in an unconventional setting. The Industry's inaugural production, "Crescent City," took place in a warehouse. This past spring, the company introduced six scenes from up-and-coming composers in another Los Angeles landmark, the Hammer Museum.

Link: <http://www.csmonitor.com/layout/set/r14/The-Culture/Music/2013/1029/Over-train-s-rumble-an-opera>

**'Invisible Cities' is a new interactive opera at Union Station**

Jerry Gorin | Off-Ramp | October 18th, 2013, 9:57am



Dana Ross

'Invisible Cities', an opera based on Italo Calvino's novel of the same name, opens for a limited run on October 19th at Union Station in Los Angeles.

If you travel through Union Station this weekend, you might walk right into the middle of an opera performance and not even realize it. You might even brush it off, thinking you've run into some ordinary wack jobs singing to themselves and dancing at no one in particular. But then you might keep watching and notice something more spectacular afoot.

Saturday marks the opening of 'Invisible Cities', an interactive opera collaboration between The Industry and the LA Dance Company based on Italo Calvino's novel. Offramp's Jerry Gorin spoke with composer Christopher Cerrone, who says that if you're just passing by, expect the unexpected.

**How does the opera work?**

What we have is a live orchestra who are being amplified and projected into your ears live (through wireless headphones). They're all in a single location, where you'll start, and then you're free to wander the station.

Throughout the station you have both opera singers and dancers, who are strategically placed in many places throughout the station. So as you wander throughout the station, sonically you'll hear the exact same work because all the sound is being mixed into your headphones, but the visual experience is at your own discretion.

**What happens if the audience bunches up and crowds a certain actor? Might they have to change their routine?**

The actors have been prescribed to go about their actions as if no one is there, and unless we have an extraordinarily obstinate audience member, I think they'll all be respectful of the cast. But they're all invited to crowd around as much as they want to. I find, as I walk through dress rehearsals, getting excited to find things as I hear them. When a new cast member comes in singing, I have felt compelled to go find them, because even I haven't discussed with our director, Yuval Sharon, exactly where everyone is at all times. I have a general idea of the trajectory of the show, but I still might go "Hey, I wonder what's going on over here" and then I'll see.

On top of that, what's interesting in the show is that you might see something and not be sure whether or not it's being staged. The show is very much designed to start that way. Discovery is absolutely part and parcel, it's not something that would be an impediment.

**You were approached by Yuval Sharon with this idea. Did it make sense at first?**

Well I'm from New York, so my idea of a train station was much more Grand Central than it was Union Station. So I think when he told me about Union Station as the setting I was hesitant simply because my default train station is so crowded and busy that it would never be possible. But he took me to LA, and I think the space is, in a sense, underutilized. There's a lot of space in that station-- a beautiful old ticket counter which is not used at all, the Harvey restaurant, the gardens-- and given that Los Angeles is the 2nd largest city in America, it's pretty calm.

**What's been the most rewarding part of working on this?**

I think the most rewarding part is to see an idea I had many years ago finally realized in a way that makes me very excited. I'd fallen for Calvino's work for years and used his novel as the basis for a number of instrumental pieces before finally deciding to adapt Calvino to opera. We'd done a stage production at Columbia University before this, and it did not feel right. It felt like it was trying to impose a work-- which is not a dramatic work in a traditional sense-- onto a stage, and it felt very flat to me. Whereas now I feel the work is alive and you live in it. To experience it physically felt much closer to what I was hoping to have the opera be in the first place, but it took quite a few years to actually get there.

*'Invisible Cities' is a collaboration of Yuval Sharon's [The Industry](#) and Benjamin Millepied's [LA Dance Project](#). The show has a limited run from October 19-November 8, and tickets can be found at [www.invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://www.invisiblecitiesopera.com)*

Link: [http://www.scpr.org/programs/offramp/2013/10/18/34179/invisible-cities-is-a-new-interactive-opera-at-uni/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+kpccofframp+\(KPCC%3A+Off-Ramp\)](http://www.scpr.org/programs/offramp/2013/10/18/34179/invisible-cities-is-a-new-interactive-opera-at-uni/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+kpccofframp+(KPCC%3A+Off-Ramp))



## In The Opera 'Invisible Cities,' The Audience Becomes Part Of The Show

October 20, 2013



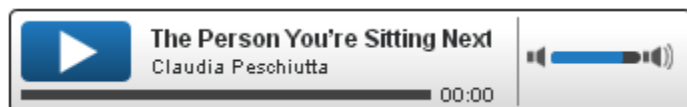
That's no traveler! That man in the hoodie is an opera singer and part of "Invisible Cities." (credit: Claudia Peschiutta/KNX 1070)

**LOS ANGELES (CBSLA.com)** — For the next three weeks, Union Station will be more than just a transportation hub.

As KNX 1070's Claudia Peschiutta reports, it will also be the stage for a unique opera in which the performers can easily be confused for passengers.

Sitting on a bench in a courtyard at Union Station, wearing a hoodie and carrying a backpack, one man looks like any other traveler just waiting for a train. But looks are deceiving.

The traveler is actually one of the performers of "Invisible Cities," an opera based on the novel by Italo Calvino.



The paying audience hears the orchestra and the singers through wireless headphones. There are no sets.

The audience has to walk around to see the show. The performers, in turn, blend in with the typical goings-on at the station.

The scenes play out in different parts of the station — confusing, surprising and delighting passengers. Peschiutta encountered several passengers who were a bit of all three.

Talking on her cellphone while waiting for a train to Oceanside, one woman tells a friend about the opera going on around her.

"Can you hear this?," she says to her friend.

"All of a sudden these beautiful people started performing. I thought I was in a movie! I did," the woman told Peschiutta.

"It really is a dynamic experience for everyone involved," said David Mack, general manager of the Industry, the LA-based opera company that is co-producing the show with the LA Dance Project.

The performers blend in really well. Maybe even too well.

Peschiutta mistook one man for a passenger. She even explained the concept of the show to him. "Then I lent him my headphones. Only later did I realize he was one of the dancers!"



"I think art belongs at the center of life. The message of the novel is summarized beautifully in the line 'It is not the voice that commands the story it is the ear.' It's not about the speaker's experience, it's about the audience listening and interpreting, no two people will take the same meaning away from this experience, and I think that's what's really beautiful about it," said Yuval Sharon, the director behind "Invisible Cities."

Performances of "Invisible Cities" continue at Union Station through November 8.

For more information about "Invisible Cities," click [here](#).

Link: <http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2013/10/20/in-the-opera-invisible-cities-the-audience-becomes-part-of-the-show/>

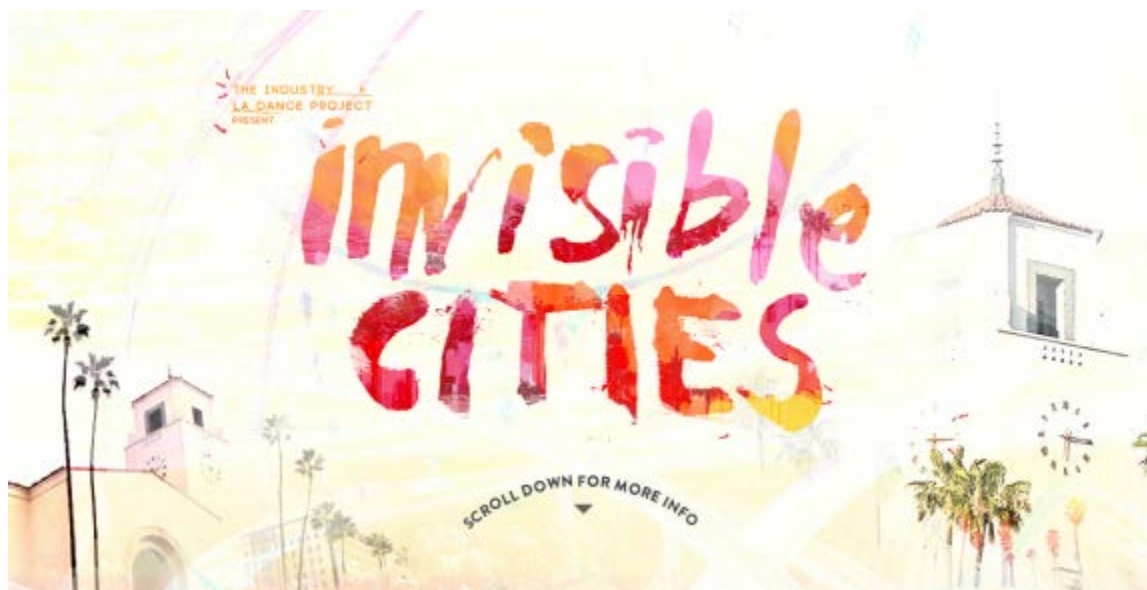


## October is Genre-bending Opera Month: *Pauline*, *Einstein at the Beach*, *Invisible Cities*

Posted October 10, 2013 by Frances Anderton

For those who like their arias served up with experimental architecture, technology and music, this is the month for you, with three operas coming up that play with the genre in highly imaginative ways: [Pauline](#), [Einstein at the Beach](#), [Invisible Cities](#).

### **Invisible Cities**



Like *Pauline*, *Invisible Cities* is an opera that will take place in an L.A. architectural landmark, Union Station. *Invisible Cities* is the co-creation of some of the rising stars of live performance. It is directed by new opera wunderkind Yuval Sharon, artistic director of The Industry. The composition and adaptation is by Christopher Cerrone and dancers from Benjamin Millepied's L.A. Dance Project will perform a site-specific new choreography by the LA-based Danielle Agami.

The station will remain open during each performance, and in order to drown out the hustle and bustle of the train commuters, Sennheiser will provide the technology to allow *Invisible Cities* to become the first large scale opera to use wireless headphones.

According to Sharon, "The opera will function as an *invisible layer* of everyday life, and every audience member will have a different, radically subjective experience of the opera. . . it's an ideal way to bring Calvino's masterpiece to life and to hear Chris's quiet, haunting original score—all while celebrating a landmark of L.A.'s architecture."

Listen to Yuval Sharon talk about the opera on Which Way LA, below.



October 19th- November 8th

Union Station  
800 North Alameda Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

[Click here for tickets](#)

Link: <http://blogs.kcrw.com/dna/october-is-genre-bending-opera-month-pauline-einstein-at-the-beach-invisible-cities>



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Posted 10/12/2013 8:00:00 PM



Link: <http://www.kusc.org/Episodes.aspx?PID=2129>



Opera, History and Headphones: Invisible Cities at Union Station  
Posted By: Sheila Tepper · 10/17/2013 4:21:00 PM

This weekend, [The Industry](#) opens their new production. The show is a pioneering concept that combines delivering divas through headphones and having the audience move around Union Station. *Invisible Cities* has a libretto based on the [novel by Italo Calvino](#).



Here's The Industry's artistic director Yuval Sharon on the show.

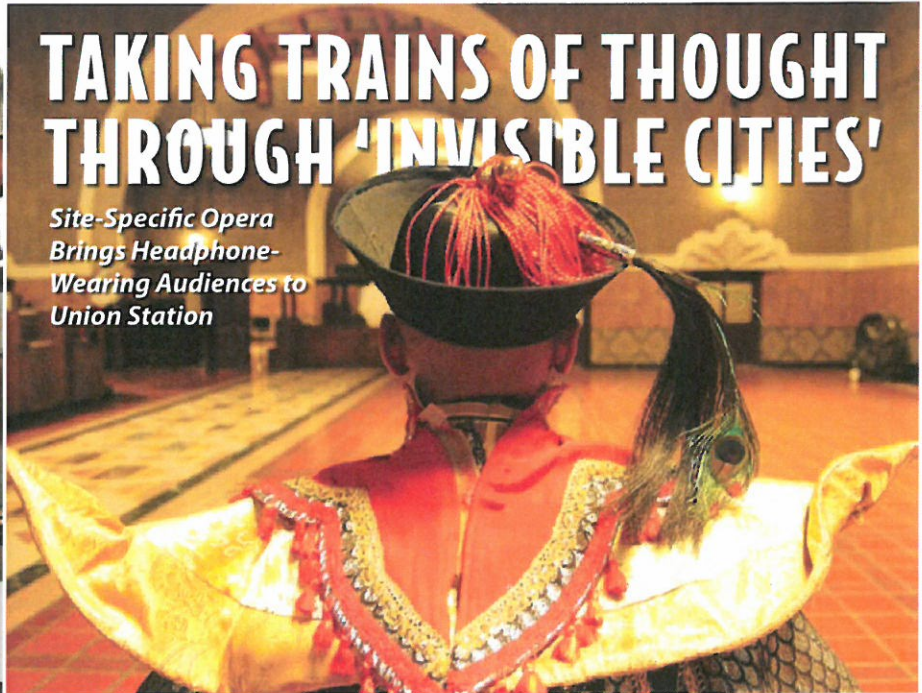
A SoundCloud player interface. On the left is a small thumbnail of the man from the previous image with a "Follow" button. The main area shows the title "Arts Alive Invisible Cities: An Opera In A Public Sp..." with a "Share" button. Below the title is a waveform visualization. At the bottom right, it says "4:50" and "Leave a comment at 2:41".

Link: <http://www.kusc.org/blog/artsalive/blogentry.aspx?BlogEntryID=10603350>

CALENDAR



In *Invisible Cities*, audiences will watch an opera that takes place amidst the bustle of travellers passing through Union Station. They'll hear the singing and the score through wireless headphones.



Photos by Dana Ross

# TAKING TRAINS OF THOUGHT THROUGH 'INVISIBLE CITIES'

Site-Specific Opera Brings Headphone-Wearing Audiences to Union Station

**By Dany Margolies**

As of late, Yuval Sharon hasn't been staging his shows in theaters. These days, he seems to prefer museums and empty warehouses and, in the case of his latest venture, Union Station.

Sharon is directing the opera *Invisible Cities*, which opens Saturday, Oct. 19, at Downtown's iconic depot. Just as unlikely as the venue is the presentation: Over 70 minutes, the audience will follow eight singers, 11 musicians, a conductor and a group of dancers as they weave amidst the rush of departing passengers and the greetings of arriving ones.

There's one other unusual element: The audience will listen to the proceedings through high-tech wireless headphones.

Sharon is the artistic director of The Industry, a Silver Lake-based collaborative organization that, as its website says, presents "new and experimental productions that merge music, visual arts and performance." Last year his *Crescent City* — a "hyperopera," as he termed it, depicting post-Katrina New Orleans — took place in an Atwater Village warehouse he converted with the help of a group of visual designers. Audience members had the choice of remaining seated or wandering around the space.

The UC Berkeley graduate with a degree in English literature has been pondering *Invisible Cities* since he found it, in its incipient form, in 2009 while he was the project director for New York City Opera's workshop program, VOX. The opera's composer, Christopher Cerrone, adapted the libretto from Italo Calvino's 1972 novel *Invisible Cities*. The framing devices of both versions are fictional conversations between the real-life Marco Polo and Kublai Khan.

In the novel and the libretto, Polo describes wildly imaginary cities. One is created of staircases encrusted with spiral seashells. Another is populated with those who were loved but died, then who were reborn but no longer recognize their loved ones.

"All these very fantastical cities are meant to provoke an internal look, for the reader, as to how a city can reflect their own makeup, their own psychology," says Sharon. "Every time we go

traveling, we're just searching for something in ourselves we can't otherwise find. It's done in a way that gives you an incredible amount of power. It's meant to be your journey through these cities."

Audiences can literally journey through Union Station during the one-act opera, gazing at the building's 1930s tiles and moldings or spying dancers from Benjamin Millepied's L.A. Dance Project, which co-produced *Invisible Cities*. But the audience will not see sets, as in traditional theater.

"The minute you start representing the cities, you take away the magic," says Sharon.

**Dissonant Melodies**

Cerrone scored his opera for the two main characters, four ensemble members who play other roles, and two lead sopranos who, Cerrone says, "sing wordless lyrical music to evoke the feel and color of each city."

That approach is exemplified when Polo describes the city of Isidora. Cerrone notes that Isidora is beautiful, the type of place we would have wanted to go to in youth. The Polo character reveals that by the time we'd get there, we'd be old. The two sopranos begin to sing the melodies on top of each other, says Cerrone, "and suddenly there's dissonance and they're a little out of sorts with each other — the experience of what you desire versus what you have."

The 2009 workshop version at VOX comprised only three scenes, but Sharon was instantly smitten. Cerrone then workshoped it on his own until 2012. Meanwhile, Sharon pondered his next project: the mix of opera over headphones in a public space.

"When I started thinking proper content or the reason for doing it," he says, "it hit me that Chris' work would be the most appropriate, because, like the Calvino book, we're inviting the audience to create their own experience."

Sharon began shopping for a venue. Union Station seemed apt for the travel themes, not only because it's the hub of the Southern California mass transit system, but also because it had been purchased by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

The agency is in the midst of staging a series of events to celebrate the building's 75th anniversary.

Once the venue was nailed down, Sharon began to explore how singers could move out of sight of the conductor and still keep time with the orchestra. He solved the problem with his music director and conductor, Marc Lowenstein.

Contrary to most maestros, says Sharon, "He believes the orchestra should be following the singers. He rehearses the singers with vigor and discipline to be appropriate to the music, but he wants the singers to have an expressive freedom."

The general public walking through Union Station may hear individual singers but won't be privy to the blend of voices and instruments — including found items such as tuned metal pipes — that the audience hears. For the operagoer, Sharon promises a "vibrant and high-quality" audio experience over the Sennheiser headphones.

In part that's because Cerrone, who holds two master's degrees in music from Yale, is "totally an audiophile." He is working closely with *Invisible Cities*' sound designer, E. Martin Gimenez, to create a very specific "sound world." Says Cerrone, "Each scene will have a different acoustic, a different reverberation. Some scenes are dry and dead and not reverberant. Other scenes feel like they're in the middle of a cathedral."

Cerrone seems sure everyone in the audience — each show is limited to 160 attendees — will understand the music. For example, Polo will sing repeated melodies, and while a sophisticated operagoer might notice how the motifs and intervals return, Cerrone hopes those compositional elements seem natural and invisible.

"My goal is not to mystify," he says.

Sharon expects veteran opera lovers to attend, but he says first-timers are his primary target. Like the novel's readers and Polo, all will be able to roam and dream, pondering the literal and metaphoric.

*Invisible Cities* runs Oct. 19-Nov. 8 at Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St. Tickets and additional information at [invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets).

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Posted: Wednesday, October 16, 2013 9:34 am | Updated: 9:32 am, Tue Oct 22, 2013.

By Dany Margolies



DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - As of late, Yuval Sharon hasn't been staging his shows in theaters. These days, he seems to prefer museums and empty warehouses and, in the case of his latest venture, Union Station.

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Cerrone seems sure everyone in the audience — each show is limited to 160 attendees — will understand the music. For example, Polo will sing repeated melodies, and while a sophisticated operagoer might notice how the motifs and intervals return, Cerrone hopes those compositional elements seem natural and invisible.



“My goal is not to mystify,” he says.

Sharon expects veteran opera lovers to attend, but he says first-timers are his primary target. Like the novel’s readers and Polo, all will be able to roam and dream, pondering the literal and metaphoric.

Invisible Cities runs Oct. 19-Nov. 8 at Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St. Tickets and additional information at [invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets).

Link: [http://www.ladowntownnews.com/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/site-specific-opera-invisible-cities-brings-headphone-wearing-audiences-to/article\\_b7349d12-3680-11e3-84f3-0019bb2963f4.html](http://www.ladowntownnews.com/arts_and_entertainment/site-specific-opera-invisible-cities-brings-headphone-wearing-audiences-to/article_b7349d12-3680-11e3-84f3-0019bb2963f4.html)

# LA STAGE TIMES

## FEATURES

Travelers From *Invisible Cities* Sing and Dance Through Union Station

by Jessica Koslow | October 16, 2013



The cast of "Invisible Cities" rehearses at Union Station. Photo courtesy of The Industry.

A tall, slim dancer commands the attention of everyone in his immediate area in the entrance of downtown LA's [Union Station](#). He's rehearsing for *Invisible Cities*, an experimental opera collaboration between [Yuval Sharon's The Industry](#) and Benjamin Millepied's [L.A. Dance Project](#), which premieres Saturday at the stroke of 7 pm.

Falling, sliding, lunging and flailing, the dancer executes large movements in a designated small space. Suddenly, another dancer gallops briskly by the first company member, hands flapping wildly, scratching his head and neck, keeping to his own rhythm. But he doesn't stop. He heads out the main doors and into the night because, in fact, he is not a cast member. In retrospect, he was one of the eccentrics who frequent Union Station, one of the many characters who will make this innovative production even more interesting and challenging.



Yuval Sharon

“From the beginning of the concept [of *Invisible Cities*], I wanted the piece to feel like an invisible layer of what is already among the reality of Union Station,” says Sharon, director of *Invisible Cities* and artistic director of The Industry, an LA-based nonprofit that aims to expand the traditional definition of opera and explore new paradigms for interdisciplinary collaboration. “The idea that there is a really eclectic, wild mix of personalities, characters, costumes, activities — that’s a major theme of the performance.”

Union Station is gorgeous to look at, combining Dutch Colonial Revival architecture with Mission Revival and Streamline Moderne style. But it’s a far stretch from, say, New York City’s Grand Central Station. Though the two stations serve the same purpose, Grand Central is almost always packed with travelers. Union Station has that atmosphere at times, but more often, it feels stagnant, like a resting place for the less fortunate who have nowhere else to go. Travelers alternate with down-and-out locals, who are sleeping or just hanging out, on the main lobby seats. During rehearsals, without costumes, the cast of *Invisible Cities* blends in with the masses as the singers walk slowly around the station or when Ashley Faatoalia, who plays Marco Polo, sits at a table at Traxx Restaurant as part of the performance.

It’s easy to pick out the performers because they’re wearing headphones and have serious-looking people who look like production assistants following them. But, otherwise, the cast members look like they too could be waiting to catch a train or just whiling away the hours.

Sharon appears to be in command at each rehearsal. He has headphones, but also a handheld mic. The singers have wireless mics in front of their mouths and headphones to hear the music. When Sharon calls a cue, the singers begin to rehearse a section, stopping when they hit a technical snag or if the director has notes. He’s juggling a lot: the cast, the sound, the public. Once in a while, the whole creative team — director, composer ([Christopher Cerrone](#)), singers, production assistants, sound engineers — huddle together.

It’s a little bit of controlled chaos in this large area of busy activity. People stop to tell the singers how pretty their voices are. A production assistant has to politely explain that they’re rehearsing and hands them a flyer with show information. The loudspeaker blares out that the 8:45 pm train to Riverside is leaving in 20 minutes on track nine.

Onlookers gather in random areas, making it more difficult for the singers to move freely. They have to adjust, weaving through the rooms and courtyards.



Dress rehearsal

Then there are the people who mimic the singers, blurting out off-key words, or leaping in the air, copying what they see the dancers doing. The actors can't break character, but they often have a smile creeping up in the corner of their mouths or they just outright giggle at the goofiness.

During the performance of *Invisible Cities*, for 70 minutes audience members will wear wireless [Sennheiser](#) headphones, which pipe in a mix of the singers' voices with pre-recorded and live music from an 11-person orchestra housed in the Fred Harvey Room (formerly a restaurant with a magnificent Native American-meets-art deco design theme). A stage management team is on hand to make sure the audience members' headphones are working throughout the entire performance and to hover around the singers and dancers to answer any bystander questions and prevent any interference. Those who aren't wearing headphones might see a singer and hear the individual's voice, but they won't comprehend the interconnectedness of the work as a whole.

On an average Tuesday at Union Station, a man shuffles in the courtyard with his pants at his knees and a teenager walks down the main corridor with a live pet cat perched on his baseball cap. This is the colorful environment in which the actors, dancers and singers perform *Invisible Cities*, which is based on Italo Calvino's novel about the meeting of the emperor Kublai Khan with the explorer Marco Polo, where Khan orders Polo to report on the cities in his empire.

Wednesday, October 2, is the first of seven rehearsals at Union Station after months of planning and preparation. The following Friday, at the second rehearsal, just the singers are mapping out a scene titled "Venice." Ashley Knight, Delaram Kamareh, Maria Elena Altany, Stephen Anastasia and Cale Olson join [Ashley Faatoalia](#) (Marco Polo) and [Cedric Berry](#) (a wheel chair-using Kublai Khan) as they all wander around inside the station and outside in the courtyards, singing the word "Marco" into the sky.



Actors walk among bystanders at Union Station

People watch them curiously. Berry, as Khan, wheels by a group of college-age students. He's singing into his mic. Everyone in his vicinity hears a subtle, soft murmur. One guy imitates Berry, pretending to be an opera star, singing at a high pitch, hands swinging in the air and mouth stretched wide open. His circle of friends chuckle. They have no idea what's going on. Maybe they think Berry is a weary traveler or a strange LA local. They aren't aware that there are many other singers meandering around other parts of Union Station singing the same word.

"Marco Polo tells Kublai Khan that every city he's ever visited is basically just a representation of his hometown of Venice," says Sharon, who was recently selected as one of the three finalists for Center Theatre Group's 2014 Richard E. Sherwood Award. "In that scene ["Venice"], Marco is being called by the chorus as if it's this nostalgic call from his hometown. Chris wrote those voices in this beautiful cascade. That entire scene is built like a cascade of sound. Everyone will hear it perfectly in their headphones, but if they're in the station, they'll hear these beautiful, perfectly sung almost-like bells scattered through the space."

It's not a call and response, though. Sharon admits he's waiting for someone to yell out "Polo!" He says he's sure it will happen, and "when it does, it'll be a big challenge for the singers not to break character."

People busting out into dance and yelling out ad-libs are just two of the challenges of this production. Christopher Cerrone, who composed and adapted *Invisible Cities*, points out more of the show's specific musical challenges.

"In any other opera, the conductor and singer have some ability to make eye contact," he says. "By far, this is the biggest challenge for the singers. They have to memorize [the lyrics], sing [them] really well, without looking at a conductor while acting. Kublai Khan's wheel chair causes interference. I don't know if anyone knew how challenging this would be."



Stephen Anastasia

These obstacles are part of the experimental territory that *Invisible Cities* inhabits.

“The everyday life of the station is part of the performance, even the maintenance that has to happen at Union Station,” says Sharon, who begins to recount how at the third rehearsal, on October 8, the artists showed up to find part of the seating area roped off where the performance occurs.

“So we adjust. And people can wonder whether that’s an intentional artistic choice or the life of the station. The sights, sounds, smells and lighting are all part of the performance. Depending on the moon and how bright the sky is, it’s beautiful to have that impact. We’ve had three different rehearsal days [so far] with different weather and atmosphere, and it changes the energy in a fundamental way, which is quite beautiful.”

For the first rehearsal, Sharon says, the cast was “relatively self-conscious about doing the opera there, constantly watching how people were reacting. Is this something that feels like it belongs to the space?” But by the third rehearsal, “we felt we are all connected to each other across this big space. Union Station is an amazing town square. It’s a broad spectrum of who arrives at the station. In and among that layer is this performance, and it’s a performance that belongs in a public space, in a space that is fundamentally about travel, and is a place to meditate on the past and also contemplate the future. It feels really aligned with the space in so many ways.”

This third rehearsal is also when the L.A. Dance Project entered Union Station. LA-based [Danielle Agami](#) is responsible for the new site-specific choreography for *Invisible Cities*.

“Danielle and I are working very closely to create a map of the performance,” says Sharon. “Where are there really fantastic moments for these worlds to collide? Danielle has a great knack for movement that feels like it’s extraordinary, but you can see it’s rooted in the post-modern tradition of investigating pedestrian movement. The dancers seem to disrupt the space far less than the singers. The dancers seem to really seamlessly fit into the world of the station, which is a total delight to watch.”

The dancers, like the singers, also receive a ton of strange glances from bystanders. With the dancers in the space, there is a new energy that dancers bring, a can’t-sit-still, jumping, stretching, hugging, touching energy, which is

different from the more reserved behavior of the operatic singers. The dancers also make more of a spectacle of themselves.



Danielle Agami and Yuval Sharon

At the fourth rehearsal, Sharon is going over a few scenes with the dancers in the front part of Union Station. In solos, duets and trios, the dancers use their entire bodies to enact the emotions and behaviors of travelers. Two men and a woman pull frantically at each other. One woman sits on top of a man's shoulders, legs dangling on his chest, as he walks briskly. In another moment, every L.A. Dance Company member holds a piece of luggage as they swirl in circles around Marco Polo while he drifts forward, as if in a trance. The dancers stop and start.

It's hard to know how these sections connect yet, or if they're in chronological order. Although the work is highly choreographic, at times it seems the performers just fly into fits of movement. They contort, squirm and kick, then hurry along, only to stop and break out into more jarring movement. Their mannerisms are so chaotic that a man running to catch his train might be mistaken for an *Invisible Cities* cast member.

No person can pass by without stopping and staring. Most people are amused. Not one person looks annoyed or frustrated that their path is being blocked. And then, in one rush of bodies, several of the singers and the majority of the dance company head into what used to be the ticket lobby, where a sign at the entrance now reads, "This area is not open to the public." People now have to peer in through the entrance-way to see what's going on, and a small crowd gathers with some of them standing on their toes to see over each other.

The dancers line up on the narrow ledge of the ticket-selling counter and all execute the same choreography, much like a synchronized swimming routine. Without costumes, it's a beautiful sight set against the huge, arching windows in the background. (Union station was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 and was designated as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument in 1972.)

For anybody who wants to make the connection between *Invisible Cities* and flash mobs, Sharon says his opera takes the concept of a brief occupation of a space to the next level.

"What we're doing is so much more expansive because it's a 70-minute-long performance ... that actually invites the audience into a deeper sense of the environment," he says. "Most importantly, into their own imagination and into their own relationship of what they see and hear. Because for every single spectator, that is going to be radically different, including the ones without headphones."

Link: <http://www.lastagetimes.com/2013/10/travelers-from-invisible-cities-sing-and-dance-through-union-station/>

# LA STAGE TIMES

COLUMNS

## Sites of Frights and Invisible Cities

by Don Shirley | October 21, 2013

*Invisible Cities* is a much more streamlined and effective site-specific production, which opened Saturday at Union Station. It isn't Halloween-related, and I don't normally cover opera. So I'll be brief. It's an enchanting experience that I recommend highly.

The audience assembles in the train station's former restaurant, where we hear the orchestra perform the overture to Christopher Cerrone's haunting score. Then, wearing wireless headsets, we enter the magnificent gardens and the other rooms of the 1939 structure. We wander wherever we like, listening to Cerrone's dramatization of selected parts of Italo Calvino's 1972 novel *Invisible Cities*, which relates an encounter between Kublai Khan and Marco Polo in which Polo tells the emperor about cities in his domain that Polo has visited — most of which the emperor has never seen.



"Invisible Cities" dress rehearsal. Photo courtesy of The Industry.

We encounter the singers and dancers as well as the regular customers of Union Station along the way. For a long time the main characters are dressed like someone at Union Station might be dressed, so we might have to pick out the emperor and the explorer from among the people around us. Sometimes lyrics are projected on the walls. The general theme is about the mixed blessings of exploring distant cities as well as one's home — an apt subject for a production in a train station.

*Invisible Cities* lasts only 75 minutes, culminating in a finale in the former ticket-selling room, a soaring cathedral-like space that amply justifies the final words of the libretto — "make them endure, give them space." With Kublai Khan on one end of the long room and Marco Polo on the other end, with the dancers performing Danielle Agami's choreography atop the old ticket counter, with Cerrone's score soaking into our brains, this is a thrilling moment.

It's a collaboration between director Yuval Sharon's The Industry and L.A. Dance Project. More, please.

***Invisible Cities*, Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St., LA. Thu Oct 24 and 31, Sat Oct 26, Tue Oct 29 and Nov 5, Fri Nov 8, 7:30 pm and 10 pm. [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com).**

Link: <http://www.lastagetimes.com/2013/10/sites-of-frights-and-invisible-cities/>



# BLOUIN ARTINFO

Yuval Sharon's "Invisible Cities" Now Disappearing in Union Station



Photo by Dana Ross

A scene from "Invisible Cities" at Union Station.

by Jordan Riefe

Published: October 22, 2013

LOS ANGELES – Tourists, commuters, and loiterers at Los Angeles's famed Union Station might be surprised when a face in the crowd suddenly belts out an aria and then moves on to another room. It will be happening all over the station, not by buskers or psychopaths, but by the cast of **Yuval Sharon's** daring new site-specific opera, "[Invisible Cities](#)."

Based on the 1972 novel by Italo Calvino and composed by **Christopher Cerrone**, the new opera is centered on a series of imaginary conversations between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan. Polo describes fantastical cities in the emperor's crumbling domain, while the language gap between them only enhances the images in the mind of the listener.

"The train station is the perfect place to be doing this adaptation of the novel because it is so much about travel," Sharon told **ARTINFO** about making the architectural landmark his stage for the opera's world premiere. "It's so much about looking at the experience of visiting other cities and imagining other cities as a way of understanding our own life."

Eight singers from Sharon's company, [The Industry](#), perform with seven dancers from [LA Dance Project](#), choreographed by **Danielle Agami**, to the music of an 11-piece chamber orchestra. An audience of 200 hears the performance on wireless headphones, which they borrow for the price of admission. At the beginning of the opera, the entire group of audience members and performers gather in the same room. As the show progresses, the

performers wander off in separate directions, and attendees do the same. All hear the same opera, but each sees different parts of it.

“The key concept of the piece is really meant for the audience to come up with their own ideas, their own image of the world,” Sharon explained. “It’s something where the performance coexists with the general flow of everyday life in a really beautiful way.”

Sharon first heard of “Invisible Cities” in 2008 when he was director of New York City Opera’s VOX workshop, a once-vital incubator for new works. The following year, while working in Los Angeles as assistant director to **Achim Freyer** on LA Opera’s production of Wagner’s “Ring” cycle, Sharon set up the Industry in an Atwater Village warehouse. Their inaugural production, 2012’s “Crescent City,” was a groundbreaking avant-garde “hyperopera” combining art installation and video projections.

For their next project, Sharon decided to go the opposite way with something more suggestive and less imposing. His sound designer proposed something with headphones; Sharon was unconvinced, but liked the freedom it would give him in terms of space. Then LA Philharmonic’s **Chad Smith**, who had just programmed the overture to “Invisible Cities,” suggested Sharon take another look at the opera.

“It suddenly made sense to do Chris’s piece with the headphones because the piece is so intimate and so quiet,” Sharon said. “It was the perfect intersection of the form, the content, and the expression.”

Sharon’s reputation for thinking outside the proscenium is often considered a fresh approach to a medium that frequently relies on the same old repertory performed the same old way. He is quick to note that opera was the first multidisciplinary performing art form, incorporating drama, dance, music, and acting.

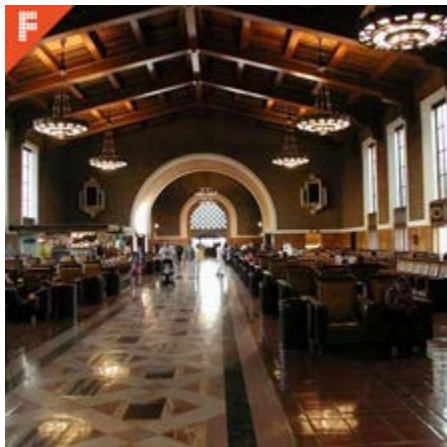
“The idea of trying to push the boundaries of opera is, to me, inherent to what the art form is,” he said. He is now looking ahead to his next project, a German production of **John Adams**’s ambitious “Doctor Atomic” in January, after “Invisible Cities” closes November 8. “The best operas really challenge you to think in an aspirational kind of way. When you can make the challenge of it also the thing that makes it so sensually beautiful and joyous, that’s what’s amazing about opera.”

Link: <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/974368/yuval-sharons-invisible-cities-now-disappearing-in-union>



## Invisible Cities

By: Kenneth Hughes



The Industry partners with LA Dance Project to put on this site-specific, contemporary opera at Los Angeles Union Station. The tale reveals explorer Marco Polo narrating to Kublai Khan, conqueror of China, about remarkably lavish cities of the world — or is it our deepest personal places? The layered immersion occurs by spreading the opera throughout Union Station where you wander with Sennheiser wireless headphones to discover it all amongst the life of the train station. The grace of the opera and dance elevates all the busy train-goers, homeless, and partiers seeking their rave up the street. Often the civilians get swept up in the semi-clandestine performances because they can hear or see the performers in front of them. The opera attendees hear everything performed wherever they go in their wireless headsets, including the live orchestra and all the singers in front of them, still hearing them when they explore the historical building and grounds. Everything is peeled away during the experience, leaving the discovery of all the beauty in the random moments in front of you. Discovering who in the train station will end up having an opera singer sitting next to them or how someone will respond to seven dancers suddenly and purposefully performing in the garden is a deep part of the experience. Finally, watching opera attendees give their headsets to station pedestrians for a listen is just a sublime part of discovering all of our own "Invisible Cities."

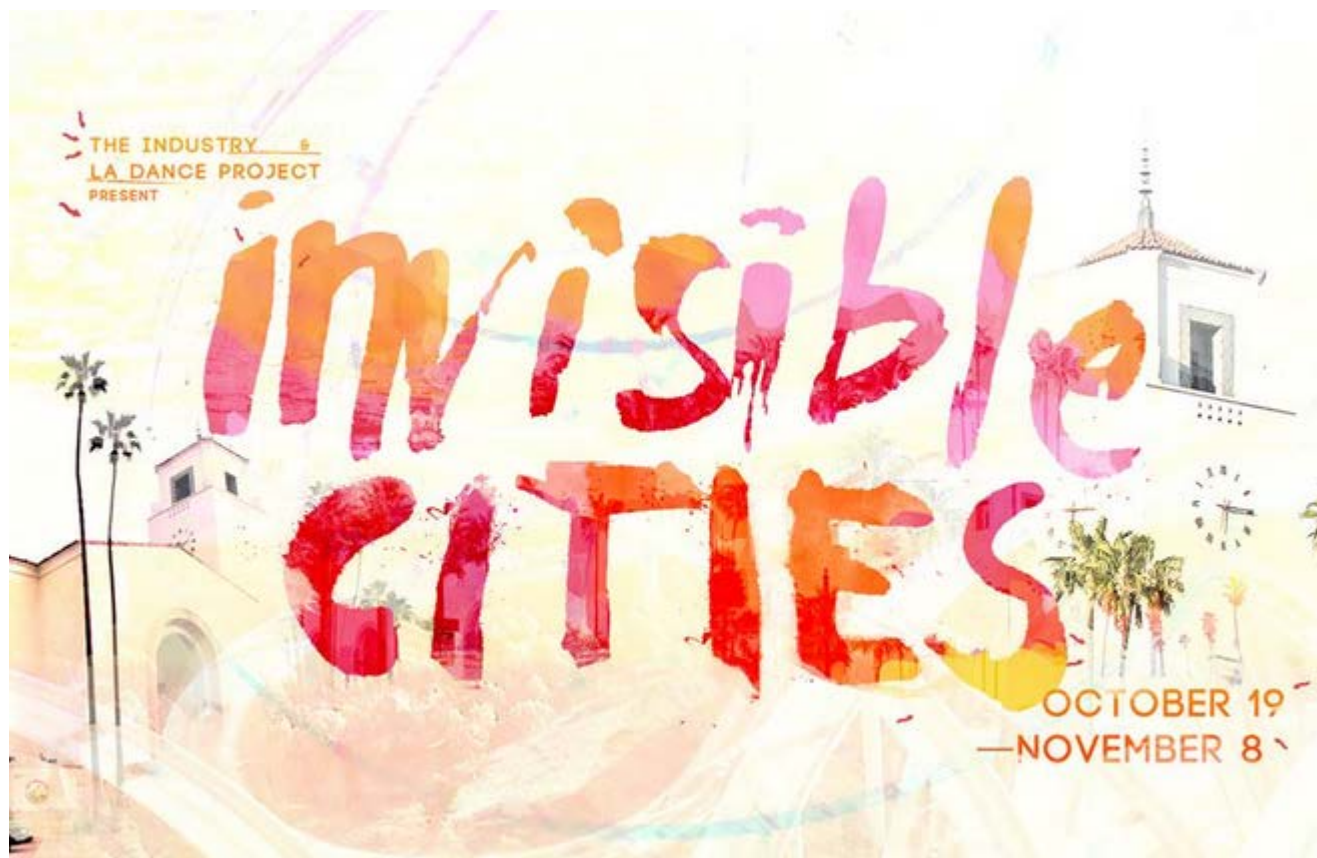
Link: <http://beta.flavorpill.com/events/invisible-cities-1>

# MUSEUMVIEWS

MUSEUMVIEWS PRODUCTIONS

Meet @AshTheTenor of @LADanceProject & @IndustryOpera 's INVISIBLE CITIES | @LACMA

October 23, 2013



When we think of Los Angeles, opera is not the first thing that comes to our minds. Nor, too often, is it even the last thing that we think of when we consider the City of Angels as a performing arts metropolis. The entertainment industry, The Industry, is what we associate LA with. Well, those of you who have not been to Los Angeles over the past three years or so, may not know that the hottest (**The Industry**) in town is the one founded by Yuval Sharon. The director and producer, named "Face to Watch in 2012" by the Los Angeles Times, has been creating an exciting body of work that explores the boundaries of music, visual art, and live performance. Accordingly, his opera company's mission is to "present new and experimental productions that merge music, visual arts, and performance in order to expand the traditional definition of opera and create a new paradigm for interdisciplinary collaboration."

The Industry's latest undertaking, in association with [LA Dance Project](#), has proven hugely successful. As of two hours ago (Pacific Time), "25 tickets total left for the extended run of INVISIBLE CITIES, only on Sunday 11/17 at 5:00pm. <http://www.InvisibleCitiesOpera.com/tickets>" @IndustryOpera (twitter)



INVISIBLE CITIES, based on Italo Calvino's brilliant novel of the same name, is staged at a train station in Los Angeles. And, oh, it is wireless!

Yesterday afternoon, I met with one of the performers in INVISIBLE CITIES, Ashley 'The Tenor' Faatolia at my favorite hotspot in LA: [The Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#). After speaking with Ash The Tenor for nearly three hours about anything and everything relating to the comparative worlds of visual and performing arts, I couldn't help but think of the following quote by Marianne Williamson. *Disclaimer*, I don't quote spiritual gurus, nor do I follow them. However, a friend had recently posted this famous saying by Williamson (which has wrongly been attributed to Nelson Mandela) on her Facebook profile and I couldn't help but think how relevant it is to a great (& young) artist like Ash 'The Tenor':

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do...*

In fact, this quote is how I relate to the art of opera which is one of the most complex and magical art forms ever created by humankind. The most complex art form, of course, is that of cinema!

Visit [The Industry](#) – in hope of purchasing tickets for the extra five shows that were recently added to their performance schedule. Assuming there are any tickets lefts, by now. Good Luck!

Follow Ash 'The Tenor' on Twitter @[AshTheTenor](#)

Link: <http://museumviews.com/2013/10/meet-ashthetenor-of-ladanceproject-industryopera-s-invisible-cities-lacma/>

# Swide

Invisible Cities: Calvino revisited in innovative opera

By Hugo McCafferty

Modern technology by Sennheiser meets modern dance, musical inspiration and a classic Italian novel in 'Invisible Cities, a modern Opera based on the book by Italo Calvino and the world's first large scale opera for wireless headphones.

#OPERA

As Italy celebrated the 90th anniversary of the birth of Italo Calvino, across the water in Los Angeles' The Industry is teaming up with **LA Dance Project** and Sennheiser, to interpret the writer's beloved novel Invisible Cities as a **modern opera** set in the unusual setting of Union Station and created specifically for listening with wireless headphones, for a limited run October 16 to November 8.



Composer and librettist Christopher Cerrone adapts Italo Calvino's beloved 1972 novel. Calvino's book explores the realms of the imagination through an account of fantastical cities relayed by Italian explorer Marco Polo in a conversation with the Kublai Kahn. Replete with stories within stories, artful linguistic devices and the imaginative potentialities of cities.



Renowned LA-based choreographer Danielle Agami guides LA Dance Project's company of seven dancers through a constantly changing series of pictures, creating both large-scale patterns throughout the architecture and beautiful miniature moments.



Directed by Yuval Sharon of The Industry production company the setting and dynamic of this modern opera pushes the limits of what a modern musical operatic performance can be. No two audience experiences are the same as people interact with the performance on a personal within the dynamic of a working open railway station, the largest in the western United States.



Sennheiser lends its world leading ability in sound technology design with wireless earphones that ensure the highest listening experience for the audience while allowing them free movement within the space. The technology is crucial to the experience, the earphones 'isolate' a group from the work-a-day world, uniting them in a creative, imaginative experience expressed through story, music and dance. Innovation in every respect, this type of performance wouldn't have been possible even ten years ago.

Link: <http://www.swide.com/art-culture/opera/italo-calvino-invisible-cities-becomes-a-modern-opera-by-sennheiser-and-la-dance/2013/10/18>



# 24700

October 19 – November 8, 2013

The Industry Stages an 'Immaterial' Opera at Los Angeles' Union Station



Los Angeles' iconic Union Station becomes an unusual stage for an opera in *The Industry's Invisible Cities*, running from Oct. 19 to Nov. 8.

The opera is based on Italian writer Italo Calvino's eponymous 1972 novel, an epic exploration of cities real and imagined framed in prose poetic conversations between the explorer Marco Polo and the aging Mongolian leader Kublai Khan. Composer and librettist Christopher Cerrone penned the score that explores "sonic qualities of decay and lushness."

A number of CalArtians are participating in the staging of the experimental opera. The Herb Alpert School of Music faculty member Marc Lowenstein, with assistant Andreas Levisianos (Music DMA 15), conducts an 11-piece orchestra that includes trombonist Matt Barbier (Music MFA 10), violinist Eric KM Clark (Music MFA 06), percussionist Jodie Landau (Music BFA 15), harpist Jillian Risigari-Gai (Music MFA 12), cellist Derek Stein (Music MFA 10), pianist Richard Valitutto (Music MFA 11), clarinetist Brian Walsh (Music MFA 08) and flautist Sarah Wass (Music MFA 03). The LA Dance Project led by choreographer Benjamin Millepied completes the experience with site-specific dance.

The German audio company Sennheiser provides attendees with wireless headphones, through which they hear eight singers scattered throughout the LA transportation hub. They are free to wander around the historic building, the music always in their ears, immersing them in a highly private experience in an extremely public place as they

seek out these “invisible” performers. Lead sound designer E.M. “Martin” Gimenez (Theater MFA 09) and sound technician Veronica Mullins (Theater BFA 15) work with the cutting edge audio technology to make sure that not even a whisper from the opera singers is lost.

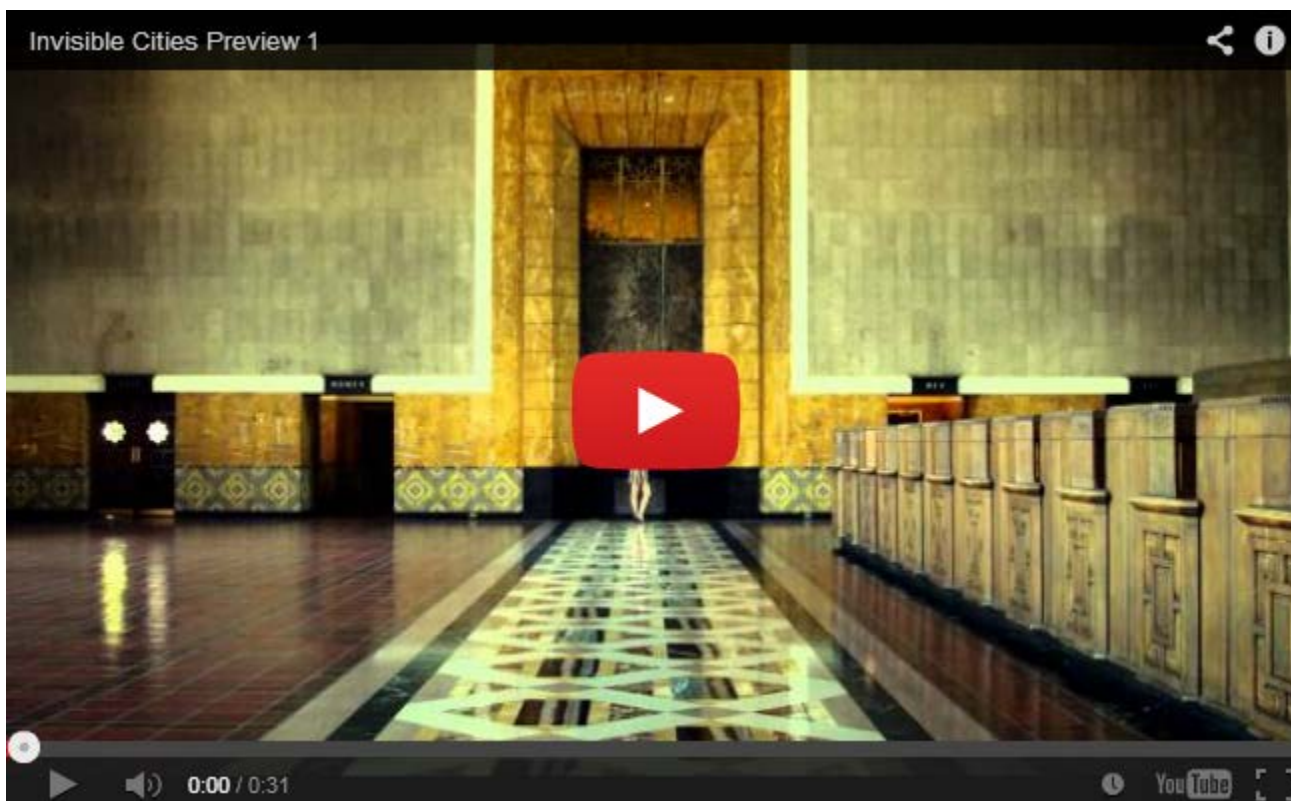
Stage manager Rita Santos (Theater BFA 15), marketing outreach coordinator Mitchell Colley (Theater BFA 11) and general manager David Mack (Theater MFA 08) bring all of the elements of this avant-garde opera together.

In an article published in KCET’s *Artbound*, experimental opera company The Industry’s artistic director Yuval Sharon talks about the process of this ambitious work, from selecting a train station as a site for opera to the audience as the last element that finishes a work of art:

The performance at Union Station will be as close to immaterial as opera can allow while remaining a live experience. You will be offered a pair of headphones and move through the station—which is not closed to its everyday traffic. The singers and dancers will be all around you, but you may not ever see them. The headphones and Sennheiser’s wireless technology will always keep you connected to the story, so what you hear will be the same as everyone else; but what you see will belong to you alone. The performance will become your experience, with no wrong choices: everyone will miss something, and everyone will have a perfect view. There will not be anything to explain.

*Artbound* has teamed up with The Industry to produce an original series about *Invisible Cities*. The feature provides an in-depth look at the one-of-a-kind opera through exclusive articles, photos and video. The program culminates with an hour-long *Invisible Cities* feature airing on KCET on Dec. 12 at 9 pm.

Below, we have posted a preview from *Artbound’s Invisible Cities*.



Link: <http://blog.calarts.edu/2013/10/16/the-industry-stages-an-immaterial-opera-at-los-angeles-union-station/>



**VIDEO: Behind the Scenes of KCET's Artbound and The Industry's INVISIBLE CITIES**

October 4, 2013 6:10 PM

KCET's award-winning arts and culture series, Artbound and The Industry have partnered to produce an in-depth online series and television special exploring the creative process behind the new experimental opera, Invisible Cities, a joint production by The Industry and L.A. Dance Project which premieres at Los Angeles' historic Union Station on Oct. 19, 2013. Artbound's unique online multimedia series, which launches Oct. 8 at [www.kcet.org/Artbound](http://www.kcet.org/Artbound), invites fans to explore the artistry and experience the behind-the-scenes excitement prior to Invisible Cities' opening night. Get a sneak peek below!

The original Artbound series provides an exclusive look at the avant-garde opera, composed and adapted by Christopher Cerrone, in an audacious production conceived and directed by The Industry's founder and artistic director Yuval Sharon, with choreography by Danielle Agami. The production utilizes wireless technology provided by Sennheiser, offering audience members headphones to hear the opera amid the normal "hustle and bustle" of the train station's everyday life.

Updated weekly with new articles, video and photos, Artbound viewers will see rehearsal footage; get a glimpse of the production's beautiful costumes; discover the technical nuances of combining technology, art and public spaces; learn about the complexities of choreographic dance in high traffic areas, and much more.

The project culminates on Dec. 12, 2013 at 9 p.m., with a special hour-long Artbound episode that airs exclusively on KCET. The special will capture the complete creative narrative of Invisible Cities, featuring scenes from the live opera performance, artfully interspersed with robust multimedia footage taken during the making of the production.

"We are honored to collaborate with The Industry and artistic director Yuval Sharon on the production of this special series, which is redefining our understanding of opera and modernizing it for the 21st century," said Juan Devis, vice president of Arts & Culture Programming, KCETLink. "This project underscores Artbound's willingness to document the most relevant and innovative art production in Southern California, while breaking the boundaries of traditional arts reporting, and shows our audience how a complex theatrical production of this magnitude is mounted."

Added Sharon, "Invisible Cities is a large-scale collaboration of many incredible LA-based artists, all working towards the purpose of a once-in-a-lifetime event. With KCET's imaginative approach to capturing the production as it is developed, I believe this behind-the-scenes look will appeal to anyone fascinated by the creative process."

Invisible Cities makes its world premiere on Saturday, Oct. 19 for a limited run through Nov. 8 at Los Angeles' iconic Union Station. Performance dates for Invisible Cities are Oct. 19, Oct. 24, Oct. 26, Oct. 29, Oct. 31, Nov. 5, and Nov. 8. There will be two performances each night at 7:30 and 10 p.m. except for Oct. 19 (7 p.m. only). The VIP experience includes exclusive access to a roped off area of the Harvey Restaurant and a glass of wine. For ticket information, visit [www.InvisibleCitiesOpera.com/tickets](http://www.InvisibleCitiesOpera.com/tickets).

Based on Italo Calvino's fantastical novel, *Invisible Cities* imagines a meeting of the emperor Kublai Khan at the end of his life with the explorer Marco Polo. Khan orders Polo to report on the cities in his empire, and Polo's responses are flights of fancy, cities of the imagination and the mind. The opera depicts the meeting and describes three chimerical cities with a quiet stateliness that offers the audience a chance to contemplate the essence of travel, as well as our subjective experience of environment and time.



Link: <http://www.broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/VIDEO-Behind-the-Scenes-of-KCETs-Artbound-and-The-Industrys-INVISIBLE-CITIES-20131004>



STAGE TUBE: Sneak Peek at INVISIBLE CITIES Opera at Union Station

October 22, 2013

by Stage Tube

The Industry LA Project presents INVISIBLE CITIES Opera for Wireless Headphones, at Union Station, Tuesday, November 12: 7:30 & 10pm\* (" \$25 Tuesday" 10pm show!) Friday, November 15: 7:30 & 10pm, Sunday, November 17: 5:00pm - including a special "closing night" encore! Check out a sneak peek below!

Extension tickets on sale Monday, 10/21 at 10:00am: [CLICK HERE TO PURCHASE TICKETS!](#)

**\$20 STUDENT TICKETS:** Ten \$20 tickets only for full-time students will be available for all 5 extension performances. Valid ID required at the box office. One ticket per order. Use code "STUDENT" when checking out.

Share your experience with members of the creative team and fellow audience members over a complimentary glass of wine in an exclusive area of the Harvey Restaurant not open to the public! VIP Tickets also have a dedicated box office line for faster check-in and check-out of headphones.

For more information, visit: <http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/>



Link: <http://www.broadwayworld.com/bwwopera/article/STAGE-TUBE-Sneak-Peek-at-INVISIBLE-CITIES-Opera-at-Union-Station-20131022>



Two performers from L.A. Dance Project dance during dress rehearsal for experimental ...



FRED PROUSER October 15, 2013 5:29 AM

Two performers from the L.A. Dance Project dance during a dress rehearsal for the experimental opera "Invisible Cities", which is presented inside the historic Los Angeles Union Station in California October 14, 2013. The performers and audience roam throughout the station as passengers and visitors go about their way, with performers and audience listening to the opera's score performed by a live orchestra via wireless headphones and headsets. Music from "Invisible Cities" and libretto is by Christopher Cerrone and the opera is directed by Yuval Sharon of "The Industry", which fosters new and experimental opera in Los Angeles.

Link: <http://news.yahoo.com/photos/two-performers-l-dance-project-dance-during-dress-photo-092733271.html>



## "Headphone Opera" *Invisible Cities* Extends Engagement at Union Station

By Carey Purcell  
22 Oct 2013

*Invisible Cities*, the new opera by Christopher Cerrone, has extended its run at Los Angeles' Union Station.

*Invisible Cities*' world-premiere production began performances Oct 19, and additional performances have been added for Nov. 12 and 15 at 7:30 and 10 PM and Nov. 17 at 5 PM.

Directed by Yuval Sharon, *Invisible Cities* is presented by The Industry opera company and L.A. Dance Project. The follow-up to the Industry's 2012 debut, *Crescent City*, the opera is staged as a site-specific production at the downtown L.A. train terminal.

"This fragile, quiet score attempts to capture 'decaying sounds' through the use of found objects as instruments and pre-recorded voices interweaving with live voices," press notes state. "The instrumental music will be a mixture of pre-recorded and live performances from an eleven-person orchestra."

Set in Union Station, while the station is still operating, the live performance is experienced via premium wireless headphones. All vocalists sing live as they move throughout the station, and dancers from the L.A. Dance Project perform choreography by Danielle Agami.

For more information, visit [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com).

Link: <http://www.playbill.com/news/article/183521-Headphone-Opera-Invisible-Cities-Extends-Engagement-at-Union-Station?tsrc=rnn>

# PureWow.

October 3, 2013

## MUSICAL TRACKS

### Union Station's opera debuts



*Soprano Delaram Kamareh rehearses in Union Station*

The hottest ticket this fall isn't for the glittering Walt Disney Concert Hall. It's for a downtown train depot where you'll hear opera while thousands of travelers shuffle past. Really.

Starting October 19, Union Station hosts *Invisible Cities*. It works like this: An 11-piece orchestra performs in a nearby building, and the music is simultaneously piped into high-tech Sennheiser headphones for 150 audience members' auditory pleasure.

And it's a moveable feast: You're encouraged to wander under the train station's noir-glam arches and through manicured grounds, where performers are waiting for you to discover them. You might happen upon pirouetting dancers from Benjamin Millepied's L.A. Dance Project. Or find a soprano warbling in a corner, her voice amplified by a hidden microphone into your headphones.

It's the high-concept project of director Yuval Sharon, whose fledgling company The Industry is fresh from wowing audiences last spring with a different production. This time the work is even more ambitious, since it's based on dreamy vistas from Italo Calvino's book of the same name, which is a dialogue between explorer Marco Polo and aging emperor Kublai Khan.

Sharon says you can talk, sit, snack--whatever you like--during the performance. Finally, someone who's made opera accessible and fun.

*Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St.; 718-812-9159 or [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com)*

Link: [http://www.purewow.com/entry\\_detail/la/7589/Union-Stations-opera-debuts.htm](http://www.purewow.com/entry_detail/la/7589/Union-Stations-opera-debuts.htm)





'Invisible Cities' Opera world premiere at Union Station Oct. 19

By Theda Kleinhans Reichman | Fri, Oct 18 2013 12:37 PM



When I think of opera I think of LA Opera at the Music Center in downtown Los Angeles. But on Oct. 19, "Invisible Cities" will premiere downtown at Los Angeles Union Station. This new opera by Christopher Cerrone will be heard via Sennheiser wireless headphones in the spectacular setting of Union Station, and the wireless headphone will allow the audience to roam freely through the station, following individual characters or creating their own adventure.

This new concept is reminiscent of "Tamara," a theatrical event of a few years back that allowed the audience to follow different characters from room to room, thus creating their own scenario. With this opera, you will hear the music in its entirety, but observe the physical action of your choice, depending on which singer and character you follow.

"Invisible Cities, tells the story of Kublai Khan, who asks Marco Polo: "Do cities in my empire exist, or are they figments of my imagination? Does any city truly exist, or are they the construct of our desires and expectations?"

"Invisible Cities" opera is a unique collaboration between The Industry, L.A. Dance Project and Sennheiser. The artistic director for the company is Yuval Sharon who works in collaboration with the L.A. Dance Project which is an artist collective founded in 2012 by renowned choreographer and dancer Benjamin Millepied.

"Invisible Cities" opera at Los Angeles Union Station, 800 North Alameda St., downtown Los Angeles from Oct. 19 to Nov. 8. Performance dates are: Oct. 19, 24, 26, 29, 31 and Nov. 5 and 8; 7:30 p.m. performances are \$60, \$75 VIP and 10 p.m. prices are \$45, \$60 VIP.

The VIP experience includes exclusive access to a roped off area of the Harvey Restaurant and a glass of wine. Tickets are on-sale at <http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets/>.

\*\*

The Pantages Theatre is off to a rousing start. The season began with the whimsical, beautifully designed "The Wizard of Oz" followed by an all too short run of "War Horse," which was beautifully staged and skillfully acted.

The story of the heroic horses who fought and died in World War I focused on a young 16-year-old farm boy and his beloved horse, Joey. All the animals in the show are amazing puppets which are so skillfully manipulated you forget they are not alive.

By the end I had tears in my eyes. This production of "War Horse" was, in a word, "fantastic."

Next on the agenda is *Evita* from Oct. 23 to Nov. 10, followed by the Disney theatrical musical of *"The Lion King"* from Nov. 20 to Jan. 12. *"Lion King"* would make a delightful theatre gift for the whole family to share. Then, by popular demand, *"The Book of Mormon"* returns on Jan. 21.

For tickets go to [Hollywoodpantages.com](http://Hollywoodpantages.com) and order now for best seating. For season tickets call: 866-755-2929 Mon. thru Fri., 9:30 am to 5:30 pm.

Link: <http://www.culvercitynews.org/columns/invisible-cities-opera-world-premier-at-union-station-oct-19/>



November 20, 2013

## Los Angeles Staged an Opera Inside Its Biggest Train Station

By Mark Byrnes

Yes, L.A.'s biggest train station, not its opera house, served as the backdrop for Christopher Cerrone and Yuval Sharon's version of Italo Calvino's 1972 novel. Each night, 15 singers and 11 dancers performed for spectators (often in the hundreds) who wore wireless headphones while train passengers scurried about.

According to *Reuters*, Sharon, the director, moved to Los Angeles three years ago and quickly became fascinated with the 74-year-old Union Station. Eventually, he decided it was the right fit for "Invisible Cities", a story where, as *Los Angeles Times* arts critic, Mark Swed, describes "explorer Marco Polo entertains and bewilders the aging 13th century Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan with tales of travels to 55 mysterious cities."

As one can imagine, the line between performance and daily life was very blurred. A sign at an information booth read: "Please do not bother the nice person on the computer. She is part of an opera performance." The orchestra and conductor meanwhile, worked from a former restaurant space. Performers roamed the building, their words projected onto its walls.

After seeing it for himself, Swed says the concept "could be, and should be, done anywhere." Those behind the performance say it's quite likely, with cities around the world expressing interest in bringing wireless headphone opera to their train stations soon.



*A member of the L.A. Dance Project performs the opera "Invisible Cities" at Amtrak's Union Station in Los Angeles November 15, 2013 (REUTERS/Fred Prouser)*



*A member of the L.A. Dance Project portraying Kublai Khan performs the opera "Invisible Cities" at Amtrak's Union Station in Los Angeles November 15, 2013. (REUTERS/Fred Prouser)*



*A member of the L.A. Dance Project portraying Kublai Khan performs the opera "Invisible Cities" at Amtrak's Union Station in Los Angeles November 15, 2013. (REUTERS/Fred Prouser)*

Link: <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/arts-and-lifestyle/2013/11/los-angeles-staged-opera-inside-its-biggest-train-station/7648/>



CULTURE: BLOG

Yuval Sharon Brings 'Invisible Cities' to L.A. at Union Station



Rehearsal for 'Invisible Cities' at Union Station.

Yuval Sharon's 3-year-old opera company, the Industry, will perform Christopher Cerrone's "headphone opera" called, "Invisible Cities." It takes place at Union Station, and his version will have eight singers, seven dancers and an 11-piece chamber orchestra. Around 200 audience members will have wireless headphones so they can listen to any performers walking in and out of the designated area.

The experience is meant for audience members to be more interactive and have their own experience with opera. The event will occur on Saturday, and there will even be a Halloween night performance.

Link: <http://www.campuscircle.com/review.cfm?r=18487&h=Yuval-Sharon-Brings-Invisible-Cities-to-L-A-at-Union-Station>

# LOS ANGELES

## I'M YOURS

Into Invisible Cities

By Kyle Fitzpatrick

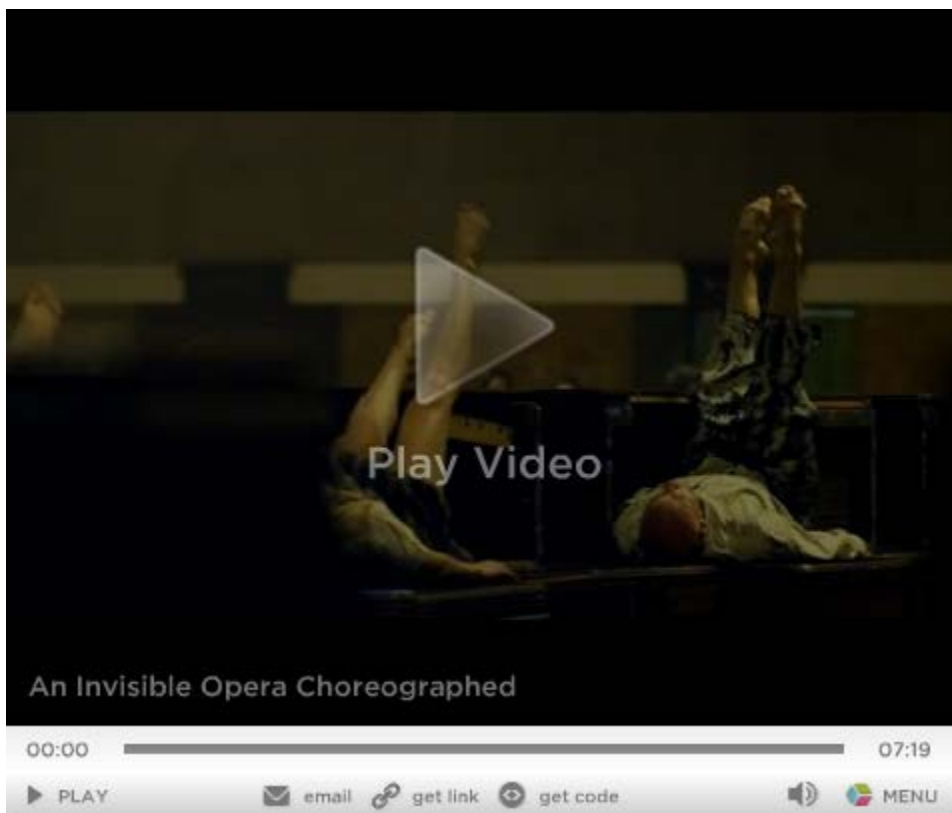
November 4, 2013



There has been quite a lot of buzzings about [\*Invisible Cities\*](#), a Union Station based [LA Dance Project](#) and [The Industry](#) production. The show is at the intersection of casual, found performance and obviously very intentional, very rehearsed happenings. It's an incredibly unique marrying of movement and sound paired with an iconic space and compelling, historic story of travel. [KCET's Artbound](#) has focused on the opera for its [latest video](#). Whether or not you are able to see the November 8 closing show, you will want to watch this video to see what exactly this production is about.

The opera—directed by [Yuval Sharon \(who you may remember from\)](#)—presents itself as something that is both happening and not happening. It's a play about Kublai Khan having Marco Polo tell him stories of his travels, which you realize could all be made up or illustrative of different happenings in life. Through [Danielle Agami's](#) improvisation formed choreography, her dancers help to define these worlds, acting as both inhabitants of a place and a moving scenery. The movements Agami has made also help to blur where the performance is and isn't happening, causing both audiences and dancers to wonder where the stage ends and where it begins. The result is an entirely immersive performance piece that is held within the always on Union Station. It's a fascinating, thrilling piece that we hope gets a bit of an extension so more people can see it.

You can catch the video below which we should note was directed, edited, and partially produced by LA focused filmmaker [Joris Debeij](#). He does an excellent job of capturing both the process of making the show in addition to sharing the final product. We also highly recommend reading [Victoria Looseleaf](#)'s coverage of the subject too.



Link: <http://www.laimyours.com/55816/into-invisible-cities/>



[Experience Invisible Cities, an Innovative, Italo Calvino-Inspired Opera Staged in LA's Union Station](#)

in [Music](#)

By: Ayun Halliday

November 3rd, 2013



The site specific opera [Invisible Cities](#) is up and running at [LA's historic Union Station](#). Location aside, something in this original work demands that I subject it to the New York Magazine Approval Matrix I carry around in my mind. It's a snarky, quadfurcated rating system for the latest trends and happenings.

The phrase "based on an [Italo Calvino](#) novel" should guarantee it a spot in the Highbrow range.

Opera purists might consider the fact that ticket holders must rely on wireless headphones to get the full sound mix as reason enough to send this innovative work to the Despicable end of a "deliberately oversimplified guide to who falls where on our taste hierarchies." A philistine myself, I think matching wandering singers to an invisible live orchestra (they're sequestered in a nearby room) sounds Brilliant. It's as if a silent disco and a flash mob mated, giving birth to a baby with impervious street cred and an incredible set of pipes. Here, [have a listen...](#)





Unlike the typical Improv Everywhere lark, the audience here is in on this gag. Though innocent passersby may wonder why various individuals are mooning around the terminal singing, Invisible Cities is a ticketed performance. Indeed, its popularity is such that the producers have needed to add extra free shows. Approval Matrix suggests it's time to hop a train to LA.

Link: <http://www.openculture.com/2013/11/listen-to-invisible-cities-an-innovative-opera-in-las-union-station.html>

# Ian David Rosenbaum

## percussion

November 18, 2013

### My Experience at Invisible Cities

The experimental and forward-thinking LA opera company [The Industry](#) just completed a 22-show run of my friend [Christopher Cerrone's](#) opera *Invisible Cities*. I had performed Chris' solo percussion and electronics piece *Memory Palace* on a preview event for the opera back in October and they were kind enough to invite me back to perform on closing night as a memorial for William Weaver, the man who originally translated Italo Calvino's novel that inspired the opera.

The gist of the production: it was set in LA's historical Union Station and the audience heard it completely through a pair of high-quality wireless headphones. The orchestra (mic'd by 24 wireless microphones) was in one room and the singers and dancers (16 wireless mics/15 wireless in-ear monitors) were spread throughout the many rooms and gardens of the station. (all of this audio gear was generally donated by Sennheiser USA for the performances) The audience began by watching the orchestra perform the overture, and then was invited to walk throughout the station as they liked. You could follow the performers or sit down. You could go where the action (and the crowd) was, or find your own interesting facet of the production. I can't tell you how many times I veered away from the main event, only to find a dancer or singer removed from everyone else, completely occupied and engrossed with their own set of tasks or movements. It was a spellbinding experience.

How did LA react to this? Every single show was completely sold out. They extended the run multiple times, and each additional show they added sold out in a matter of hours. They featured a couple special free shows for the community, and the lines to get in started hours before the shows started. Last night, the audience pushed 200 (compared to a normal full house of around 150) simply because the organizers couldn't bear to say no to all of the people who wanted to get in.

I don't think you can overstate how much a success for opera and contemporary performance in general this is. How many times have you heard of a brand new piece of art being performed 22 times in a month in the same city? Not often. Of those times, how many of them were 100% sold out, with tickets becoming unavailable with near pop-concert speed? I think I can guess your answer.

This was a perfectly planned and perfectly executed combination of great music, great choreography and an incredible vision for the piece. Throw in a successful Kickstarter campaign and a tremendous PR effort, and this is the result you get. I've seen this opera performed in various forms – from initial sketches and readings that I performed in to a fully-staged version in Manhattan a few years back – but after seeing this new production, I cannot imagine experiencing *Invisible Cities* any other way. This opera was **made** to be heard through headphones.

They are already talking about bringing the production to other cities across the world, as well they should. This is the kind of experience that will bring in a far more diverse audience than a typical contemporary performance.

It was a good month for opera. Last week, I had the pleasure of seeing the closing performance of the other big name in contemporary opera these days – Nico Muhly's *Two Boys* at the Metropolitan Opera. Another great

production and another really good piece. The whole time I was sitting there, I just couldn't get over the fact that I was watching a 21st-century piece at the Met.

If this is what the future of opera looks like, it's brighter than we think!

Link: <http://www.iandavidrosenbaum.com/2013/11/18/my-experience-at-invisible-cities/>

# Los Feliz Life

November 2013

## AROUND TOWN

Local news you can use.

### When 'Invisible Cities' Come to Life

Play turns Union Station into a moving stage where audience determine the play's outcome.

by Samuel Threadgill  
Community contributor

The Industry, LA's home for new and experimental opera, in partnership with the L.A. Dance Project and powered by Sennheiser, is proud to announce "Invisible Cities," an innovative production representing a thrilling new collaboration of art and technology that has never before been done before..

Experienced via premium wireless headphones from Sennheiser in the spectacular setting of Los Angeles' iconic Union Station while the station is still operating, "Invisible City" utilizes headphones to make this performance a highly personal experience in a highly public space allowing the audience to act as a participant roaming freely through the station, following individual characters or creating their own adventure in the moment.

"The opera will function as an invisible layer of everyday life, and every audience member will have a different, radically subjective experience of the opera," Director Yuval Sharon said. "It's an ideal way to bring Calvino's masterpiece to life and to hear Chris's quiet, haunting original score — all while celebrating a landmark of L.A.'s architecture."

Composed and adapted by Christopher Cerrone (hailed as "a rising star" by the New Yorker), this fragile, quiet score attempts to capture "decaying sounds" through the use of found objects as instruments and pre-recorded voices interweaving with live voices. The instrumental music will be a mixture of pre-recorded and live performances from an 11-person orchestra.

During the course of the performance, all vocalists will sing live as they freely move throughout Union Station, appearing and disappearing into the everyday



Cast of "Invisible Cities" performs the opera throughout Union Station.  
Photo courtesy of MPRM Communications



"Invisible Cities" imagines a meeting between Kublai Khan and explorer Marco Polo.  
Photo courtesy of MPRM Communications

fabric of the building. Dancers from the L.A. Dance Project, the company founded by artistic director and choreographer Benjamin Millepied, are featured in a site-specific new choreography by the LA-based Danielle Agami.

"L.A. Dance Project is incredibly excited to partner with The Industry for what promises to be a unique performance experience," said Millepied. "The kind of bold artistic adventure that makes L.A. so special."

The involvement of Sennheiser, a leader in sound and wireless transmission technology, ensures that "Invisible Cities" will offer the highest possible sound reproduction without distortion, delay and interference. Due to the technological demands of this production, this type of performance would not have been possible even 10 years ago. "We are thrilled to be part of this incredibly creative production, which relies on Sennheiser's innovative wireless microphone and headphone technology as its technical foundation," commented Stefanie Reichert, director of strategic marketing, Sennheiser USA.

"As our technology has evolved and become more sophisticated, Sennheiser



Dance and opera is performed in the very public space of Union Station  
Photo courtesy of MPRM Communications

has played a more central role in the creation of art rather than just be the supply of technical hardware. Our work with The Industry on this project is a testimony of the power of collaboration between the best technical and creative minds — and how these can shape and create unique user experiences. "

—Performances of "Invisible Cities" are scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 5, and Friday, Nov. 8. Tickets are available at [www.InvisibleCitiesOpera.com/tickets](http://www.InvisibleCitiesOpera.com/tickets).

# REVIEWS

# Los Angeles Times

October 22, 2013

Circulation: 641,369

## OPERA REVIEW

# All aboard for 'Invisible Cities'

This ambitious new piece travels the mind. Departure point: Union Station.

**MARK SWED**  
MUSIC CRITIC

If you hoped to catch the twilight Pacific Surfliner on Saturday at Union Station, you first had to pass through the Twilight Zone. The sign on the information booth read: "Please do not bother the nice person on the computer. She is part of an opera performance."

Dancers in imaginative traveling outfits might have obstructed your path or simply distracted you with some ferocious funny business on the floor. You would have had further need to jostle past a couple hundred gawkers sporting large headphones and not going where you were going or hearing what you were hearing.

Their destination was not San Diego nor any place tangible but "Invisible Cities." [See 'Invisible,' D5]



LAWRENCE K. HO Los Angeles Times

**UNION STATION** becomes a performance space for "Invisible Cities." Dancer Aaron Carr is on the move.

# Marco Polo travels 'Cities'

['Invisible,' from D1] les." This was the premiere of a new opera by Christopher Cerrone, a startlingly ambitious project by the venturesome opera company the Industry.

The idea of putting on an opera in a train station where the characters can be nearly indistinguishable from everyday people in the waiting rooms is a strange and alluring subversion of Samuel Johnson's oft-quoted characterization of opera as "an exotic and irrational entertainment." But that's just the beginning of an existential confusion between reality and unreality, of the private experience of listening to the opera on headphones while participating in the activities of a public space.

Cerrone's opera is based on Italo Calvino's 1972 poetic Italian novel, "Invisible Cities," in which the explorer Marco Polo entertains and bewilders the aging 13th-century Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan with tales of travels to 55 mysterious cities. All are — like latter-day Lake Wobegons — imaginary places defined by the sum of their seemingly quotidian peculiarities.

The emperor asks his Venetian guest why he leaves out the fabled Venice. Polo answers that cities must be conjured from memory and desire. By inventing cities of the living and the dead, of the past and present, of the real and the unreal, he ultimately shows Khan his Venice. The emperor must invent his own invisible cities.

And so must we in experiencing Cerrone's opera.

The performance began communally with a short overture performed by an 11-member ensemble, which stays put throughout the 70-minute performance in a

room apart from the main station. Most on Saturday were not tempted to remove headphones here, although the room's acoustics were first-rate. The confusion between virtual and visceral had already begun.

Cerrone is a composer based in Brooklyn who turns 30 next year, and his instrumental writing has the quality of glittery, half-lighted surfaces enhanced by Post-minimalist patterns. His vocal style is lyrical and owes a debt to John Adams. There are fanciful dramatic outbursts as well, but mostly the score sounds as if it floats, very agreeably, on an acoustical cushion slightly lighter than air.

After the overture, we were on our own for the next hour, free to wander the waiting rooms and other public areas, indoors and out, while listening to the live performance on the headphones. However, Yuval Sharon — the artistic director of the Industry, the stage director of the performance and the mastermind of the project — provided several helpful suggestions in the program booklet.

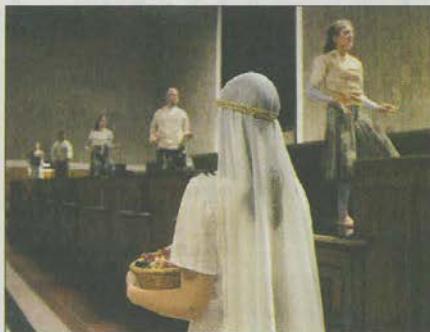
These included buying a drink at the bar or taking off the headphones and enjoying the silence. But most of us, operagoers that we are, scouted out the performers and pursued them. That was relatively easy because all you had to do was pay attention to the crowds.

Cerrone's libretto stays close to William Weaver's excellent translation of Calvino's Italian text. Three cities, though, must stand for the rest. Isidora is a place of spirals and young love enviably observed by the old. Armilla has no walls, no ceilings, no floors, just pipes and rushing water and slender young women luxuriating



Photographs by LAWRENCE K. HO Los Angeles Times

**THE ORCHESTRA** occupies a room away from the main thoroughfare, where audiences hear the overture.



**UNION STATION'S** old ticketing area is among the performance spaces once the action goes public.

"under the showers suspended in the void." Adelma is where the dead come to life.

Sharon's production is meant to stimulate discovery. Sooner or later you look up and find the text projected on a wall. You discover that the angry-looking fellow in a wheelchair — no, not that one but the other one — is Kublai Khan (Cedric

Berry). I missed Marco Polo (Ashley Faatoalia) most of the time. He was heavy-set, in a plaid shirt, hooded vest and carrying a backpack.

There are many, quite literally, moving parts to this production, which is a collaboration with Los Angeles Dance Project. Choreographer Danielle Agami installs the eight dancers into a wide variety of scenic elements.

## 'Invisible Cities'

**Where:** Union Station, downtown L.A.

**When:** 7:30 and 10 p.m. Thursday, Saturday, Oct. 29, 31, Nov. 5, 8, 12, 15 and 5 p.m. Nov. 17.

**Cost:** \$45 to \$75; \$25 for 10 p.m. Tuesday performances.

**Info:** <http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets/>

They rush through the station like hurried balletic commuters. They brawl. They become statues in outdoor spaces. They seductively take over the ticket booths. They are ravishingly outfitted by costume designer E.B. Brooks.

The singers include two stately women (Delaram Kamareh and Ashley Knight) who take on a variety of roles and a three-member chorus. All appear and disappear, mirage-like.

No one sees everything.

There are issues and questions raised. The opera audience, with our headphones, is ostentatious. We who gawk are gawked at. The homeless also take shelter here, which adds an uncomfortable element of stumming. Self-congratulating politicians who spoke afterward didn't help matters. The worst was an intrusive documentary camera crew, bulls with bright lights in an operatic china shop.

It would not have, thus, been hard for Sharon's herculean act of coordination and inventive production to overwhelm a delicate and beautiful opera. Importantly, it didn't. Somehow, even the performance, conducted by Marc Lowenstein, remained sensitive in so intimidating a performance space.

"Invisible Cities" is enhanced by, but, like Polo's Venice, not defined by, exteriors. It could be, and should be, done anywhere.

[mark.swed@latimes.com](mailto:mark.swed@latimes.com)

# THE Hollywood REPORTER

10/21/2013 by Myron Meisel



**The Bottom Line:** Elaborate public happening in a train station both enriches and overwhelms a rather sensitive and delicate vocal work rendered as a “headphone” opera.

**Venue:** The Industry at Union Station, Los Angeles (runs through Nov. 8)

**Cast:** Cedric Berry, Ashley Faatoalia

**Director:** Yuval Sharon

**Composer & Libretto:** Christopher Cerrone, based on the novel by Italo Calvino

**Italo Calvino's famous novel -- a conversation between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan about cities -- is transformed into a site-specific opera at L.A.'s historic Union Station.**

This may be a contemporary equivalent to those much-lampooned, dressed-to-the-nines, high society openings at the Grand Opera of an earlier era, a great public event where the appointments of the occasion and the trappings of scale dominate the high art aspirations of the work. The modern twist is that it's packaged aggressively as the diametric opposite: a hip, inviting and inclusively unpretentious environmental staging in which each attendee's experience is technologically designed to be individually constructed according to their own whims and perceptions. To adopt an appropriately chic, ironic perspective, the two are not so very different under the surface, tony civic opportunities for local puffery and, incidentally, decorative culture.

Union Station makes for a spectacular and apt location for such an endeavor, with its smooth mélange of Dutch Colonial, Mission Revival and Streamline Moderne styles, an architectural mash-up before we became so self-conscious about the technique. Many Angelenos are rarely there or otherwise invariably rushing through. Issued our Sennheiser headphones with their disorienting sense of suggestive directionality, we are consigned to wander the terra cotta tile floors and travertine marble walls of the waiting rooms and of the side patios and grassy areas after starting out in the now-unused “Harvey House” restaurant (the last ever built) where the 11-piece ensemble plays a startlingly rousing overture.

Some move in packs, instinctively following one another, while others edge more towards the peripheries. The singers and dancers in mufti are interspersed among the terminal's regular travelers, though it doesn't take long to spot the tiny “tells” that differentiate them. The audience, in their Mickey Mouse ears, look like touristy aliens, and it is hard not to regard the station's patrons with their luggage and other baggage as objects being observed. Camera crews abound, and cellphone recordings promiscuously document everyone's presence at the “Scene.” And listening to playback, we are all our own cameras, walking a tracking shot, head-twisting a pan, staring a close-up.

It's somewhat involving and apparently novel until one realizes that the text, drawn by youthful composer **Christopher Cerrone** from **Italo Calvino**, is dense, poetic, profound and truly requires undivided concentration, while the music is lyrical and rigorous and points the words with skillful felicity and no little gorgeousness. In short, while the site-specific realization may amplify some of the implications of the essential themes, such as traveling and memory, it also perpetuates perhaps the central problem of daily life: the severe



limits of multitasking, of the delusion that split focus and divided senses can comprehend anything approaching a whole awareness of value in competing attentions.

I found myself wandering back to orchestra, seemingly lonely in the now-abandoned restaurant. Encountering the singers' voices throughout the station, the synch in my ears had always felt a fraction of a beat behind (just like the insert boxes on digital television where the technology, its standards set by politicians as a compromise among engineers, ensures the lips never quite match the words). Far from the madding crowd, the sublimity of the music emerged far more piquantly. *Invisible Cities* would work perfectly well, probably better, in concert, without distractions lending it inessential relevance. Here the sensation leans uncomfortably close to silent disco.

Calvino's ruminations center on Marco Polo (**Ashley Faatoalia**) describing to Kublai Khan (**Cedric Berry**) fabulous inventions about wondrous cities elsewhere outside his empire. Khan has been experiencing melancholy intimations of mortality and the evanescence of civilizations, and Polo, ostensibly communicating as much through objects, gestures, grunts and cries as through rudiments of spoken language, himself finds nostalgic rue in lost memories that never existed. A fable about confabulation, Calvino's ruminations enfold layers of grand power and essential insignificance with a playful yet precise examination of how our perception inevitably remains inadequate to our needs. Cerrone inventively mimics Calvino's tone with recurring musical ideas that repeatedly change perspective. It's not so very different from classical themes and variations, yet it allows the words to inflect the musical meanings as much as the other way round. He's undeniably already a composer of considerable gifts, and his work is supple enough to overcome the outsized concept of this elaborate mounting with at least some of its delicacy intact.

The Industry director **Yuval Sharon**, who surmounted unimaginable logistical difficulties to realize this signal cultural event, certainly struck the sweet spot of ballyhoo and artistic accomplishment here. One might wish only that the achievement had been more concurrent than coincident. Loitering about the station after the audience had left, one could see actual people, everyone moving to their own music, some no doubt hearing voices without benefit of headphones.

*Venue: The Industry at Union Station, Los Angeles (runs through Nov. 8)*

*Cast: Cedric Berry, Ashley Faatoalia, Delaram Kamareh, Ashley Knight, Maria Elena Altany, Sarah Beaty, Stephen Anastasia, Cale Olson (singers); Charlie Allan Hodges, Anthony Bryan, Aaron Carr, Julia Marion Eichten, Morgan Taylor Lugo, Nathan B. Makolandra, Rachele Ann Rafeiledes, Amanda Kramer Wells (dancers)*

*Director: Yuval Sharon*

*Composer & Libretto: Christopher Cerrone, based on the novel by Italo Calvino*

*Conductor: Marc Lowenstein*

*Lead Sound Designer: E. Martin Gimenez*

*Choreographer: Danielle Agami for LA Dance Project Company*

*Costume Designer: E.B. Brooks*

*Scenic Architects: John and Donald B. Parkinson, Jan van der Linden, Mary Colter*

*Audio Production Mixer & Audio Broadcast Mix Designer: Nick Tipp*

Link: <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/invisible-cities-opera-review-649834>

# LAWEEKLY

## Blogs

### Opera

*Invisible Cities*, the Wandering Opera Through Union Station, Is a Welcome Adventure

By Christian Hertzog

Tue., Oct. 29 2013 at 1:26 PM



**Dana Ross**

**Scene from Christopher Cerrone's *Invisible Cities*: Ashley Faatoalia as Marco Polo (in blue cap) with LA Dance Project**

"It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear."

This aphorism appears on the cover of the program to Christopher Cerrone's opera *Invisible Cities*. Yet in the Industry's fascinating production at Union Station, it is not the ear shaping the story, but rather the eye.

Usually in opera, the blocking and lighting focus the audience's attention on the characters and actions that the director feels are most important. In Yuval Sharon's site-specific production, each audience member must choose where in Union Station to observe the opera and what characters or dancers to follow.



**Dana Ross**

**Who can sing and pop a wheelie at the same time? Who can? Kublai Khan!**

Figuring out exactly who the performers were was tricky -- Kublai Khan first appeared as a plainly dressed man in a wheelchair amid train station passengers. A black man in a worn flannel shirt, sleeveless hoodie and blue cap wandered through the waiting room, seemingly another homeless person; when he suddenly sang, we realized he was Marco Polo. Eight dancers from LA Dance Project were easier to spot, due to their stylized movements and, at times, their ghostly costumes by E.B. Brooks.

Lit majors may pout that the opera does not adequately portray its source material, Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, a collection of prose poems about 55 imaginary cities as told by Marco Polo to Kublai Khan. But what art form could do justice to it? Think of Cerrone's opera instead as a brilliant gloss on Calvino.

Using text from the English translation (by William Weaver), Cerrone's libretto delves into three cities -- the last an eerie port where every citizen resembles dead people others have known -- and explores the dynamics between the experienced traveler, Polo, and the powerful but fading emperor, Khan.

An evaluation of the opera's libretto, in its premiere production, becomes difficult. Director Sharon jettisoned nearly all of Cerrone's stage directions, making the work even more abstract. Sharon invited Danielle Agami into the mix to choreograph movement evoking graceful water nymphs, hurrying travelers and stylized royal dance. By staging singers and dancers in different parts of the station at the same time, Sharon forces audience members to choose -- or to serendipitously experience -- their own unique perception of *Invisible Cities*. Watch the dancers in the courtyard, and you'll miss the singers in the waiting room.

The music, however, stayed true to Cerrone's original vision. Marc Lowenstein smoothly conducted an eleven-piece group that was clearly comfortable with the score. The ensemble was in the old Fred Harvey restaurant, while the soloists strode through other rooms and courtyards. All of the singers and instrumentalists were miked, mixed, and broadcast to wireless headphones that every audience member wore. No matter where you were, you could hear the entire cast and ensemble. Unfortunately, many participants endured static and

interference over their headphones during the performance, perhaps caused by audience members taking pictures on their cell phones (despite the stage manager asking them to turn off their phones before the performance began).

The young Brooklyn composers with whom Cerrone is identified are known for blurring lines between indie pop and classical music. Cerrone's compositions eschew these flirtations; his music displays rhythmic flexibility and a grittiness often missing in his colleagues' works. He has a sure grasp of instrumentation; his vocal writing sets one note per syllable in declamatory yet rhapsodic melodies that float above the more regular rhythms and melodic patterns in the orchestra. Cerrone explores limited materials (the first three notes of a minor scale, for instance) with maximal results, developing an entire scene out of three or four pitches without auditory tedium.

In addition to possessing pure, lyric voices, tenor Ashley Faatoalia (as Marco Polo) and baritone Cedric Berry (Kublai Khan) appeared to sing without any conducting or prompting, seeming to rely entirely on their memory of their score to make their entrances. Sopranos Delaram Kamareh and Ashley Knight roamed through the station as well, equally plaintive and sure of their parts.



Dana Ross

**Cedric Berry as Kublai Khan in full imperial splendor, with LA Dance Project working the ticket counters**

The recent run of Philip Glass and Robert Wilson's groundbreaking *Einstein on the Beach*, was a sad reminder of how dramatically old-fashioned contemporary American opera is, in spite of *Einstein's* 38-year-old innovations. So much current opera is depressingly predictable -- take a well-known novel or film with a linear narrative, adapt it for the stage, and give the tenor his high C. Cerrone dared to turn something with an abstract, poetic structure into a subtle and beautiful musical meditation on travel, cultural differences, death, and memory.

Let's hope more American composers and librettists challenge audiences with wonderful, new theatrical experiences -- as Cerrone and Sharon did -- instead of spoon-feeding them known commodities adorned with arias and pretty music.

*There are 9 more performances at Union Station on Oct. 29 and 31, and on Nov. 12 and 15 at 7:30 and 10 p.m. and on Nov. 17 at 5 p.m. All performances are currently sold out, but call the Industry at (718) 812-9159 to check for cancellations. If you can't get a ticket, you could still show up at a performance and enjoy the dancing, singing and the spectacle of audience, performers, and train station customers interacting, even if you don't hear the instruments.*



## OPENING THE CURTAIN



Our Invisible City

TUE OCT 22, 2013

Host: Anthony Byrnes

This is Anthony Byrnes Opening the Curtain on LA Theater for KCRW.

Director Yuval Sharon boldly sets the new site specific opera "Invisible Cities" within Los Angeles' Union Station. Conceptually, this courageous gesture is both the work's greatest success and most profound challenge.

The opera borrows its title, characters and thematic inspiration from Italo Calvino's famously dense novel "Invisible Cities." Complexly structured, Calvino's text imagines a dialogue between Kubla Khan and Marco Polo as they recount the glory of cities both real and imagined.

For the opera, the explorer and conqueror are joined by an ensemble of singers, a corps of dancers, the life of Union Station, and significantly a pair of wireless headphones. Upon arrival, every ticket holder gets a pair of headphones that serve as our connection to the score and singers.

On opening night, Mr. Sharon welcomed the audience; explained that the piece would travel throughout the historic architecture of the station; we were free to wander; he reminded us that this was a "working train station" and that surrounding us would be people rushing to catch a train, people waiting, people seeking refuge . . . "Ideally," Mr. Sharon said hopefully, "these two worlds will be one."

The opera comes closest to this exciting promise in the station's waiting room. After following characters, who are clearly a part of the opera through the gardens, the audience finds itself in the cavernous hall. You find yourself scanning the faces, the bodies of everyone in the station. Who's part of the art? Who isn't? Suddenly, a woman sleeping under a green blanket, who you imagined to be homeless, begins singing. There's a delicious, dangerous tension as you discover and imagine both the invisible city of the opera and more importantly the invisible city of Los Angeles.

The magic of the piece is becoming aware of the art and life that surrounds us: of engaging the public space of our city as a locus for art making.

But it's this very awareness that leads to a discovery of the piece's conceptual shortcomings.

First, those pesky headphones: they have the unintended consequence of cutting off one of our most important senses and isolating each audience member in their own sonic bubble. Sound, which gives us such a strong sense of direction and space, is flattened into two dimensions. While they connect the audience to the 'music' of the opera they obscure the 'music' of Union Station.

But the more important consequence is one of community. I couldn't help but become aware of everyone with a headset and everyone without one. Here's a piece that's embracing the life of the city but at the same time excluding it.

"Invisible Cities" stumbles upon an ironic and unfortunately apt metaphor for Los Angeles: here are the privileged elite wandering around a historic relic, oddly cut off from one another by technology, searching for the center of the invisible city that surrounds them.

This is an important piece you shouldn't miss.

"Invisible Cities" plays through November 17th at Union Station.

This is Anthony Byrnes Opening the Curtain on LA Theater for KCRW.

Banner image: Dana Ross

Link: [http://www.kcrw.com/etc/programs/ab/ab131022our\\_invisible\\_city](http://www.kcrw.com/etc/programs/ab/ab131022our_invisible_city)



Union Station's the Stage In New Opera Production  
By Lyle Zimskind Oct 29, 2013



*Cedric Berry as Kublai Khan in "Invisible Cities" at Union Station (photo: Dana Ross)*

It's tempting to call The Industry's daring new opera event, "Invisible Cities," performed in the public areas of LA Union Station, a flash mob—except flash mobs don't sell out tickets way in advance. And while you actually could just show up and watch what's going on at any performance even without buying a ticket, the headphones you need in order to listen to the opera are all already reserved for the rest of the run (except for two just-added performances coming up this Sunday).

Let us explain.

"Invisible Cities" is a new operatic work by young New York composer Christopher Cerrone. The Industry is director Yuval Sharon's upstart Los Angeles opera company devoted to deconstructing the traditional modes of contemporary opera staging. In this production, audience members independently wander around the train station and happen upon body-mic'd singers and dancers performing, usually simultaneously, in different areas in and outside the building. Equipped with high-tech wireless headphones, we can always hear everyone at once, even as for most of the performance we can almost never see everything that's going on at any given time. While the orchestra's seated in its own room set apart from the building's main traffic areas, some of the singers may be performing in one of the station courtyards as others sit at a table in the Traxx restaurant and a coterie of dancers has taken over the main waiting room.



Union Station itself remains open for business and fully functioning during these performances. And part of the intriguing scavenger hunt for performers interspersed among the station's evening and late-night denizens is occasionally discovering that that woman wheeling her suitcase to catch a train, those two maintenance workers mopping the floor or that down-and-out-looking man in the wheelchair are indeed performers rather than unsuspecting onlookers.

Of course, the station is also full of genuinely unsuspecting onlookers, too, some waiting for trains to take them home, others apparently taking advantage of the warmth and shelter that the public facility offers. So even though we're there to witness the production, it soon becomes viscerally clear that our group of around 160 ostentatious headphone-wearing cultural consumers is very much a part of the spectacle for those who just happen to be in the station during performance times.

(At the particular performance we attended, it was particularly gratifying to see a young woman carrying a toddler become absolutely entranced by the surprise performance suddenly going on around her. Exclaiming that she'd "never seen anything like this," she and her young son joined the crowd walking from one part of the station to another where the performance was going on, and members of the audience intermittently took turns lending her their headsets so she could experience the full dynamic of the production. Really a heartwarming civic moment.)

And—oh, yeah—there's an actual opera being performed here, too. Adapted from the Italo Calvino novel of the same name, Cerrone's "Invisible Cities" features Marco Polo (Ashley Faatoalia) regaling the emperor Kublai Khan (Cedric Berry) about his travel adventures and the cities he's seen. Truth be told, it took us a while to tune into the opera's dramatic content as we ourselves embarked on the adventure of encountering this audacious production, although the performers themselves were consistently captivating and Cerrone's music effectively accompanied both our initial disorientation and our gradually increasing involvement in the work.

Union Station's architectural splendor provides a worthy setting for this one-of-a-kind production, the Industry's second after 2012's less satisfyingly experimental "Crescent City." As in that staging, Sharon in "Invisible Cities" reveals his intention not to provide a uniform viewing experience to his assembled audience members. In "Crescent City," performed in a cavernous space with half a dozen different set pieces, those in different seating areas saw different events get played out. The current production takes this approach a step further as each mobile audience member is blatantly encouraged to select the elements of their own spectacle. The effect is now both charismatically disorienting and downright dazzling.

*Tickets to an added 9 p.m. Sunday, November 3, performance of "Invisible Cities" go on sale tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. 80 free tickets to an added 6 p.m. show this Sunday will be distributed at Union Station's Old Ticket Counter starting at 5:30 p.m. (The line will officially start forming at 3:00.) All other performances--at 7:30 and 10 p.m. tonight, Thursday (Halloween), November 5, November 8, November 12 and November 15 and at 5 p.m. on November 17--are sold out.*

Link: [http://laist.com/2013/10/29/all\\_the\\_train\\_stations\\_a\\_stage\\_in\\_i.php](http://laist.com/2013/10/29/all_the_train_stations_a_stage_in_i.php)



## BWW Reviews: INVISIBLE CITIES Offers a Total Immersion Experience at Union Station

by Shari Barrett

October 25



**INVISIBLE CITIES**, the world's first large scale opera for wireless headphones, is being staged by The Industry, L.A. Dance Project and audio specialist Sennheiser to push the boundaries of art, imagination and wireless technology for an unprecedented, interactive dramatic experience, allowing the audience as well as by-standers in Los Angeles' Union Station - the largest railway terminal in the western United States - a chance to become totally immersed in the site specific opera.

The **INVISIBLE CITIES** opera, written by Christopher Cerrone and based on the 1972 novel by Italo Calvino, combines historical fiction with surrealist elements to create an invisible opera for wireless headphones. The opera's narrative, which centers on explorer Marco Polo's descriptions of fantastical cities to Emperor Kublai Khan, transforms Calvino's novel into a unique experience for each participant - combining a classic art form with the ultimate in technology.

While **INVISIBLE CITIES** is an opera at its essence, it is unconventional in many ways. For example, there is no opera house and no assigned seats. Also, whereas audience members at a conventional opera typically rely solely on natural building acoustics to hear an operatic production, **INVISIBLE CITIES** uses wireless headphones, so audience members are intimately connected to the storyline on a deeply personal level while having the ability to roam freely as the opera moves throughout the terminal.

An 11-piece orchestra consisting of strings, brass and percussion performed the original score which was shared with the dancers and performers in the production via their wireless headsets. As they moved from room to room, each of the eight singers was able to listen to their performances and director cues using Sennheiser's world-class in-ear monitoring system (IEMs). The performance audio was sent to a multi-channel digital console, where it was mixed and broadcast via wireless RF technology to attending patrons, each wearing wireless headphones.

After meeting the orchestra and experiencing the deeply emotional overture in person, the audience was set free to roam and follow any of the characters or to simply choose a spot to sit and wait for the action to come to them, all the while listening to the full score on wireless headphones. Thus the opera was heard within the mind of each audience member, each of us involved our own unique experience while listening and walking around the station following which actors or dancers tickled our fancy or crossed our path. As you walk from room to room, you might just walk into the middle of a dance or confrontation between two characters. And even if you cannot see the person singing into your ears, you definitely are experiencing whatever part of the story you happen to encounter from moment to moment.

At one point, I found myself walking in a procession next to Marco Polo (Ashley Faatoalia) as he escorted Emperor Kublai Khan (Cedric Berry) through a garden, singing about his fantastical home city of Venice, Italy. Eight dancers in elegant masks surrounded us and even though there were many audience members watching the scene, in that moment I felt as if Marco Polo was only singing to me as I walked with him through the garden. And then he was off to another place.

Later while I was leaning on the information desk watching Marco Polo singing to a group of travelling spirits, in an instant they were dancing around the desk and then ran up next to me, surrounding me on both sides, leaning on the desk with me. Again, I was totally immersed in the moment, feeling a part of the scene as if the spirits were singing only to me and I was a part of them. I know other audience members were taking photos of the moment and I can only imagine the look of wonder on my face.

"Art-making is not just about great ideas but about ingenious execution - making a vision something real," commented Yuval Sharon, artistic director, The Industry. I certainly can attest to the real nature of this work, so much so that even by-standers in the station without headphones could be seen following the action, enjoying the artistic vision and highly stylized dancing, even without hearing the music as the words being sung were also displayed on the wall above our heads in the main waiting room of the terminal. I am sure many of the homeless who are allowed to stay inside Union Station until 1:30am will remember the experience of having such beautiful artistic work made available to them, opening their eyes to the possibilities and wonder that can happen so unexpectedly in life.

"Our world is characterized by fast-paced, interactive communication and consumers seek experiences that touch them in a much deeper and more meaningful level. **INVISIBLE CITIES** caters to this desire and delivers a truly innovative performance to its audience," commented Stefanie Reichert, director strategic marketing, Sennheiser. I agree with her wholeheartedly. It is shame the run is sold out, but if you do not have tickets just go to Union Station, sit and be part of the wonder going on all around you during the performances.

And I would suggest taking the Metro to Union Station as I did, which enhanced the experience of travelling to a new place, surrounded by its wonder and history - and then experiencing an artistic work full of wonder.

For more information on **INVISIBLE CITIES**, including performance dates, ticket information and cast biographies, please visit [www.invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://www.invisiblecitiesopera.com).



Link: <http://www.broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/BWW-Reviews-INVISIBLE-CITIES-Offers-a-Total-Immersion-Experience-at-Union-Station-20131025>

# arts meme

## Opera occupies Union Station

By: Debra Levine

4 November 2013



The overture ended, a set of heavy double doors opened, and into Union Station spilled the opera audience. As the group dispersed, some displayed trepidation in their quest for the singers heard in their headsets. Others eschewed the life-sized version of *Where's Waldo*: One couple made a beeline for the bar; ordering a bottle of wine, they watched and listened from a comfortable perch.



There is no right or wrong way to experience the opera *Invisible Cities*, **Yuval Sharon** assured the audience in his pre-show speech. The audience can expect to stumble upon some scenes and miss others, he said. Sharon is the artistic director of The Industry, the fledgling company that produced the site-specific performance of **Christopher Cerrone's** opera, which is performed amongst the denizens of Union Station—commuters, employees, and transients alike.



Whereas traditional opera relies on the power of raw auditory stimulation, *Invisible Cities* is entirely mediated. The audience is equipped with headsets. Singers and orchestra members are mic'ed and broadcast through them.

Conductor **Marc Lowenstein** and his 11-piece orchestra are confined to a room outfitted with the necessary high-tech sound equipment. **Sennheiser USA**, one of the *Invisible Cities* sponsors, provides the state-of-the-art technology.

A cast of LA-based singers, led by Cedric Berry and Ashley Faatoalia, delivered Cerrone's tight harmonies and sustained lines with graceful intensity. Impressively, they demonstrated the required restraint for mic'ed singing.

Choreographer **Danielle Agami** made good use of the station's architecture, deftly weaving eight dancers from **L.A. Dance Project** in and around the space ... and its spectators.

Cerrone's composition masterfully mixes tonalities from East and West in keeping with the opera's imagined meeting between Kublai Khan and Marco Polo. The libretto, also by Cerrone, is based on an Italo Calvino novel. Possessing the intimacy and urgency of a whisper, it's the score that unifies the otherwise aimless theatrical experience. Headsets emphasize Cerrone's orchestration, which creates a mystical and meditative ambiance against the backdrop of a busy train station.



In the opera, Polo contemplates the distant extremes of the empire. Without knowing many of the cities and people he rules, he instead describes to Khan imaginary cities with mystical qualities.

“Invisible Cities”’s epilogue has the cast converging in the station’s historic ticketing room. The audience reunites there as well. Berry oversees the proceedings at the end of the long room, resplendently dressed as Kublai Khan. The rest of the cast, dressed as spectral travelers, carry valises. The entire effect is like a fantasy travelogue.

I removed my headset to hear the vocal harmonies reverberate live throughout the cavernous space. Relieved of the headset, I indulged in an unmediated musical experience that provided a moving closure to the performance.

The *Invisible Cities* experience is layered. It’s intensely personal and uncomfortably voyeuristic. It dissolves the thin veil between reality and artifice. The headphones function as a Mardi Gras mask, granting the audience permission to act more boldly in an environment that otherwise promotes anonymity. The audience’s proximity to the performers and the interactions with the station’s non-opera inhabitants serve as stark contrast to the passive role relegated to audiences in traditional theater.

As audiences for classical music dwindle nationally, producers are turning to alternative formats to reach an elusive new audience. Site-specific performances are one popular format. Companies such as New York’s Elevator Repair Service and London’s Punchdrunk are significant international players. Similarly, in Los Angeles, choreographer Heidi Duckler has led audiences through abandoned buildings, parking garages and laundromats for two decades.

Beyond its theatrical inventiveness, The Industry is committed to producing the work of contemporary composers. The company’s first undertaking in 2012 was *Crescent City*, Anne LeBaron’s composition performed among art installations in an Atwater Village warehouse. Since then, the company shows signs of evolving sophistication. The successful staging of Cerrone’s opera in a train station signals a promising future for The Industry, and the sold-out run confirms that the Los Angeles audience has a keen appetite for adventurous art.

Photos by [Dana Ross](#)

Link: <http://artsmeme.com/2013/11/04/opera-occupies-union-station/>

# EasyReaderNews

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## theaterreview

easyreadernews.com

### "Invisible Cities" – a movable feast

by Bondo Wyszpolski

**D**reamily wandering at night through downtown L.A.'s Union Station, often retracing one's steps while traversing courtyards and high-ceilinged halls, doesn't sound so enticing, but "Invisible Cities" is just that. Based on Italo Calvino's whimsical, wistful novel of the same name, and brought to fruition by The Industry and LA Dance Project, composer and librettist Christopher Cerrone's "headphone opera" is innovative, clever, engaging, and fun.

Calvino's fanciful tale is presented as a series of dialogues between the Tartar emperor Kublai Khan and the Venetian traveler Marco Polo. The latter describes the dozens of fabulous cities that he has seen or passed through while crossing the great Khan's domain. It is a sparkling, magical book, with undercurrents of melancholy and the knowledge that all things must pass.

"Sire, now I have told you all about the cities I know," Marco Polo says. "There is still one of which you never speak," the legendary Khan replies. As Marco Polo bows his head Kublai Khan names it: "Venice." Moments later, Marco Polo explains his reticence: "Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all

at once, if I speak of it. Or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little."

Cerrone has, accordingly, woven his composition from such fabric as this, and the score – when we can give it our full attention – echoes the enchantment of the book.

Wearing headphones powered by Sennheiser, an audience of 200 gathers in a vacant restaurant across a breezeway near the main entrance of the train station to hear the opera's overture, conducted by Marc Lowenstein. With or without headphones, one begins to acclimatize to what's in store. After that, in the encouraging words of director Yuval Sharon, the audience is free for the next hour to do as it pleases. The list of options includes "Sit in the beautiful waiting room," "Buy a drink at the bar," "Study the tiles," and "Follow someone who may or may not be performing in the opera."

Well, the opera, as such, transpires simultaneously in several locations, and the audience is invited or challenged to discover where those voices they hear are coming from. Perhaps the best way is to watch where others are headed or already congregated.

Because the audience is mobile, and because Union Station is a public place, there is inevitably some degree of contact with the general populace, although much of it is within the ranks of the



A page greets Kublai Khan (Cedric Berry, with Delaram Kamareh and Ashley Knight behind him). Photo by Dana Ross

homeless who have settled in for a few hours of respite from the elements.

Both orchestra and singers are channeled through the wearer's headset, and the sound quality is crisp and clear. This must have been the foremost challenge of mounting such a work, because with a faulty transmission the aural aspect would be compromised and, really, what good is an opera if it's drowning in static?

Of the eight singers, Cedric Berry is Kublai Khan and Ashley Faatoalia is Marco Polo. Berry has sung with L.A. Opera, Faatoalia hasn't, but the latter has such a crystalline voice that I hope we'll soon see his name on the marquee of a prominent opera house.

The choreography, by Danielle Agami, seems contoured for every space. In the grassy courtyard it's stately and elegant, in the "abandoned" ticket hall it's ritualistic, and in the grand hall it's occasionally frenetic and even spasmodic at times like an epileptic seizure. Other dancers seem to frogmarch one behind the other, and it's our guess as to what each choreographed movement is meant to convey. There is quite a bit of costume-changing as well, with several dancers also mimicking passengers with their luggage as they rush to catch their train. The opera would also work well staged in an airport or Greyhound terminal. Regardless, a hub of arrivals and departures complements the essence of the story.

As with the choreography, the costuming (by E.B. Brooks) is all over the map. Faatoalia looks as if he just got off work sweeping out the trains, and Berry – in a wheelchair and looking like a castoff army vet – could almost pass for one of the homeless taking refuge within the well-lit confines of the station.

"Invisible Cities," while resembling audience participation works like the recent "Gallery Secrets" at the Natural History Museum, is a unique and enjoyable experience, but how well does the "staging" serve the opera?

The overture is well served, because the audience is right there with the orchestra, in the traditional sense of being gathered in front of the musicians. But after that?

There are reasons why we sit still in

an opera house or concert hall without talking or hearing others talk, without roving about or allowing others to, and that's because we want to focus on and absorb the work at hand. However, if we're walking around and taking in every little attraction and distraction, we're not truly engaged with the essence of the piece – assuming the operatic score is still the essence. Yes, we hear it, and yes we see key aspects of it, but in a kind of segmented patter. Yuval Sharon posits the experience as a wonderful thing, and it is. That is to say, it's a wonderful novelty, but it does shortchange the opera [music, vocals] in exchange for one's ambulatory freedom.

I'm not really complaining; I relished the opportunity to become my own portable camera, at being able to step around or encircle the action as I chose. Back in the 1980s, when John Cage was in Los Angeles to conduct one of his works, he encouraged us to get up and experience the music from a variety of vantage points. And I did just that, walking upstairs, downstairs, sitting left, sitting right. Events of this kind, let's face it, are the ones we're going to remember for a long time to come, whether or not the music itself stays with us.

Several dates have been added to the original schedule, but tickets seem to have been immediately snatched up and whether there will be an additional extension remains uncertain. However, intrepid readers, there is nothing to prevent someone from showing up and mingling with the audience, and soaking in – sans headphone, however – the visual and vocal components of the opera. It's a bit sly and subversive to do it this way, but if that's your option, well, that's your option. As Sharon says at the top of his director's notes: "This experience is yours. It is unlike anyone else's. It is exactly the same as everyone else's." He's right, so make the most of it.

Invisible Cities is being performed at 7:30 and 10 p.m. on Saturday, Tuesday, next Thursday, as well as Tues., Nov. 5; Thurs., Nov. 8; Tues., Nov. 12; and Fri., Nov. 15. There is also a 5 p.m. performance on Sunday, Nov. 17. Check for added dates at [invisiblecities.com](http://invisiblecities.com). **BR**

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# KCRW WHICH WAY, LA?

The drama of humanity unfolds in Union Station — oh, and an opera, too

Posted October 18, 2013 by Lisa Napoli



*Musicians perform in an area that's typically off-limits and out of sight to passengers.*

At most performances you pay your money, go sit in your seat, and wait for the action to unfold. Not so at the opera *Invisible Cities*, which officially debuts tomorrow night at Union Station in downtown. (It is based on the 1972 Italo Calvino novel of the same name.)



*"This information booth is closed!"*

After checking in, you are presented with a snazzy set of headphones, into which is pumped an operatic score performed live by on-site musicians. Then, you and your fellow audience members roam around in search of the action.

Of course there's plenty of action in Union Station on a typical day. (Nighttime is particularly dramatic, if you haven't ever been.) It's some of the best theater in the universe, in fact; all you need is a bit of imagination to look at the parade of humanity, coming and going, or fixed in the enormous chairs in the waiting area, using the magnificent building as home base.



But imagine all that, with the occasional opera singer emerging from around a corner, belting out a song.



*After bounding through the main waiting area, this dance leapt onto the information booth*

What I loved about Invisible Cities is how it forced me to inhabit and experience Union Station in a way I never would have just passing through. Curiously, tentatively, with no particular aim.

What’s also fascinating is the group dynamics. At first the audience, in this case about 50 people, roamed in a cluster, looking for... well, we weren’t sure what or where. Eventually, some of us rogues meandered off away from the group, integrating with the unofficial audience of passersby. With the haunting music playing in my headphones, I witnessed a poor young guy sinking to the ground, clearly tripping out on something– not the opera. He was oblivious to the opera.

Walking east in the terminal, I faced a gaggle of people who just emerged from an arriving train, as the operatic music in my headsets provided a dramatic score. Was that man in a gold sequined jacket coming from Santa Barbara part of the action? No, it turned out, but the guy in the wheelchair hanging out in the courtyard was.

*Below: Warren Olney talks to Yuval Sharon, Artistic Director of The Industry about “Invisible Cities”*



The genius of the conceit here is that it forces you to inhabit a space the way we rarely do, curiously, tentatively, with no particular aim. It creates a bond between you and the other headphone-wearing audience members. It made you pay better attention to the random other humans who happened in on the experience, as they gazed with wonder or concern or even disinterest at those dancers writhing on the floor of the terminal.

The producers told me beforehand that part of the aim here is to celebrate mass transit in this city that’s furiously working to embrace and expand it. While that aim is great, and so is this massive effort, really what’s most wonderful about Invisible Cities is how it uses technology to unite us in an odd, wordless way. A nice antidote to how technology is dividing us in its odd, wordless way.

*Performances through November 8th. For details, click here.*



*Passenger, or opera singer?*

Link: [http://blogs.kcrw.com/whichwayla/2013/10/the-drama-of-humanity-unfolds-in-union-station-oh-and-an-opera-too?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=the-drama-of-humanity-unfolds-in-union-station-oh-and-an-opera-too](http://blogs.kcrw.com/whichwayla/2013/10/the-drama-of-humanity-unfolds-in-union-station-oh-and-an-opera-too?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=the-drama-of-humanity-unfolds-in-union-station-oh-and-an-opera-too)

# HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

The Public Spectacle of a Personal Opera in LA's Union Station

By: Sarah Zabrodski

November 14, 2013

LOS ANGELES — A train station is an apt location to tell stories of journeys to lands unknown, particularly when the storytelling method is as unconventional and frontier-pushing as the one deployed in *Invisible Cities*. This experimental opera, a production by [The Industry](#) in partnership with [LA Dance Project](#), deconstructs the boundaries between performer and audience and resurrects them in the form of personalized, fluid relationships.



*The orchestra in the former Fred Harvey Restaurant in Union Station.*

Los Angeles Union Station provides a historically rich and architecturally stunning backdrop for the performance. The narrative unfolds in multiple locations throughout the various courtyards and vaulted halls at any given moment, allowing members of the audience to roam freely and let their personal whims dictate their experience. Each participant is equipped with a set of wireless headphones through which the music of the live orchestra and voices of the singers are broadcast.

*Invisible Cities* is an adaptation of Italo Calvino's 1972 [book of the same name](#). This structurally complex novel centers on Marco Polo's relaying of fantastical descriptions of imagined cities to the waning Kublai Khan. Christopher Cerrone's score and libretto poetically navigate the shifting relationship between the Italian explorer and Mongol emperor as Marco Polo narrates his ethereal visions.

Although the lyrics are projected as surtitles onto two prominent walls, the narrative itself seems rather peripheral to the overall pageantry of the production. The music is delightfully light yet moving, and the performers are mesmerizing in their skill and focus, but the real excitement is derived from the constant adventure of stumbling upon new scenes and unexpected vignettes.



*Marco Polo (played by Ashley Faatoalia) at Traxx Restaurant.*

In the beginning, it's nearly impossible to distinguish the performers from the audience. Someone who I thought to be a fellow participant broke out into a meticulously choreographed dance. What first appeared to be a civilian seated at Traxx Restaurant, casually clad in a plaid shirt, red vest, and ball cap, turned out to be none other than the tenor-voiced Marco Polo.

Union Station ceases to feel like a public space and instead takes on the aura of the stage itself; the audience becomes passive yet privileged members of the cast wandering with the performers as they engage in their crafts. Neither group takes overwhelming precedence over the other; everybody moves through the station in a spirit of mutual re-arrangement.

The sense of connection between the audience and the performers is palpable. After all, participants are equally a part of the spectacle as they silently roam about Union Station en masse wearing matching headphones. This communal sense of spectacle also serves to highlight the more unsettling disconnect between the performance and the third, involuntary participants of *Invisible Cities*: the general public.

Perhaps the mood at the 7 o'clock show is more convivial, but come 10pm the overwhelming majority of people in Union Station (whether waiting to catch late trains or seeking sanctuary from the nighttime chill) seem primarily preoccupied with catching some sleep. As the opera paraded in and out of the main waiting area, I doubt I was the only one feeling like a very conspicuous and intrusive interloper in an otherwise relatively prosaic environment.

For this reason, I felt compelled to remove my headphones at frequent intervals. I wanted to know what the show looked, sounded, and felt like to anyone without access to the microphoned orchestra. The answer? Beckettesque, completely absurd.

Whereas the headphones transmitted the rich, evocative music of the nearby orchestra, the main hall was noiseless save for the intermittent voices of the opera singers, the grunting and heavy breathing of the dancers, and the shuffling of audience feet as they trailed Marco Polo and Kublai Khan about. As a result, the atmosphere in Union Station felt heavy with an unnatural type of silence.

The promotional material for *Invisible Cities* promises a “highly private experience” in a public space, but I would argue that this opera delivers the opposite effect. Most of us maintain introverted demeanors in public places such as train stations – we keep our heads down, earbuds in, and eyes fixated on our books or smart phones. The thrill of *Invisible Cities* lies in creating a shared focus within a space where we intuitively tend to keep to ourselves.

No one observes the show in the same way, in this respect making it a highly *personal*, not private, experience. It is this individualized element that provides the source for sharing different stories connected by a single, very public event. Once the applause died down and the headphones were off, Union Station filled with the buzz of strangers talking to strangers. Everyone seemed to revel in the sense of camaraderie that comes from together having witnessed something rare and groundbreaking.



*Invisible Cities* plays at Union Station (800 N. Alameda Avenue, Los Angeles) through November 17.

Link: <http://hyperallergic.com/92262/the-public-spectacle-of-a-personal-opera-in-los-angeles-union-station/>



Los Angeles Theater Review: INVISIBLE CITIES (The Industry and L.A. Dance Project at Union Station)

by TONY FRANKEL on OCTOBER 23, 2013



#### SEEING WHAT'S INVISIBLE

In describing Invisible Cities, allow me to paraphrase Gore Vidal's critique of Italo Calvino's 1972 novel of the same name on which this production is based: Of all tasks in reviewing director Yuval Sharon's marvelously inventive theater event in Union Station, recounting Christopher Cerrone's opera is the most difficult and perfectly irrelevant. The opera itself, while being far more pleasing and far less irritating than The Industry's Crescent City: A Hyperopera, Invisible Cities in this context is inconsequential as a score.



The happening itself, however, is far from irrelevant or inconsequential. Regardless of the material, this joint production from The Industry and L.A. Dance Project is a fascinating display of unbounded creativity and talent – and a helluva lot of fun. As theater practitioners continue to experiment with site-specific theater (that which occurs in a space conducive to the script) and immersive theater (productions developed for a manufactured environment), a shapeshifting landscape is emerging which I call interactive theater, in which spectators take on a participatory role. It's a murky territory difficult to categorize: When Odet's Waiting for Lefty has cab drivers speak from the audience or Brecht's Epic theatre has actors speak directly to us in a proscenium house or the groundlings answer back to Elizabethan players, is that not all interactive theater on some level?



The difference now is the domineering presence of the internet. As live performances compete with technology which entertains from the palm of your hand, consumers are attracted and swayed by entertainments where they are less likely to be passive observers. And producers know this. Only recently, I saw *Gallery Secrets*, four new playlets done inside the Natural History Museum after closing; *The Importance of Being Earnest* inside the L. A. Athletic Club; *Macbeth* in a Civil War-era fort underneath the Golden Gate Bridge; and an outdoors *Our Town* as part of La Jolla Playhouse's *Without Walls Festival*. Whether scrambling up a spiral staircase or following actors around a Gem Exhibit or being videotaped and projected onto a large screen, being part of the action is an undeniable thrill.



And Union Station is one of the most perfect locations for interactive theater I have ever seen. One of the show's stars is the 1939 transit hub, designed by John Parkinson and Donald B. Parkinson (who also designed L.A.'s City Hall), which combines Dutch Colonial Revival architecture, Mission Revival, and Streamline Moderne style. The detailed nooks and crannies one would normally miss running for a train, such as the tile-work, become vivid as we linger.

So, along with about 200 other patrons, I donned state-of-the-art headphones and followed singers and dancers as they performed throughout Union Station among the throng of bemused train customers who observed the proceedings as well (many, no doubt, believed this was some kind of flash mob).



We were informed from the start that this would be OUR experience and we were free to roam about at will. The inside of the program offers optional activities such as “Dance,” “Imagine our future city,” “Buy a drink at the bar,” “Study the tiles” and “Picture Kublai Khan.”

Along with Marco Polo, Kublai Khan is the main character of Calvino’s fictional novel, which is more or less a conversation between the two even though they do not speak the same language. Khan is concerned about his empire’s decline and hopes that Polo’s vivid descriptions of cities (real and imagined) will offer hope for a brighter tomorrow. There is little dialogue and the book consists of mostly prose poems describing 55 cities.



Cerrone’s libretto for his 7-scene opera, liberally lifted from Calvino’s text (translated by William Weaver), describes but a few. The score is almost Wagnerian in the way that it builds and then pulls back. Overall, it’s meditative and pleasant, sometimes eerie like a science fiction thriller, and exquisitely orchestrated for 11 players under the tight leadership of Marc Lowenstein (the show begins with all of us gathered in a side room for the thrilling overture).

But since the musical lines are atonal (read: no discernible melody), the lyrics refused to penetrate my brain. It wasn’t until halfway through that I noticed them displayed above our heads (fluid and sharp projection design by Jason H. Thompson). Glimpsing up at the words (“You hear them singing” and “I speak and speak, but the listener retains only what he is expecting”) proved too taxing and actually served to interrupt my reverie; it’s no accident that the program suggests another activity: “Visualize Marco Polo trying to communicate to him.” The entire work is so ethereal that my theatergoing companion continued to wear his headphones not knowing that the opera had concluded.





Aside from the tale's allusion to travel and a hint of Moroccan features at Union Station, this is hardly a site-specific affair. Truth be told, had Mr. Cerrone's opera been replaced by Philip Glass music or the greatest hits of Walt Disney, the experience would have been no less captivating and enjoyable.

The bottom line is that you don't need to know what's going on to have a blast. Think Cirque du Soleil here. Their press kits are pages thick with exposition, explaining the story behind their shows and music. Yet I defy anyone to remember anything but a series of great acts. It's the same with *Invisible Cities*: Who cares what the story is about when eight amazingly nimble dancers execute Danielle Agami's angular/spasmodic/sinewy choreography on the floor and on top of the ticket counters? If L.A. Dance Project continues work like this, our metropolis may one day be known as The City of Ankles. The dancers are Charlie Allan Hodges, Anthony Bryant, Aaron Carr, Julia Marion Eichten, Morgan Taylor Lugo, Nathan B. Makolandra, Rachele Ann Rafailedes and Amanda Kramer Wells.



You may be disoriented at first, but there are plenty of actors to follow; you could end up anywhere from the enclosed garden patios to the gloriously refurbished ticket room, normally off-limits to patrons. There's Marco Polo, a large black man with a backpack singing at TRAXX Restaurant (the pure-voiced tenor Ashley Faatoalia); a Khan in a wheelchair and later clothed in 13th century garb (resonant bass-baritone Cedric Berry from *Crescent City*); two robed silver-throated soprano nursemaids from somewhere in antiquity (Delaram Kamareh and Ashley Knight); four singers who play everything from janitors to masked Venetians (soprano Maria Elena Altany, alto Sarah Beaty, tenor Stephen Anastasia, bass Cale Olson); and those dancers in outfits streaked with white paint (imaginative costumes by E.B. Brooks).



My favorite moment occurred when I followed a woman in a pink down jacket and black fuzzy slippers with a plastic shopping bag among the dancers. How fascinating, I thought. This added element of homelessness is perfect for Invisible Cities. But then the woman disappeared out the front doors to inspect the garbage. For me, that moment represented Sharon's intention more than any other. The mastermind behind all of this wants us to examine our city and imagine a better world for all.

But there is something I examined which unsettled me: As if some kind of documentary crew taping the performance art wasn't intrusive enough, many many patrons had their cell phones out and were doing the same thing (a few, with headphones around their neck, were actually texting). For all the wonderment around us, I believe patrons utilized electronica because they were not emotionally engaged.



This is one of the most buzzed-about openings of the year (the creators were even given proclamations by the city of L. A. after opening night), there is a lot of money behind it, and the logistics involved are mind-boggling. Even with five additional dates added, the run sold out just after opening (keep checking for tickets). As breathtaking as this shebang is, I can't help hoping that all of this interactive theater will one day offer a story that we can sink our teeth into and touches our heart. In the meantime, a cerebral blow job is nothing to scoff at.

Link: <http://www.stageandcinema.com/2013/10/23/invisible-cities-the-industry/>



## The Real and Imaginary in Collision: Christopher Cerrone's 'Invisible Cities' in LA's Union Station

Posted on October 17, 2013 by David Gregson



Kublai Khan arrives in Union Station. Photo by Dana Ross.

Review by David Gregson — Tuesday, October 21

[Invisible Cities](#) for all info.

In my recent commentary about [Einstein on the Beach](#), I discussed the increased emphasis that postmodern artists place on the subjective response in the arts. For something as ephemeral and insignificant as my *Opera West* critique, it's a complex matter impossible for me to discuss adequately without this review becoming unreadable. So, to put the matter as simply as possible, the creator of a work of art — be it a short story, a poem, a painting, a string quartet or an opera — expects an audience of distinct individuals, each of whom enters into the work of art on his or her own terms, and who emerges from the experience with a totally unique understanding and sense of appreciation. Has anything been communicated? It's by no means certain. There is a sender and receiver, but the content of the message is ambiguous. Mutual and/or communal aesthetic and emotional sharing may have occurred, or possibly not. Bizet's *Carmen* and Glass's *Einstein* differ radically from one another in that Bizet uses a traditional musical-dramatic language intended to affect virtually everyone in the same way; but Glass is not concerned with such matters. You are invited to make of it what you will.

Composer Christopher Cerrone and his confederates have taken this idea to its logical extreme. Cerrone's *Invisible Cities*, based on a genuine postmodern literary masterpiece, Italo Calvino's so-called novel of the same name, is

performed by singers, actors and dancers who move about a large public space — LA’s magnificent Union Station — and the audience and performers and honest-to-God real people get all mixed up together. No single experience, therefore, is duplicated by any other, and nobody (not even the producers themselves, one assumes) can grasp the entire picture. The people who have paid for this experience wear state-of-the-art audio Sennheiser headsets on which they hear a live orchestra and live singers; the train station patrons and homeless people wonder what the hell is going on; and the performers communicate tenuously via earbud headsets of their own. Needless to say, the producers are more coordinated than anyone else, but it’s doubtful they know fully what their colleagues are doing at all times.

The initial creative spark for this must be attributed to Calvino’s gorgeous “novel” — a collection of 55 highly evocative and fantastic poetic descriptions of cities that exist only in the mind. And yet these are all somehow real places, every one of them very similar to places we know or that we would like to know or that we think we know, and all of them have a bit of Venice in them. Underneath all of the poems lies a threat of decay and destruction, like the icy caves that undermine Xanadu in Coleridge’s famous poem, “Kubla Khan.” Calvino apparently borrows this famous Asian monarch and frames the novel as a conversation between Kublai (sic) and Marco Polo — and the whole book very well might be a delicious subject for philosophical speculation if I were not just now writing an opera blog instead. Let me just say that for me personally, Calvino’s words resonate deeply and conjure up a lifetime of travels, both real and imaginary.

Cerrone, with whom I met and chatted very briefly before the performance, is a gifted young Brooklyn based composer with a knack for setting texts in a beguiling lyrical manner. For a short time, readers have the opportunity to sample cuts of *Invisible Cities* online. I offer the [link here](#). The work he has created could very well stand on its own as a sort of song cycle, and probably should be expanded to twice its current length. As it stands, there is an overture and only seven scenes. In the prologue, we hear Kublai Khan and Marco Polo entertaining the notion of the Chinese empire’s decay; and in the epilogue the conclusion is reached that “It is all useless, if the last landing place can only be the infernal city.” (The English translations of the Italian are by William Weaver, the 1974 Harcourt edition.) In between, however, Cerrone takes us to only three locations: Isidora of the encrusted seashells and feminine temptations; Armilla, the amusing town that is nothing but plumbing without walls; and Adelma, a place where all the faces we meet are the faces of our dead acquaintances. Midway through the piece, Marco Polo reveals the idea that the city of Venice underlies everything he has been speaking about. I feel Cerrone could enrich his piece by including a few more of Calvino’s cities. The three he has chosen do not seem to be quite enough.

My peripatetic experience began with getting a paper wristband and a set of large, padded Sennheiser earphones. I then joined an large assembly of guests in a particular wing of Union Station I do not recall having seen before from the inside. In any case, it is just off the right somewhere after one enters the building near the information booth. It was in this beautiful room that the orchestra was stationed and remained throughout the next 70 minutes. The ensemble consisted of violin, viola, cello, clarinet, flute, horn, trombone, harp, two pianos and percussion. Putting on and removing my headset while listening to these instruments live, I virtually could not tell the difference between the living and piped-in audio. Unfortunately, my headset was plagued by static, and nothing I did with the tuning dial seemed to change this. It simply got worse all evening. At one point I took the suggestion of pursuing someone in a red shirt who was supposed to help me tune the apparatus. Alas, I never got rid of the static — and all the while I was aware of how excellent the sound reproduction was. Potentially it was perfect. It seems unfortunate that the unlucky Sennheiser people should give a defective headset to someone writing about the opera on the internet. I met one other gentleman with the same problem, but my companion for the evening had no complaints. Sennheiser headsets, by the way, have been my earphones of choice for as long as I can recall. I have owned several pairs dating back to the early years of high fidelity recorded sound in the 1950s.



Photo by Dana Ross.

After the overture, I went wandering here and there, all over the station, inside the halls and outside in the patio-like gardens. Some of the people I encountered were wonderful dancers from the Los Angeles Dance Project, Benjamin Millepied's creative collective. They might be pretending to be real travelers or workers in the station, or they might be aerobically in motion, individually or in sync with their colleagues. From time to time — I think, for to be frank it was all very hallucinatory and confusing — I ran into Marco Polo (Ashley Faatoalia) and even Kublai Khan (Cedric Berry), not to mention an assortment of singers and two women, Delaram Kamareh and Ashley Knight, who were dressed in white flowing garments and bearing fruit. I have listed the fine ensemble of singers below. So many people were involved in this, all I can do is offer the reader a gigantic list and say — well, here are the ones that should receive credit. Director Yuval Sharon, conductor Marc Lowenstein, and choreographer Danielle Agami and costumer E.B. Brooks for starters. The lead sound designer is E. Martin Gimenez and projection designer is Jason H. Thompson. The latter must be responsible for the bits of Calvino texts that appeared high on the walls here and there.

I would love to make some sort of sensible critical commentary on the Cerrone score and the performers' execution of it (I dearly hope for a recording!), but the event's distraction level was higher than anything I have ever experienced in my life. Happy is the man or woman who can simply go to *Invisible Cities* and experience this happening, this postmodern flashmob, and not have to evaluate it. Any one critic is limited to merely chance encounters with various elements of the production. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the evening for me was making decisions: do I go this way or that way? Should I follow this person or that one? Should I follow the composer? Should I go where Marc Swed is going? He's covering this for the *LA Times*. Director Sharon does provide 26 suggestions in the program — too many to list — and I am happy to say I took them all without having actually read them!

About midway in this intriguing adventure, I simply succumbed to my hiker's fatigue and had to sit down somewhere. My arthritis was killing me. Ah! From far away I spotted the Traxx Bar — and it was almost empty except for a couple drinking cocktails at a table in front. They both were wearing headsets and were smiling. But, were they real or were they actors? I made a beeline for the bartender. "I need a drink!" I told him. "A glass of

chardonnay.” The chardonnay appeared forthwith and when I tried to pay — well, no thank you. The drink was part of the performance package. The bartender marked my paper wristband with a black grease pen. And I went and sat contentedly at an empty table, sipping my wine and enjoying the music.

Just as I was beginning to feel like the reprehensible music critic who leaves a concert before the end, I noticed a man next to me who was moving his mouth in perfect sync with the sounds on my headset. And then all sorts of people gradually began to swarm around me, like some nightmare sequence from a science fiction short story by Philip K. Dick, he of androids fame. I cannot recall clearly what happened next. I think I went with the flow. The man may or may not have been sitting in a wheelchair or wearing a backpack. It’s all a blur, and not because of the drink. I have an enormous capacity for chardonnay without becoming befuddled.

I recall my personal epilogue quite clearly because I just happened to pass the large wing of Union Station apparently known as the “old ticket booth” room. It was empty except for what appeared to be a guard standing next to a men’s room sign at the far end of the hall. The space was slowly filling with smelly stage smoke. The men’s room appeared to be functional and I thought it would be just lovely to add that small venue to my utterly memorable *Invisible Cities* odyssey. Perhaps people were dancing in there too. So I entered and exited this mundane space with Cerrone’s lovely score filling my ears, and — heavens — when I re-emerged, the show and the mob were still after me! This time there were travelers, maidens, dancers on top of the ticket booths, cameramen, and even a fully functioning figure of Kublai Kahn in full monarchical regalia.



Someone’s smartphone shot of me watching the epilogue. Where am I?

The absolute end came with public applause and a dreary speech by a no-doubt worthy local councilman. There were other luminaries as well. The performance had all been wonderful, but I was in no mood to hear a politico after two weeks of Ted Cruzification, so I turned the headset in and sped off to a wonderful downtown restaurant with my charming companion.

Wouldn't you know it? The councilman and his party followed me (presumably not on purpose) into the same downtown restaurant, where the chef lavished him with attention whilst ignoring me and the other customers in the room. Was this still part of the show?

So came the end of my journey. Performances have been added, it seems, for those who want to set off from Union Station into an intriguing world where the real and imaginary either collide or fuse. You will be the judge.



Frisking upon the old ticket booths. Anonymous iPhone snap.

Link: <http://www.operawest.com/travelers-journey-to-christopher-cerrones-invisible-cities-in-las-union-station/>

# THOMAS HAMPTON REVIEWS

Thomas Hampton Reviews INVISIBLE CITIES  
November 2, 2013



Participants and performers share the old ticketing lobby. Image courtesy of @tastoid.

The Industry desperately wants you to get out of your comfort zone with INVISIBLE CITIES, a new headphone opera currently at Los Angeles' Union Station. This world premiere is designed around the transience of the moment amongst the hustle and bustle of Southern California transit, it's ridership, and the desperation of transients seeking refuge in a public space.

It makes for an interesting mix. The classic audience base for opera in LA is what causes an incredibly mysterious downtown traffic nightmare on Eastbound Temple Street before LA Opera matinees. Even though the piece is staged at what could well be considered Los Angeles County's main public transit hub, the vast majority of patrons drove their cars to the show, and many were experiencing the opulence of Union Station for the very first time.

INVISIBLE CITIES begins and concludes in two areas normally closed off to the public (yet available for party rentals and film shoots.) The ingenuity of a live performance streamed by headphone to the audience is awakened as the crowd fans out into the main lobby and patio grounds of Union Station. The Industry invites each participant to direct their own version of the show. The viewer is trusted with the power to give equal weight and focus to the singers and dancers of the company or any of the unknowing participants that are merely living their lives and passing through Union Station throughout the duration of the performance.



No two participants perceive the same experience, find the same meaning, create a personal relevance in the same way. While this is true for any and every artistic endeavor, INVISIBLE CITIES is more akin to a choose your own adventure book... better yet, a video game with a large, freely navigable field of play. The audience can be as adventurous as it chooses, utilizing hidden backdoors to traverse the omnipresent stage, finding unique locations to take in each vignette, even choosing to share their headphones with a stranger so they can get a better idea of why there is a gaggle of people strolling about Union Station with massive grey headgear.

And about those headphones... the entire idea of a live performance being streamed to headphones sounds a bit gimmicky. And it is. But it also works, allowing participants a freedom of movement unlike most performances. The headphones and technologies supporting them are not perfect, and cyclical interference from some unknown source plagued the transmission with a repetitive clicking. When in the same room as the orchestra, the cans were completely unnecessary, and when within earshot of a singing performer, the performance felt truer with the headphones removed, or at least allowing one ear to hear the vocalist live.

INVISIBLE CITIES works. It allows for magical moments each participant can choose to find with a performer, an unsuspecting traveler, or even a self-discovered epiphany. It is a more formalized step up from the three Meet Me at Metro transit oriented, site specific performances of the past few years, and indicates that the MTA may be willing to work with the performance community to enliven our public spaces with non-static art.

It would be unfair to posit much thematic context on the show. It is so intrinsically tied to each participant's experience that to distill a meaning is moot. It is safe to say that The Industry is attempting to open the minds of it's audience to a wider sense of community, an ownership and acceptance of the city and it's denizens without exclusion. Because INVISIBLE CITIES takes place on property open to the public, it is possible to experience much of the performance without purchasing a ticket. Take this unique show in. Choose to witness it yourself. With the headphones if you can... and without them if you must.

The screenshot shows a website for 'INVISIBLE CITIES' with a navigation bar containing 'The Show', 'Video', 'Links', and 'Map'. The main content area is divided into two columns: 'TICKETS AND PRICING' and 'DATES AND TIMES'. The background features a pattern of lightbulbs.

**TICKETS AND PRICING**

GENERAL ADMISSION: \$25.00

OPENING NIGHT \$150. Most nights 7:30pm: \$60, \$75 VIP 10:00pm: \$45, \$60 VIP. Tuesday nights at 10pm \$25. VIP ticketing includes dedicated Box Office & a glass of wine at VIP section of the Fred Harvey Restaurant with the creative after the show.

Thematic content includes: Redemption, Love, Self Destruction, Singing, Live Music, Dance/ Movement, Site Specific

**DATES AND TIMES**

This show runs: 10/19/2013 to 11/08/2013

Tuesdays: 7:30pm & 10:00pm  
Thursdays: 7:30pm & 10:00pm  
Fridays: 7:30pm & 10:00pm  
Saturdays: 7:30pm & 10:00pm

Opening night 10/19: 7:00pm ONLY • Additional Performances on 10/24, 10/26, 10/29, 10/31, 11/5, 11/8: 7:30pm and 10pm.

Union Station: 866-811-4111 **MAP**

**PURCHASE ONLINE**

OR BY PHONE 866-811-4111

Link: <http://www.thomashamptonreviews.com/2013/11/02/thomas-hampton-reviews-invisible-cities/>

# intrepid LA

[The Secret Opera Happening In Union Station](#)

[HAYNES HOLIDAY](#) FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2013 AT 11:35AM

**What a difference interactivity makes.**



Take, for example, opera. I'm not an opera guy. I'm still going through what a friend of mine calls "the womp-womp" stage of musical taste, where the sound of a zipper over a bass-drop makes me want to dance around with my fist in the air and break furniture. I figure I'll have plenty of time to learn to appreciate opera when I'm an older gentleman, lounging on my veranda, sipping a martini made from my enemies' tears, watching my pet pandas play in the fields beyond my jungle fortress. (Ok, I have some very specific ideas about what my later years are going to be like.)

Long story short: opera = zzzzzzz. But **opera + interactivity + urban exploration = awwwwesome.**

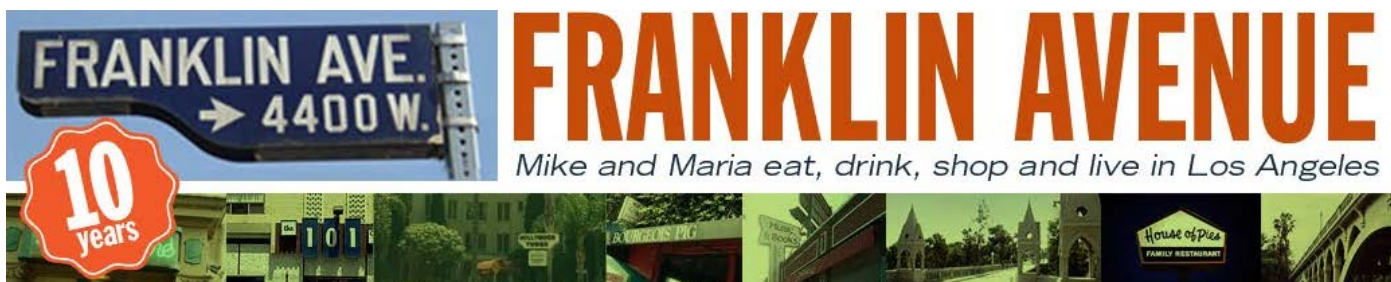
Which brings us to [Invisible Cities](#), a one-of-a-kind musical experience happening now in downtown LA. How it works: buy a ticket, show up at Union Station, and put on a pair of Senheizer headphones. A live orchestra starts up inside the ticketing area, and for the next 70 minutes, the entire train station becomes a mesmerizing wonderland of sights and sounds. A cast of sublimely talented opera singers (some of them dressed in period garb, some of them dressed as civilians) float through the station, body mics transporting their voices into your headphones. Costumed figures promenade through the night-lit gardens outside. Stage-fog fills the towering, opulent cavern of the old ticketing hall, as lithe dancers rise onto the booths in synchronicity.

The best art has the power to make us look twice at our world. To jolt us out of our default mode, and experience life with fresh eyes. Invisible Cities does that in spades. With the symphony pouring through your headphones, what was once just a train station becomes a place fraught with mystery, danger, beauty. Those janitors aren't mopping the floor, they're engaged in a dance. That grungy guy in the wheelchair you just walked past is now singing an aria in a voice forged by angels.

Coming back into the regular world is like emerging from a dream. I spent the ride home glancing out at my city passing by and wondering to myself: "Who else is in on this beautiful conspiracy?"

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- **WHAT:** [Invisible Cities Opera](#)
- **WHERE:** [Union Station](#)
- **WHEN:** Check ticket availability [here](#)
- **\$:** \$40-\$60 a ticket



Monday, October 28, 2013

### Plenty Of Movies Have Filmed There, But This May Be Union Station's First Live Opera



It's a late Saturday night at downtown's Union Station. Travelers (or perhaps they simply have nowhere else to go) are slumped in the train station's waiting room chairs, dozing. Janitors are mopping the station's floors. Traxx restaurant employees are cleaning up. People race to catch the next Amtrak, Metrolink or Metro trains.

Suddenly, one of those travelers -- wearing a bright red vest and carrying a too-small backpack -- stands up and starts singing in a strong, tenor voice. Across the train station, those janitors break into dance.

It's another performance of [Invisible Cities](#), a new opera produced by experimental opera company The Industry and LA Dance Project. For our anniversary, Maria and I were at Union Station on Saturday night to catch a performance - in the very location of our wedding reception 11 years ago (at the Fred Harvey, which has not changed at all).



Audience members are handed a pair of wireless headphones, and then directed to the Fred Harvey, where an 11-part orchestra is about to perform.

"Invisible Cities" was composed by Christopher Cerrone, based on the novel by Italo Calvino. The work centers on Kublai Khan and famed explorer Marco Polo. As Khan examines the ruin of his empire, he asks Marco Polo to describe his travels. It makes sense, then, that the story of travel, exploration and the life of a city would be performed at a train station.

The big revelation of the show is tenor [Ashley Faatoalia](#), a big guy who is dressed like a regular Union Station patron, perhaps looking to board the Metrolink. The first moment you realize that, "nope, he's actually a part of the show," your mind is blown. Faatoalia plays Marco Polo, and you'll find yourself simply following him around by the middle of the show, not wanting to miss a thing. The other breakout performance comes from Cedric Berry, who plays Kublai Khan. Early in the show, Berry is alone, sitting in a wheelchair, appearing to nap. It's interesting to see how long it takes for people to realize he's in the show too.

Part of the draw of "Invisible Cities" is being completely immersed in a performance while also being surrounded by the real world. Some Union Station patrons are curious of the crowd wearing headphones. Others can't be bothered. Still others start to watch as well, although without sound. (The idea of staging a show in an unconventional public space reminds me of the several performances we've seen from the Collage Dance Studio, including shows at the now-gone Ambassador Hotel and Perino's restaurant.)

"Invisible Cities" has an extremely limited run, with just four performances a week (the final show is Nov. 17). Go [here](#) for ticket information.

Link: <http://franklinavenue.blogspot.com/2013/10/plenty-of-movies-have-filmed-there-but.html>

# NEWMUSICBOX

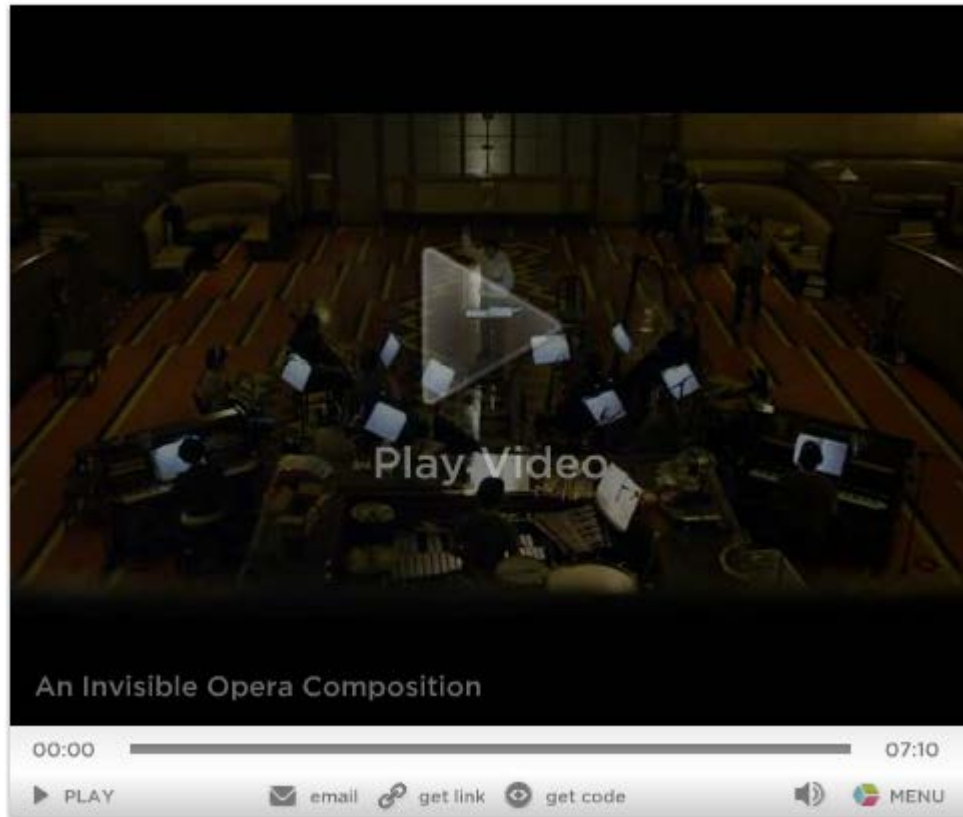
INVISIBLE CITIES: CHOOSE YOUR OWN OPERA

By Isaac Schankler on November 27, 2013



There's something about Italo Calvino's novels that makes them seem inherently musical. Maybe it's the omnipresent interaction between precise mathematical structure and human intuition that recurs again and again in his writing. Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, which finds Marco Polo narrating his travels to Kublai Khan, has a prescribed combinatorial chapter structure that dictates what kind of cities Polo describes and when, but the content of those chapters is so imaginative, so free. The structure becomes a kind of window frame that both enables and restricts what we see.

At LA's Union Station last Sunday, November 17, I saw composer Christopher Cerrone's opera based on Calvino's novel, also called *Invisible Cities*. Wisely, Cerrone doesn't copy the book's structure, instead focusing on five particular cities. But as produced by the opera company The Industry and directed by Yuval Sharon, the event brilliantly captured both the ephemerality and rigor of Calvino's writing. The Industry first grabbed people's attention last year with a production of Anne LeBaron's *Crescent City*, which featured a sprawling set composed of individual parts designed by different artists. *Invisible Cities* managed to be at once more extravagant and subtle, with the audience listening to the live performance on wireless headphones while wandering freely through an actual, historically scenic train station. The singers and dancers moved through the station too, with varying degrees of conspicuousness.



This means that anyone who saw the opera had a unique, unrepeatably experience—or, in Sharon’s words, everyone had a “front row seat.” But the fragmentary nature of this experience that makes it so compelling also makes it difficult to review. I can’t really evaluate the whole opera; I can only evaluate my experience of it.

Thankfully Cerrone’s music provides a powerful throughline for the entire duration. Less overtly dramatic than a typical opera score, there is an undercurrent of placidity to his music even at its most frantic and furious. It mirrors the benignly distant character of Calvino’s writing, unmoved by or removed from the cities’ inhabitants in a way, a kind of storm’s eye, an observer in a world of actors.

As the opera progressed, I felt unsure if I was an observer or an actor myself. After a brief instrumental overture, we wandered into a courtyard where a woman in white holding a large, shallow bowl sang long, lyrical lines. Crossing through the station into another courtyard, we came upon a stoic man in a wheelchair. While he wasn’t singing at the time, he was clearly part of the production. But this line was not always clear. When we re-entered the station, there were several audience members clustered around some chairs where two men were sitting. One looked bewildered, while one was sleeping or pretending to sleep. We had clearly just missed something, but what?

After that we found the bar, which became our stationary vantage point for much of the opera. We saw businessmen on smartphones moving in lockstep, dancers in military uniforms, and some kind of confrontation between the man in the wheelchair and a man in Italian Renaissance garb. As we watched, the man in the wheelchair stood, unsteadily, leaning on a cane.

Finally we returned to the ticket booth area where we began. Most of the audience seemed to be clustered here now, mesmerized by a line of dancers on the counter. A man emerged from the crowd that I recognized as the man in the wheelchair, but he was walking now, and dressed in resplendent robes. It was Kublai Khan. I prepared to follow him to his next destination but the music ended, and the opera was over.

I was left with an immediate desire to see the opera again, but unfortunately, appropriately, this was the final performance in a two-month run.

I should mention that on Sunday, the opera was preceded by a special performance of Cerrone's *Memory Palace*, a work for percussion and electronics performed by Ian David Rosenbaum. Based on sounds from Cerrone's childhood, the piece has a remarkable economy of materials, with subtle variations of a haunting motive threaded through five movements lasting 25 minutes. Rosenbaum's performance was exceedingly sensitive to these subtleties. The piece was performed in commemoration of translator William Weaver, who brought most of Calvino's novels to the English-speaking world.



The screenshot shows a SoundCloud interface for the user 'invisiblecitiesopera'. The main track is 'Scene 1 Excerpt', which has a duration of 1:06 and 1,388 plays. Below the main track is a list of seven other scene excerpts, each with its own play count. At the bottom, there is a profile section for 'invisiblecitiesopera' with the title 'Invisible Cities Excerpts'.

Track Name	Plays
invisiblecitiesopera - Scene 1 Excerpt	1,388
invisiblecitiesopera - Scene 2 Excerpt	805
invisiblecitiesopera - Scene 3 Excerpt	916
invisiblecitiesopera - Scene 4 Excerpt	453
invisiblecitiesopera - Scene 5 Excerpt	400
invisiblecitiesopera - Scene 6 Excerpt	349
invisiblecitiesopera - Scene 7 Excerpt	368

Link: [http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/invisible-cities-choose-your-own-opera/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=invisible-cities-choose-your-own-opera](http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/invisible-cities-choose-your-own-opera/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=invisible-cities-choose-your-own-opera)





## Invisible Cities

Los Angeles Review by Willard Manus

The Industry, L.A.'s first avant-garde opera company, recently mounted its third production in two years, INVISIBLE CITIES, directed by Yuval Sharon and conducted by Marc Lowenstein. The 75-minute work, adapted by composer Christopher Cerrone from the novel by Italo Calvino, was performed in L.A.'s historic train terminal, Union Station. Built in 1939, it was the last major terminal built in the USA, a vast and elegant Art Deco structure that sits on the eastern edge of downtown L.A.

Those attending the site-specific opera were fitted out with headphones which enabled them to listen to the opera as they wandered from place to place in the station, pursuing one performer or another as the story unfolded. The opera's characters included such personages as the Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan (Cedric Berry) and the Venetian explorer, Marco Polo (Ashley Faatoalia), plus a bunch of raffishly-dressed minor folk, some of whom were indistinguishable from the people hanging around the terminal, waiting to make train connections.

In INVISIBLE CITIES Kublai Khan rues the fact that his once-great empire is now "a vast and formless ruin." He looks to Marco Polo to explain how and why his home city has become "an inferno."

To entertain him, Polo conjures up fanciful tales about some of the great cities he has visited over the years. When Kublai Khan asks him why he left Venice off that list, Marco Polo explains that cities must be fashioned out of imagination and desire. The three cities he offers as prime examples are Isidora, where young lovers are watched over by the old; Armilla, a sylvan paradise where nymphs splash about in the canals; and Adelma, where the dead are resurrected.

The ruminative and often twee exchanges between emperor and explorer did not make for a compelling or suspenseful story, but the opera's music and singing made up for those deficiencies. Cerrone's score shimmered with lyrical warmth and tenderness, and the vocalizing was of an equally high order, rich with one touching, heartfelt aria after another.

Most memorable about INVISIBLE CITIES was being able to participate in it in such an unusual and personal way. It was a head trip to end all head trips. Through November 8. Visit [invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets/](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/tickets/)

Link: <http://lively-arts.com/opera/opera.htm>

# STONES IN THE COLOR OF RARE

ANKH ENTERTAINMENT

SENNHEISER LA DANCE PROJECT UNION STATION INVISIBLE CITIES IS EAR-RESISTABLE

OCTOBER 26, 2013 BY ANKHENTE



The moving breathing and life changing experience of LA Dance Project, Union Station and Sennheiser's, partnered art, music and sound Opera project, "Invisible Cities" is ear-resistable. Beginning with an intimate introduction to the Composer, Christopher Cerrone who along with an eleven piece orchestra, delivers a powerful self-propelled libretto that is left entirely up to individual interpretation. Based on the novel by Italo Calvino "Invisible Cities" the listening audience are given headsets to fully participate in the ongoing, no intermission, 75 minute performance. Each performer, wows the on-looking crowd with elaborate costumes, dance and movement.





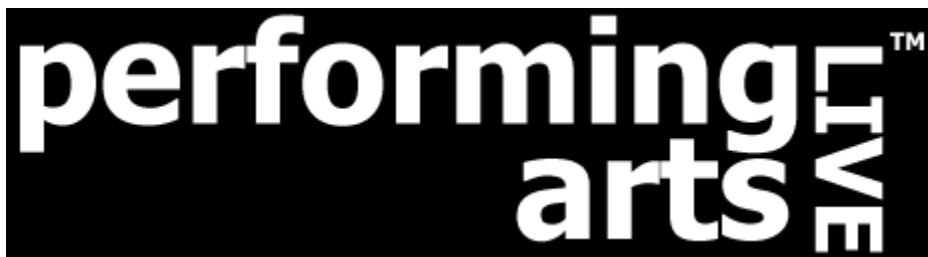
The listener is allowed to interact with each scene by following the performers to a different room or space. One can sit, stand, be inspired, eat alone, hang out by themselves, or be swept up in a melancholy moment of the love and past emotional experiences of that time. Union Station's Traxx Restaurant stepped up becoming an integral part of the visual, sound, art mix and handing out one free drink to guest with tickets. Costumed performers interacted with the crowd and aroused emotions that might have been previously stuffed.



The project is a monumental excursion of the presentation of art and creative restoration. The eyes and ears, for those of you who believe in balancing the left and right brain, are completely engaged throughout the entire experience. Union Station makes for a great backdrop and gives a wonderful setting to fully maximize the iconic Sennheiser powered event. Healthy doses of happiness were provided by the performers who gave a strong rally for diversity including the use of scenes of masked performers and an eclectic mix of dancers. The all of Union Station

itself, was a refreshing array of humanity, that looked to be in pursuit of a seduced and evolved state of oneness, bravo for “Invisible Cities”. Opera followers were given an outlined area to walk through, if anyone ventured out too far, specific guides are set to insure that no one ventures away from the real activity, which in this case is the moving Opera itself. The crowd is able to walk around amidst the daily layout of a largely ignored, although not for long, Union Station. WWW.INVISIBLECITIESOPERA.COM, for biographies on all of the artists who were involved in Invisible Cities. www.ladanceproject.com  
www.theindustryla.org. [WWW.KCET.ORG/ARTBOUND](http://WWW.KCET.ORG/ARTBOUND).

Link: <http://ankhentertainmentone.net/2013/10/sennheiser-la-dance-union-station-invisible-cities-is-ear-resistable/>



## Invisible Cities

Imagine yourself in LA's historic Union Station, surrounded by passengers and passersby, wearing a state-of-the-art pair of Sennheiser wireless headphones, and experiencing a new opera happening all around you - live.



**“Wow! Don’t miss this one-of-a-kind event....INVISIBLE CITIES is most certainly is one of our FEATURED events. GO!’ – Performing Arts LIVE**

“Wow! Don’t miss this one-of-a-kind event. Yes it is an opera but it really much more than that. All of the elements of an opera are there and augmented by the fact that you are witnessing it as you wander freely inside Union Station. The passengers waiting for their trains or just walking through are unknowingly part of this extraordinary experience. The orchestra, dancers and vocalists are all exemplary. The orchestra stays put but the rest of the show unfolds throughout the magnificence of this beautiful railway station. I forgot what a treasure it really is. You get to examine it in great detail if you wish by following the performers as they move about the various sections of this great hall. You can also choose to stay put and watch what passes by you. Site-specific work is becoming more prevalent these days but I’ve never witnessed this level of detail and execution. They have a plan to possibly bring this work to Bordeaux in the future. See it here first and you will seriously think about making the trip to France to see it again. INVISIBLE CITIES is most certainly is one of our FEATURED events. GO!’ – Performing Arts LIVE (mn)

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The Industry and LA Dance project present an invisible opera for wireless headphones powered by Sennheiser, at LA's historic Union Station.

Over the next 70 minutes, you will discover a secret level of reality at the station, isolating singers and dancers from pedestrians, soaking in LA’s architectural gem, and having a highly private experience in this public space.

INVISIBLE CITIES is an invisible opera for wireless headphones at historic Union Station. Invisible Cities transforms Italo Calvino's novel into a one-of-a-kind, high-tech experience merging opera, sound art, dance, and the Everyday. Hidden among the everyday life of Union Station, the emperor Kublai Khan hears tales of fantastical cities by the explorer Marco Polo. Listen to their thoughts and dreams as you wander freely through Union Station. Immerse yourself in the performance with the help of wireless headphone and microphone technology from Sennheiser.

Link: <http://www.performingartslive.com/Events/Invisible-Cities-9122013122241>

# {SweetLeigh}

ReVintage, ReVitalize, ReFashion. Stay Glamourous

Inspired: Invisible Cities

By: Vanessa

November 6, 2013



Two years ago in the formerly fabulous and now defunct Royal T gallery in Culver City the Industry launched their first show. The Industry presents experimental productions merging “music, visual arts and performance to expand the traditional definition of Opera and create a paradigm for interdisciplinary collaboration.” Yes, I say! The last time I went to the Opera I had a 3 show subscription with Los Angeles Opera company 5 years ago.

At the time Woody Allen, and David Cronenberg had created operas for the 2008 summer season. Allen’s production received rave reviews. Sadly I opted for the David Cronenberg directed production of The Fly instead. Little did I know how UNfabulous the production could be, involving continuous dry humping nude love scenes, and the worst lyrics I have ever heard in my life. “And his arms and his limbs started to fall off.....” My humiliation FOR the cast was all encompassing. Even when I later saw Carmen, which was staged beautifully with gorgeous costumes I wasn’t very excited about it.

About 4 weeks ago: I am riding my daily commute via L.A. Metro bus and “transit tv” features a profile on The Industry’s latest production Invisible Cities. Almost immediately I am sold. I was fortunate and entirely grateful to be able to attend a free performance this Sunday after I took too long to buy tickets and the 3week run quickly sold out quickly.



The production of *Invisible Cities* takes place entirely in the very beautiful Union Station in downtown Los Angeles, while the station is in use by commuters and travelers. The station is the stage and the commuters are the background players for a drama based on the novel by Italo Calvino and music and libretto performed by Christopher Cerrone.

In director, Yuval Sharon's introduction to the performance he informs us that there is "no right way to view this performance." He asks us to allow everyone who is using the space to let it meet their needs, whether it is transit, or warmth and shelter. He also encourages us to share our headphones with passerbys and those who were not able to procure some for that very performance. He asks us to journey together and just experience *Invisible Cities*, without concern of missing something somewhere else in the station because this is by design a unique and fleeting experience. I find this divine.





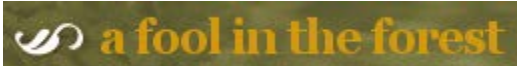
You will be able to see exactly what is so magical about this Opera, thanks to KCET's Artbound series when they air a feature on the making of Invisible Cities in early December. The show closes November 8th.

For me the performance was a joy. The joy of a beautiful public space becoming even more alive with music and dance to many's surprise as people passed through the station. The faces of my fellow audience members with intent as a dancer's kinetic energy was all of a sudden beside them and or all around them. The excitement of being in the middle of a scene as a singer is emoting and singing while staring into my eyes walking toward me. Me on the verge of tears.

I am endlessly in love with Invisible Cities. I have a renewed interest in classical music and opera in particular thanks to the creative infusion of The Industry. Thank you kindly, I am feeling inspired for years to come. XXO

Link: <http://sweetleighsewn.wordpress.com/2013/11/06/inspiration-invisible-cities/>





October 20, 2013

### **The Geography of Melancholy**

**Christopher Cerrone: *Invisible Cities***

**The Industry, Los Angeles Union Station**

Music, drama, art and technology conjoin and entwine in the world premiere production of [Christopher Cerrone](#)'s opera, [Invisible Cities](#), which opened at and in Los Angeles Union Station on Saturday evening, presented by operatic innovators [The Industry](#). The production's successes are many, and such weaknesses as it has are intriguing in themselves. Whether or not it shows the way to a new mode of opera presentation, *Invisible Cities* is a richly fascinating expression of a multifold and rewarding new work. The original announced performances, through November 8, are reported to be sold out, but there is some possibility of additional dates being added.



The work itself is a rich and marvelous thing, an opera of quick intelligence, resonant emotional depth, and lingering ambiguity. The libretto adapted by the composer from the novel by Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* emulates its source in having no conventional plot to speak of: it turns on a series of conversations between the emperor Kublai Khan and his Venetian merchant visitor and emissary, Marco Polo. The Khan's empire has grown so great that it is impossible for him to know it completely, beyond the certainty that it must fade. That the emperor might know more, Polo tells him of the many cities that Polo claims he has seen in his travels. The cities themselves are beyond knowing and, indeed, beyond belief: cities built on stilts and aerial walkways, cities in which every room is filled to its ceiling with sand, cities unheard of by the people who live there, abandoned cities, cities of the dead or the dying or the unremembered. Calvino spins out dozens of these cities; Cerrone's libretto focuses on three—Isidora, city of spirals and many women; Armilla, a lost city of water pipes inhabited by nymphs; and Adelma, whose citizens resemble those the traveler knows to be already dead—plus the equally unbelievable Venice, which Polo fears he may lose by speaking of it.

Polo and the emperor are themselves fictional inventions of Calvino and the librettist in this context, of course, and they cast doubt on whether they are really who they claim themselves to be even under those qualified

conditions. Polo departs to return to Venice in the end, urging his host to continue to search for what is worth remembering and to hold to it. (In a move reminiscent of Britten's use of Yeats, Cerrone interpolates the famous lines from Eliot's "Little Gidding," that the end of exploration "will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.")

Kublai Khan (Cedric Berry) and Marco Polo (Ashley Faatoalia) are the only named characters. Two women, Woman 1 and Woman 2, sing as representatives of the cities, and a four-member mixed chorus enwraps and fills vocal space as required. In addition to the singers, the cast encompasses eight dancers from LA Dance Project, the company recently founded here by Benjamin Millepied (choreographed here by Danielle Agami).

The musical forces deployed consist of an 11-piece orchestra centered on prepared and unprepared pianos, harp and assorted percussion, supported by a small complement of strings and wind instruments. The music wends and spills over it banks in a wash of sad enchantment and chastened reflection. A sampling from the opera's seven scenes can be heard [here](#). It is, to leap ahead and oversimplify, a beautiful and resonant piece that merits a continuing life after this premiere.

The musical satisfactions in its score should make *Invisible Cities* a recurring pleasure simply to listen to\*, but how does one translate that into engaging live theater? The central challenge in staging *Invisible Cities* is that the absence of "plot-plot"—action and incident—might make it appear static and uneventful in a traditional proscenium setting. Director Yuval Sharon and The Industry have finessed that challenge in an inspired move: using wireless sound technology, they have untethered the singers from the players and from one another, and similarly untethered the audience from the performers, and set them all free (within bounds) to roam an open ended space, performing and experiencing the opera together without a need for actual physical proximity.

The space in question is Los Angeles Union Station, formerly the southwestern terminus for the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads, and still a busy regional rail and transit hub. Each audience member was provided a high-end wireless Sennheiser headset, and each *heard* the same opera at the same time. The orchestra and singers were fully mic'd and equipped with discreet earpieces of their own. Their performances were fed into a sophisticated mixing console to be transmitted back out to them and to the audience. The lot of us (other than the stay-at-home orchestra in the terminal's historic Fred Harvey restaurant space) wandered about, looking to find one another and to see what might be seen while the musical end of the performance played out in our heads. Throughout, the station continued its regular evening operations: passengers arriving, passengers departing, travelers and the displaced alike sitting, waiting, sleeping, watching as bits and pieces of an opera broke out around them.

The audience was first convened in the restaurant to be greeted and to hear the overture—during a period when he had little hope of the opera being produced, Christopher Cerrone spun off the [overture](#) as an independent piece, which the Los Angeles Philharmonic performed as part of its "Brooklyn Festival" earlier this year—at the end of which we were set loose about the premises.

Three principal terminal spaces were used in the performance: the main concourse and waiting area, a pair of outdoor courtyards on either side, and the enormous original ticketing lobby of the station, which is typically used today only as a site for film shoots. Polo and Kublai Khan began in separate parts of the complex, eventually meeting face to face in the concluding scene. Each began in contemporary dress, the great Khan a seemingly humble figure in a wheelchair. How long he had sat there pre-performance, unnoticed, who can say. Unless you spotted his earpieces and mic, he would have looked like any other injured or disabled passer-

through. Polo began, and remained, in baseball cap, flannel shirt and red ski vest, occasionally checking his phone or settling at a table to sip a glass of water.

The two Women were in motion through the evening, in an array of more costume-like robes and dresses. Masks were donned for singing of Venice. The chorus and dancers, variously bedecked as travelers from various points in the past century, appeared and disappeared, rising from the crowd or discovered mopping a floor or repacking a suitcase. The action played out in multiple locations simultaneously, so no attendee could see everything that was happening at any given moment. The emperor eventually rose and walked, disappearing for a time at the far end of the now befogged ticketing cavern. with the dancers and Women as subtle guides, the entire audience found its way to that room by independent routes, to find Kublai Khan emerging in full imperial regalia for his farewell to Polo.



Although the technical end of the evening's project was carried off with impressive elan, it was not perfect: it may have been only my own headset, but I was beset by occasional random interference that, when it occurred, distracted from the immersive feel of the performance. The headset itself grew slightly tiresome in extended use, but removing it to let air into the porches of sweaty ears meant no longer hearing any singer not in the immediate vicinity nor the orchestra secreted in another building. Since the piece is definitely worth hearing in its entirety—and required extra attention on this first occasion simply by virtue of being new and previously unheard—even brief interruption was a minor irritant. All that said, the headset generally functioned exactly as promised, and the sound mix as transmitted was particularly well done, with the life and presence one would hope for from a particularly authentic live concert recording. (The singers' microphones even picked up a shading of sound from their immediate surroundings, lending an extra air of ambient verisimilitude to the sound in the headsets.)

I chose to stay on my feet through the 70-minute performance. Others elected to sit down from time to time on their way. The potential aggravation at "not seeing everything that is happening" passed quickly, overcome by the enveloping presence of the music and singing and by the sense of shared adventure or pilgrimage with my fellow travelers. Given that the performance was in such an open and public place, no one was discouraged from photography, and thousands of cell phone photos (such as those in this post) must have been taken, by audience and bystanders both.

The verdict? On its own terms, this production has to be deemed a solid success. It is a fine piece of operatic writing, performed with grace and vigor by musicians and dancers alike, and the experience of landing in the middle of it was exhilarating. The technology is not perfect, but what is? Even with my quibbles, it delivered very nearly all that was asked of it. Did I mention that the opera itself is really really good? Yes, I suppose I did.

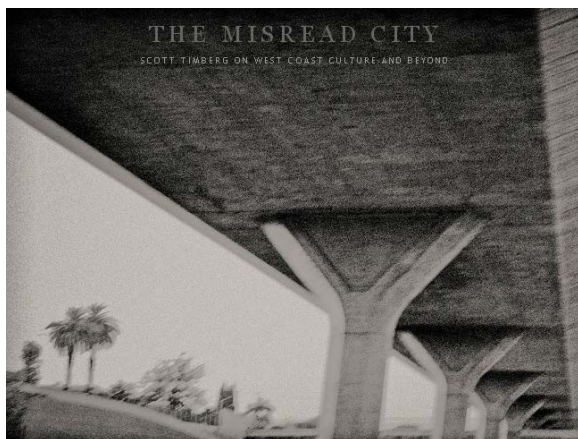
This is not—and, to be fair, was not being sold as— The Future of Opera. The bulk of the repertoire, including work already receiving workshop support from The Industry, would not adapt well to the headset approach. But in this singular case, a fatefully successful meeting of art and technology has indeed paid off. Well played, all.

As of opening night, all future performances were reported sold out. There is talk of additional performances, and I would recommend interested readers keep track of the *Invisible Cities* website linked above for updates.

*Photos* and rudimentary processing by the blogger.

\* The blogger attended this performance as a ticket holder, at his own expense. Additionally, *Invisible Cities* was partially funded by a Kickstarter campaign, to which the blogger was a contributor, at a level that promises a complete audio recording of the production. The blogger believes he chose wisely in this regard.

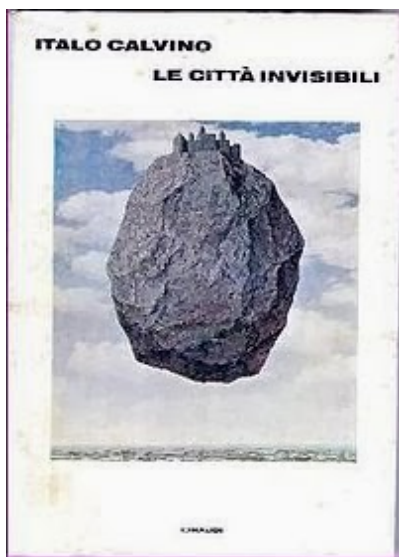




TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2013

Disappearing Into "Invisible Cities"

THERE'S a phrase of John Cage's I think about once in a while, despite having radically mixed feelings about the man and his work. "Theater exists all around us," he once wrote, "and it is the purpose of formal theater to remind us this is so."



This notion came alive for me the other night as I caught one of the last performances of *Invisible Cities*, the wild-ass, Calvino-inspired opera that took place at LA's Union Station. I'd been looking forward to seeing more work by Yuval Sharon – the youngish opera conductor who co-founded a group called The Industry – since his work on Anne LeBaron's *Crescent City*. That "hyperopera," put on at Atwater Crossing, showed the arrival of something new and exciting in Southland arts life. It was also, for all its ambition and beauty, a bit undigested – some of it was daring, some of it just didn't come together. (Mark Swed, on the other hand, was almost unalloyed in his praise.)

*Invisible Cities* showed me everything that Sharon and his co-conspirators (which seems to include, in the orchestra, members of local radical-classicalists wild Up, and dancers from Benjamin Millepied's LA Dance Project) have tried to cook up resolving almost completely. Or rather, coming together but remaining mysterious and open. As my wife, a recovering rock critic who briefly studied opera as a college student, said to me at its conclusion, "Well, that's about the coolest thing I think I've ever seen."

As local culture vultures have surely heard, *Invisible Cities* (music and libretto by Christopher Cerrone) involved a reasonably formal show taking place in a working train station, so the audience drifted from place to place, through

the historical core and the station's lovely courtyards. You walked past travelers rushing to make their train, homeless people collapsed in chairs, sleeping, and locals enjoying cocktails at the station bars. Suddenly, a woman in a blue coat begins speaking into a prewar telephone, and you hear nothing. Or a heavysset man in a baseball cap enjoying a drink at Traxx begins to sing, and only audience members – because of wireless headphones – can hear him. It was both an example of heightened, structured reality and as close as I've gotten to seeing art in the everyday. When, in the middle of a dramatic scene, an announcement came on about train departures it felt like not like an interruption but like a part of the play's narrative of loss, discovery and dislocation.

A few weeks after seeing *Einstein on the Beach*, I must say that *Invisible Cities* made the Glass/Wilson extravaganza look conventional.

Architecture hounds know the glories of 1939's Union Station – some of which is Steamline Moderne, some Mission Revival – but many Californians have never been there. (One of my most architecturally savvy friends held her wedding there.) And somehow *Invisible Cities* framed everything in a way that seemed fresh. It's remarkable enough to have the whole station to roam, but another thing to have it aestheticized by the workings of real artists.

I could go on about how much I loved the whole thing -- and my amazement that given all the opportunities for things to go wrong, it seemed to run pretty smoothly. But I'll just add: I attended a free showing of *Invisible Cities*, and it was full of people – especially teenagers and other young'uns – I never see at the LA Opera or the LA Phil. There were even more lined up who wanted to see it. At the production's end, nearly everyone – including some who probably could not tell Cage from Verdi – seemed as taken by the whole thing as I was. (And this is a work in which the audience really is part of the whole thing.)

Here is my piece on the elfin Yuval Sharon that preceded his earlier project. And here is Mark Swed's review of *Invisible Cities*. (As Mark points out, much of this opera takes place in your head.)

Looking forward to more great work from The Industry and LA Dance Project. Please forgive the unqualified rave, but this was the kind of thing – production, audience, setting – that made me proud to be an Angeleno.

Link: [http://scott-timberg.blogspot.com/2013/11/disappearing-into-invisible-cities\\_12.html](http://scott-timberg.blogspot.com/2013/11/disappearing-into-invisible-cities_12.html)



## Culture Connection: Invisible Cities Opera

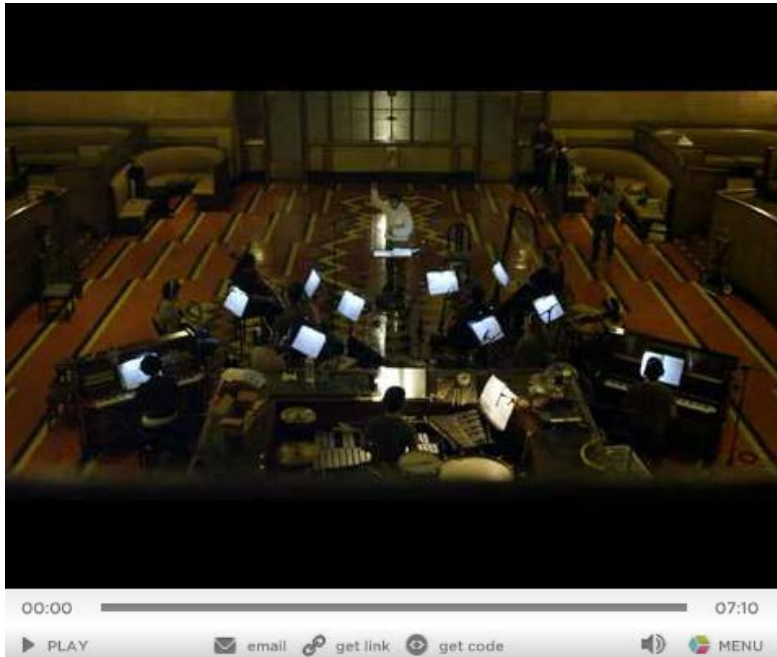
October 31, 2013

By MDarrel

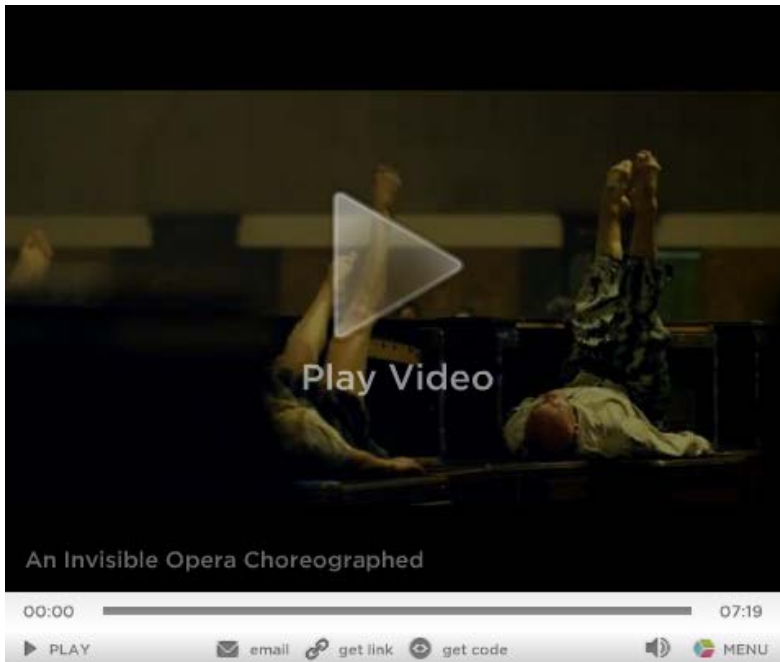
Last week I had the distinct pleasure of seeing one of the most ingenious pieces of performance I've seen in a while. [The Industry's](#) unforgettable opera [Invisible Cities](#) left an eerily moving impression on me. Set in Downtown Los Angeles' iconic Union Station, Artistic Director Yuval Sharon has created a one of a kind LA experience that rivals ambitious curated work around the globe.

I cannot do this work justice in my description of it so I figured I would give you the next best thing. Below are beautifully filmed segments from KCET's Artbound.

One segment is about the composing of an Opera in a space like Union Station in which the audience and performers are all on headset.



Segment two showcases the beautiful choreography that weaves the opera in and out of Union Station's crevices.



I do hope you will enjoy this week's Culture Connection. And please don't forget to-

*"Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in."*

*-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

*Peace,*

*Brotha Malcolm*

Link: <http://www.blackisonline.com/2013/10/culture-connection-invisible-cities-opera/>



# New World Notes

Wagner James Au reports first-hand from the Metaverse

## Invisible Cities: Masterpiece Mixed Reality Opera Creates a Shared Virtual World Within Los Angeles' Union Station

November 1, 2013



*Invisible Cities* is a mixed reality opera playing in Los Angeles' Union Station, and if you can attend this weekend or next week (when the show ends its run) you absolutely should. It's easily the best live public art I've ever seen, and more key, suggests an entirely new medium of performance ideal for the smartphone era, a time when all of us feel constantly connected and simultaneously cut off from the world around us.

Based on Italo Calvino's classic book of the same name, in which Marco Polo tells Kubla Khan about the fantastic cities he's visited in his travels, the opera uses wireless earphones and mics to create a shared virtual world within Los Angeles' cavernous, art deco-inflected train station. The performers quietly sing through small headset mics as they move through the station, and their voices are mixed with the music from a live orchestra at the end of the hall; while this happens, dancers in costumes designed to evoke different eras and cultures also perform throughout the station, creating the sense that they are citizens in these cities that Marco Polo describes.

Watch this video below to better understand what I mean:



All of this happens while life in Union Station goes on -- passengers arriving or waiting to depart, conductors, custodians, and restaurant staff still working -- which makes them and the audience part of the show. However, since only the audience can hear the full opera on their headphones, everyone else just sees dozens of oddly dressed people singing to themselves (it seems) or randomly flailing around. (After the show, a guy asked me and my girlfriend, "What was all that dancing, some kind of voodoo?") The effect is a shared group experience that embraces the environment and the people within it too.

Unsurprisingly, *Invisible Cities* the book has also inspired a number of art projects in the virtual world of Second Life, such as this one, and this one by Cao Fei. I suspect (and hope) that *Invisible Cities* the opera inspires more performances which create virtual worlds layered above the world we all share.

Link: <http://nwn.blogs.com/nwn/2013/11/invisible-cities-mixed-reality-opera.html>



INVISIBLE CITIES: 100% – SWEET

Oct 25, 2013



"Invisible Cities" at Union Station. Photo: Dana Ross.

**SWEET**

*It would not have, thus, been hard for Sharon's herculean act of coordination and inventive production to overwhelm a delicate and beautiful opera. Importantly, it didn't. Somehow, even the performance, conducted by Marc Lowenstein, remained sensitive in so intimidating a performance space.*

Mark Swed – LA Times

**SWEET**

The happening itself, however, is far from irrelevant or inconsequential. Regardless of the material, this joint production from The Industry and L.A. Dance Project is a fascinating display of unbounded creativity and talent – and a helluva lot of fun.

Tony Frankel – Stage and Cinema

**SWEET**

*I certainly can attest to the real nature of this work, so much so that even by-standers in the station without headphones could be seen following the action, enjoying the artistic vision and highly stylized dancing, even without hearing the music as the words being sung were also displayed on the wall above our heads in the main waiting room of the terminal. I am sure many of the homeless who are allowed to stay inside Union Station until 1:30am will remember the experience of having such beautiful artistic work made available to them, opening their eyes to the*

*possibilities and wonder that can happen so unexpectedly in life.*

Shari Barrett – BroadwayWorld

**SWEET**

*“Invisible Cities” stumbles upon an ironic and unfortunately apt metaphor for Los Angeles: here are the privileged elite wandering around a historic relic, oddly cut off from one another by technology, searching for the center of the invisible city that surrounds them. This is an important piece you shouldn’t miss.*

Anthony Byrnes – KCRW

***INVISIBLE CITIES***

The Industry and L.A. Dance Project

At Union Station

800 N. Alameda Ave

Scheduled to end on November 8, 2013

Tickets: (866) 811-4111

Link: <http://losangeles.bitter-lemons.com/2013/10/25/invisible-cities-100-sweet/>

# MENTIONS

# The New York Times

Sunday, September 8, 2013

Circulation: 2.1M

48 AR

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2013

## The New Season: Classical

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46

ments of the band's songs as well as new works of his own. And Iva Bittova, an innovative Czech vocalist, violinist and composer, will join the quartet in music of Janacek and in improvisations. Oct. 12; Nov. 1, 22. Metropolitan Museum. (J.R.O.)

**RACHMANINOFF VESPERS** There were fears for the acclaimed Sacred Music in a Sacred Space series when its founder, Kent Tritle, decamped from St. Ignatius two years ago to the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, where he has revived the series Great Music in a Great Space. But K. Scott Warren has kept a somewhat scaled-down Sacred Music program alive and presumably well to celebrate its 25th-anniversary season. Here Mr. Warren conducts the Choir of St. Ignatius Loyola in a glorious a cappella work that has come very much into its own in recent decades. You have to hope that he has kept the choir in good trim, and we'll know soon enough in this music whether there are any budding Russian-style basses. Oct. 16. Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, 980 Park Avenue, (212) 288-2520, smssconcerts.org. (J.R.O.)

**'DAS LABYRINTH'** The scrappy Amore Opera has lately made a tradition of pairing standard-repertoire works with related rarities like Mercadante's sparkling "Due Figaro" and Donizetti's slightly less sparkling "Olivo e Pasquale." This fall the classic is Mozart's "Zauberflöte," and the rarity is its sequel, "Das Labyrinth." The two works share a librettist, Emanuel Schickaneder, but alas, not a composer: "Labyrinth," which had its premiere eight years after Mozart's death, was composed by Peter Winter. Opens Oct. 16. Connelly Theater, 220 East Fourth Street, Manhattan, (866) 811-4111, amoreopera.org. (Z.W.)

**CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER** The society inflates into a string orchestra — some 17 strong, with veterans like Cho-Liang Lin, Ida Kavafian, Steven Tenenbom and Kurt Muroki joining younger players — to open its season in luxurious fashion. The varied and attractive program offers Mendelssohn's Sinfonia No. 13 in C minor, Tchaikovsky's glorious Sereenade in C and Bartok's moody Divertimento. Oct. 17. Alice Tully Hall. (J.R.O.)

**ANDRIS NELSONS** Named the Boston Symphony Orchestra's new music director in May, this galvanic Latvian conductor was supposed to conduct a major performance of Verdi's Requiem at Tanglewood, the ensemble's summer home, in July. But he suffered a concussion while in Germany to conduct at the Bayreuth Festival and couldn't make the trip. That will focus even more attention on his first performances with the orchestra at Symphony Hall. The program could barely be more canonical: Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll," Brahms's Symphony No. 3 and Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 25, featuring as soloist Paul Lewis, who played the work in elegant, searching style at the Mostly Mozart Festival in August. Oct. 17-19. Symphony Hall, Boston, (888) 266-1492, bso.org. (Z.W.)

**VALENTINA LISITSA** The 92nd Street Y, its new SubCulture venture downtown already in motion, opens its home season with a recital by



HARALD HOFMANN

your way through this book, that not every scrap is here, but it is a rich collection of letters to and from Bernstein, filled with revelations about his musical and personal lives. It is edited by Nigel Simeone, the author of "Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story." Oct. 29. Yale University Press, yalepress.yale.edu. (J.R.O.)

**ANDRAS SCHIFF** This master pianist played Bach's six keyboard partitas and "Goldberg" Variations at the Metropolitan Museum in 1985, the Bach tercentenary year, and the performances were revelatory. Already then, Mr. Schiff had internalized these works so thoroughly, and he played from memory with such spontaneity that it seemed almost if old Bach himself were making things up on the spot. Mr. Schiff has only deepened his interpretations since, so this reprise of the partitas and the "Goldbergs" is not to be missed. The "Goldbergs" performance concludes Mr. Schiff's two-season international Bach Project, and if he wants to throw in Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations (which he has just recorded for ECM) as a sort of built-in encore, who will complain? And don't be surprised if the tireless Mr. Schiff adds an actual encore as well. Oct. 30, Nov. 5. Carnegie Hall. (J.R.O.)

## November

**HESPÉRIEN XXI** The brilliant, enterprising early-music specialist Jordi Savall has traveled as much through national and regional traditions as he has through centuries. Last heard at the Boston Early Music Festival in June, in a program called "Istanbul," he and his superb group now present "The Cycles of Life: A Musical Exploration of the Balkans," as part of Lincoln Center's White Light Festival. The festival's Web site promises "an aural mosaic of Sephardic lullabies, Greek dances, Hebrew songs, Christian Orthodox chants and Sufi devotional songs." Nov. 3. Alice Tully Hall. (J.R.O.)

**JAMIE BARTON** This big-voiced mezzo-soprano won the Cardiff Singer of the World competition in June and appears as Adalgisa in Bellini's "Norma" at the Metropolitan Opera in October. After those performances she sticks around the city to inaugurate a new series, VOCE at Pace: Rising Opera Stars in Recital. The series will continue later in the season with the tenor Paul Appleby and the soprano Nadine Sierra. Nov. 3. Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts, Pace University, (212) 346-1715, schimmel.pace.edu. (Z.W.)

**CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA** Franz Welsler-Möst and this great ensemble add luster to Lincoln Center's White Light Festival with a program devoted to Beethoven's Mass in C and his "Grosse Fuge" (in Mr. Welsler-Möst's arrangement, performed a year ago in Carnegie Hall), and Messiaen's "Trois Petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine." Luba Orgonasova, Kelley O'Connor, Herbert Lippert and Ruben Drole are the vocal soloists in the Mass. Nov. 4. Avery Fisher Hall. (J.R.O.)

**ROOMFUL OF TEETH** This adventurous vocal oc-

tion, opens its home season with a recital by this fine Ukrainian-born pianist. Ms. Lisitsa, who achieved recognition in the 1990s as part of a piano duo with her husband, Alexei Kuznetsov, has recently established a solo career with considerable help from the Internet, where her YouTube channel has attracted more than 60 million views and 93,000 followers. Her Y program will be selected from three alternatives through a voting process conducted online. Oct. 19, 82nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Avenue, (212) 415-5500, 92y.org. (J.R.O.)

**'IL COMBATTIMENTO DI TANCREDI E CLORINDA'** It's a coven of "Combat" as Monteverdi's vivid cantata pops up several times this season. The ensemble Le Poème Harmonique, a favorite at the Miller Theater, performs it here with the soprano Claire Lefillière, playing it alongside a lighter parody by Marco Marazzoli. In November, the riveting diva Anna Caterina Antonacci includes it in her White Light Festival program. (See "Era la Notte," below.) Finally, on Feb. 26-27, Gotham Chamber Opera stages the work at the Metropolitan Museum on a double bill with a piece said to respond to it, "I Have No Stories to Tell You," a new commission from the company's composer in residence, Lembit Beecher. Oct. 19. Miller Theater. (Z.W.)

**'INVISIBLE CITIES'** Christopher Cerrone's operatic adaptation of Italo Calvino's enigmatic novel gets an innovative production from the adventurous young company the Industry: the audience will roam through Union Station in Los Angeles, listening to the performance on headphones. Opens Oct. 19. Union Station, Los Angeles, (718) 812-9159, invisiblecitiesopera.com. (Z.W.)

**BENJAMIN BRITTEN CENTENARY** Carnegie Hall begins a season-long celebration with a performance of the composer's five "Canticles" and of realizations of Purcell songs by Britten and others, sung by Ian Bostridge, Iestyn Davies and Joshua Hopkins, with Julius Drake as pianist. Oct. 20. Carnegie Hall. (J.R.O.)

**LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** Just how much Russianness has Valery Gergiev, the ensemble's current principal conductor, managed to impart to the players? We may see here, in Shostakovich's Symphonies Nos. 4 and 15,

The Hagen Quartet will perform its first complete concert survey of the Beethoven String Quartets in November at the 92nd Street Y. From left, Rainer Schmidt, Clemens Hagen, Veronika Hagen, Lukas Hagen. Below, Anthony Dean Griffey and Susanna Phillips in "Péter Grimes," coming to Carnegie Hall in November.

though the actual conductor is the Dutch maestro Bernard Haitink, who made distinguished recordings of all the Shostakovich symphonies with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra a couple of decades ago and will undoubtedly arrive with clear notions of his own. These programs, which open the Great Performers season at Lincoln Center, will also offer Mozart's Piano Concertos Nos. 9 and 27, with the pre-eminent Mozartean Emanuel Ax as soloist. Oct. 20-21. Avery Fisher Hall. (J.R.O.)

**'TWO BOYS'** When Nico Muhly's opera, inspired by a bizarre true story of love, identity and murder on the Internet, had its premiere in London in 2011, it was that rarity: an opera about ideas that also had a propulsive police procedural at its core. The work, with a libretto by the playwright Craig Lucas, has apparently been shaped and sharpened for its run at the Metropolitan Opera, which is making a rare foray into new music. The production, directed by Bartlett Sher, is the same one that appeared at the English National Opera, but the cast, which stars Alice Cooté as a cynical police officer and Paul Appleby as an overwhelmed young man, is new. So is the conductor, David Robertson, an inspired advocate for contemporary work. Opens Oct. 21. Metropolitan Opera House. (Z.W.)

**YUJA WANG** Known as much for her tiny, tight dresses and high, high heels as for her warm tone, energy and estimable technique, this young pianist barnstormed through an exhilarating recital of works written in the overripe afterglow of Romanticism at Carnegie Hall in May. She returns after just a few months with a program of Prokofiev's Sonata No. 3, Chopin (a sonata, a nocturne and a ballade), Nikolai Kapustin's Opus 41 Variations and Stravinsky's dazzling piano arrangement of three movements from "Petrouchka." Oct. 22. Carnegie Hall. (Z.W.)

**'BADEN-BADEN 1927'** Gotham Chamber Opera opens its season with a reconstruction of an evening at the seminal Baden-Baden Festival of Contemporary Music in July 1927: an evening of one-acts by Kurt Weill (the "Mahagonny Songspiel"), Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud and Ernst Toch. Paul Curran directs a production

designed by Court Watson and the painter Georg Baselitz; Neal Goren conducts. Oct. 23, 26-27, 29. Gerald W. Lynch Theater, John Jay College, 899 10th Avenue, Manhattan, (212) 868-4460, gothamchamberopera.org. (Z.W.)

**CONRAD TAO** This enterprising, wide-ranging pianist and composer, just 19, is also an impresario: he organized a three-concert series, the Unplay Festival, in June. He comes to Carnegie's intimate recital hall with a program anchored by works from his debut album, "Voyages," including music by Meredith Monk, Ravel ("Valse Nobles et Sentimentales" and "Gaspard de la Nuit") and Gordon Getty, presented by the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, an antiprejudice organization. Oct. 24. Weill Recital Hall. (Z.W.)

**WHITE LIGHT FESTIVAL** After a gospel concert by the Campbell Brothers on Oct. 24, the classical portion of the festival at Lincoln Center opens with a performance of Handel's "Aci, Galatea e Polifemo" by the Concert d'Astrée, directed by Emmanuelle Haim. Oct. 26. Alice Tully Hall. (J.R.O.)

**'UP-CLOSE'** The Dutch composer Michel van der Aa's alluring, poetic 2011 cello concerto combines film, electronics and live music, juxtaposing an onstage cellist (here, Kaori Yamagami) with video images of an older woman. The ambiguous, sometimes tense, relationship between music and technology is also central to the other works in the program, which span the last two decades of Mr. van der Aa's career: "Memo," in which a violinist records himself or herself with a small cassette recorder and then plays along with it; "Oog" ("Eye"), for cello and tape; and "Transit," for piano and DVD projection. The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and musicians from the International Contemporary Ensemble collaborate in the White Light Festival's most intriguing contemporary-music offering. Oct. 28. Grand Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 West 34th Street, (212) 721-6500, whitelightfestival.org. (Z.W.)

**'THE LEONARD BERNSTEIN LETTERS'** His collaborator Betty Comden once noted, in a letter to Bernstein, that he saved "every scrap of correspondence." You will be grateful, as you work

**ROOMFUL OF TEETH** This adventurous vocal octet had some unexpected good news in April when one of its members, Caroline Shaw, won the Pulitzer Prize for her "Partita for Eight Voices." A dazzling contemporary vision of a Baroque dance suite, "Partita" was composed for Roomful of Teeth, which recorded it, but until now the group has not performed all four movements together live. That occasion alone would make this concert a special event, but the program also features works by Caleb Burghans, Brad Wells and William Brittle. Nov. 4. Le Poisson Rouge, 158 Bleecker Street, Greenwich Village, (212) 505-3474, lepoissonrouge.com. (Z.W.)

**'NED IS NINETY'** A month before Britten's centennial is a notable not-quite-centennial: the 90th birthday of the composer Ned Rorem, whose elegant, emotionally precise songs are at the heart of his output. The New York Festival of Song pays tribute with works by Mr. Rorem and his friends and influences (including Barber, Bernstein, Copland, Poulenc, Virgil Thomson and, yes, Britten), interlaced with excerpts from his inimitable diaries. The singers, the mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey and the baritone Andrew Garland, are young and talented, and as ever, Steven Blier and Michael Barrett, the directors of the venerable series, play piano. Nov. 5. Merkin Concert Hall, 129 West 67th Street, Manhattan; (212) 501-3330, nyfos.org. (Z.W.)

**'MEFISTOFELE'** The Collegiate Chorale's performances of operatic rarities in concert have become a valuable part of the New York music scene, picking up some of the slack from a flagging Opera Orchestra of New York. Arrigo Boito's rich score may not qualify as truly unknown — the Metropolitan Opera performed it as recently as 2000 — but there is no reason it should be appreciated less than, say, Gounod's "Faust," a snoozier telling of the same story. James Bagwell, the chorale's director, is a solid conductor, particularly of operas like this one that show off the chorus, and his soloists, led by the bass-baritone Eric Owens and the rising soprano Julianna Di Giacomo, have the chops to do justice to Boito's soaring vocal lines. Nov. 6. Carnegie Hall. (Z.W.)

**'DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN'** The consensus these days is that the Metropolitan Opera's so-called new productions succeed best when

HARALD HOFMANN

# Los Angeles Times

Sunday, September 15, 2013

Circulation: 962,192

**OCT. 19-NOV. 18**

## **'Invisible Cities'**

Last year, the Industry, L.A.'s seriously alternative opera company, premiered Anne LeBaron's resourcefully apocalyptic hyper-opera, "Crescent City," in an Atwater alternative space. For its second season, the company takes the hyperoperatic urban theme a dimension further with what it calls an "invisible opera for headphones." Based on Italo Calvino's fantastical tale of Marco Polo bewitching Kublai Khan with visions of impossible cities, Christopher Cerrone's "Invisible Cities" will have its premiere in Union Station with each member of the audience provided a pair of Sennheisers through which to hear the Brooklyn composer's score while skirting commuters. Yuval Sharon directs in collaboration with Los Angeles Dance Project.

*Union Station; \$25-\$150;  
invisiblecitiesopera.com*



# Los Angeles Times

## FALL ARTS PREVIEW

Fall 2013 classical music events include notes of protest

Events include 'To Russia With Love' in Berlin, Disney Hall's 10th anniversary to-do in L.A., LA Opera's 'Einstein on the Beach.'



Union Station in Los Angeles will witness an uptick in visitors crowned with headphones. (Gary Friedman, Los Angeles Times / September 14, 2013)

By Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times Music Critic

*September 12, 2013, 9:15 a.m.*

### **'Invisible Cities'**

Last year, the Industry, L.A.'s seriously alternative opera company, premiered Anne LeBaron's resourcefully apocalyptic hyperopera, "Crescent City," in an Atwater alternative space. For its second season, the company takes the hyperoperatic urban theme a dimension further with what it calls an "invisible opera for headphones." Based on Italo Calvino's fantastical tale of Marco Polo bewitching Kublai Khan with visions of impossible cities, Christopher Cerrone's "Invisible Cities" will have its premiere in Union Station with each member of the audience provided a pair of Sennheisers through which to hear the Brooklyn-based composer's score while skirting commuters. Yuval Sharon directs in collaboration with Los Angeles Dance Project.

*Union Station, \$25-\$150; [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com)*

# Los Angeles Times

Sunday, October 20, 2013

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LATIMES.COM/CALENDAR

Los Angeles Times

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2013 E3

## DANCE

# A highly choreographed leap forward

Melissa Barak adds drama to her dance company's big debut with a mix of the classical and the modern.

By VICTORIA LOOSELEAF

Pushing herself across the floor in a slow crawl, her face in searching mode, back slightly arched, she resembles an Andrew Wyeth "Helga" painting. But this is no artist's model, nor a trained modern dancer. This is Melissa Barak, a Los Angeles native who made a name for herself with New York City Ballet first as a ballerina, then beginning in 2002 as a choreographer, with the New York Times writing, "Barak's gift is for exploring pure movement."

And though she hasn't been onstage in two years, Barak, 34, says she felt it "appropriate" to be part of Barak Ballet's inaugural performance at Santa Monica's Broad Stage on Thursday. Two years in the making (with a pre-launch performance last March), the 17-member company presents "L.A. Moves," a concert featuring two Barak premieres, a contemporary work by former Graham dancer Pascal Rioult, and Barak's solo, made for her by Danielle Agami, artistic director of the recently transplanted troupe Ate9.

"People know me as a dancer," said Barak during a rehearsal break at Westside School of Ballet, "and I also wanted to work with Danielle. I knew she was going to open my mind and body, as a dancer and choreographer. It's been challenging, because I don't feel like I'm in my artistic element, and I'm excited, but it's also a little scary."

A savvy mix of contemporary dance and neoclassical ballet, the program also features 12 musicians from the Malibu Coast Chamber Orchestra, another way Barak hopes to boost the fledgling company's profile in an unforgiving arts landscape.

"Live music adds drama to the dancers and for the audience," said Barak, her facial features Modigliani-thin. "People are creating all the art you're seeing and listening to—it's a zing of energy."

The erstwhile ballerina also wanted to tap local talent; her two



FRANCINE ORR/Los Angeles Times

MELISSA BARAK will take part in her eponymous ballet company's inaugural performance, "L.A. Moves," at the Broad Stage.

new ballets (both performed en pointe) feature scores by L.A. composers. "Lux Aeterna" for four couples is about life cycles. Set to music of Maria Newman, daughter of the late film composer Alfred Newman, the Baroque-like work has dancers making bold entrances and exits to soaring strings. Barak's "For Two" is accompanied by music of Mario Grigoriu, whose soundtracks are heard in three Lee Daniels films, including "Precious." A former Batsheva dancer, Agami crafted Barak's eight-minute solo to a commissioned score by Jodie Landau.

Agami, 28, also choreographed the dance element for the industry's latest opera, "Invisible Cities" (running at Union Station). She said working with Barak has been inspiring.

"The question is, 'How do I break the way she thinks? How do I change her mind about how she's moving?' That's the psychology I was investing in, and the solution was to use the floor."

Agami also teaches Ohad Naharin's Gaga technique. A kind of corporeal multi-tasking, Gaga is a way to both train the body and gain self-awareness by responding to verbal cues ("See if you can swim with your bones inside of your skin..."), a method that decidedly helped Barak.

"What turns me on is to create movement, to create form, to create composition. My tool to explain the sensation is images, something dancers can connect in their brains, their bodies, to something they know. I did this with Melissa," Agami said.

And though ballet is about defying gravity, modern dance involves being rooted to the floor. Rioult, 59, who founded his eponymous troupe in 1994, created the partly World War II-inspired "Wien" for six dancers in 1995, setting it to Ravel's "La Valse" (heard on tape).

Said Rioult by phone from New York: "It's based on people being dragged down, pushed down by the weight of things, and on the idea of circling. The dancers rarely lose contact with the ground, which is something different for a ballet dancer. The piece is violent, but the violence comes mostly from the movement—how relentless and physical it is. It's a hard piece to dance."

Seth Belliston, 38, performed with Pacific Northwest Ballet for seven seasons. No stranger to bare

feet, dancing in "Wien" posed challenges. "All the musical and choreographic complexities, working in tandem and opposition, make the piece difficult and intellectual since the structure is both cyclical and circular."

Belliston, who first met Barak in 2001, danced with the troupe last March. He said he's thrilled to be on the ground floor of Barak Ballet. "It's awesome to see Melissa pulling this together in such an intelligent way—going slow and steady—so it can evolve and be stronger, bigger and more visible."

Barak too is optimistic. "If we let this company organically develop, do good work, and people embrace it, we'll see where the journey goes."

calendar@latimes.com

# CULTURE

TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE

Fall Culture Preview:  
Ten Trends of the Season

Fall is culture's defining moment—from must-see theater to Oscar-worthy films to addictive new music to blockbuster books, here's everything you need to know.



In Italo Calvino's 1972 novel, *Invisible Cities*, Marco Polo sits down with an aged Kublai Khan and recounts his visits to the empire's far-flung cities—fantastical places that could exist only in the imagination. A new opera by **Christopher Cerrone** nods to that intimate conversation and its themes of travel with a rather unusual production. The setting is the Los Angeles railway hub Union Station and the mode of listening is wireless headphones; free to explore, the audience will find singers, dancers, and musicians throughout the space. The project is a collaboration between two innovative companies: the experimental opera group the Industry and L.A. Dance Project, a collective started by **Benjamin Millepied** (who, himself a traveler, will take over the Paris Opera Ballet next year).

*Union Station, Los Angeles*  
October 19–November 8  
[theindustryla.org](http://theindustryla.org)

Photo: Photo by Ian Raymond

# San Diego MAGAZINE

San Diego Travel News

Where to stay, transportation + art, the San Diego airport



## TRANSPORTATION + ART

Watch an Invisible Opera in L.A.

Starting October 19, commuters deboarding the Surfliner at Union Station just may find themselves in the middle of a performance by The Industry and L.A. Dance Project. Invisible Cities is based on Italo Calvino's 1972 novel imagining a meeting between Kublai Khan and Marco Polo. Put on wireless headphones and listen to both prerecorded and live voices. Trippy? Yes, but you're in a train station, where trips are a given (and a-taken).

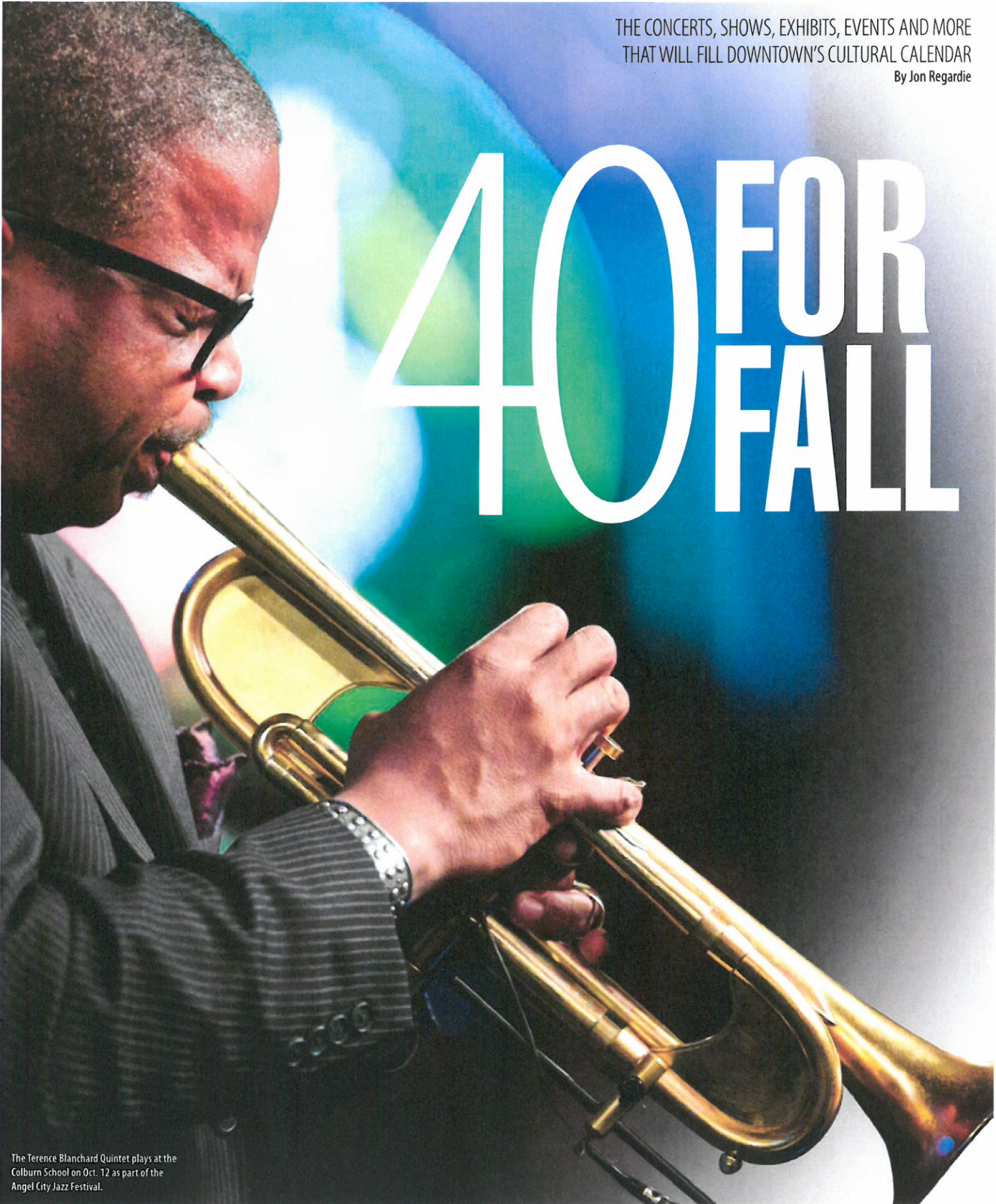
Link: <http://www.sandiegomagazine.com/San-Diego-Magazine/October-2013/San-Diego-Travel-News/>

THE CONCERTS, SHOWS, EXHIBITS, EVENTS AND MORE  
THAT WILL FILL DOWNTOWN'S CULTURAL CALENDAR  
By Jon Regardie

# 40 FOR FALL

photo courtesy of Angels City Jazz Festival

The Terence Blanchard Quintet plays at the Colburn School on Oct. 12 as part of the Angel City Jazz Festival.



# INVISIBLE CITIES

Oct. 19-  
Nov. 8 at  
Union  
Station

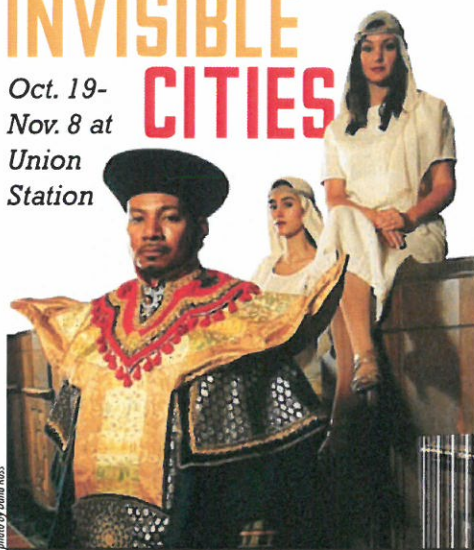


photo by Dana Ross

Even in a community that embraces the avant-garde, there has never been anything like *Invisible Cities*. Upstart company The Industry is using an Italo Calvino novel as the jumping-off point for a site-specific opera in which performers will weave through Downtown's historic train station. You may ask, won't it be hard to hear the gorgeous voices in a busy transit hub? Of course, which is why audience members will wear wireless Sennheiser headphones. The story concerns a meeting between the emperor Kublai Kahn and explorer Marco Polo. The dancers come from Benjamin Millepied's L.A. Dance Project. This limited run will likely be talked about for a long time.

At 800 N. Alameda St. or [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com).



photo by Corey Lewand

# HOLIDAY PARTY FOR DOWNTOWN KIDS

Oct. 31 at Grand Hope Park

Celebrating Halloween in Downtown has one big drawback: There are no houses for trick-or-treating. That's why the Downtown Center Business Improvement District throws an annual Halloween hootenanny at Grand Hope Park. The 5-8 p.m. event (it falls on a Thursday this year) is a family-friendly gathering with candy, hot dogs, bounce houses, games, face painting, a puppet show and a bunch of trick-or-treat doors. Kids need costumes and grown-ups are urged to dress up as well — just don't be like everyone else and come as a 250-unit under-construction Downtown apartment complex. Admission is \$5.

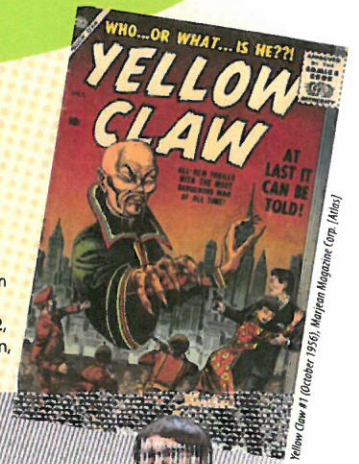
At 919 S. Grand Ave. or [downtownla.com](http://downtownla.com).

# MARVELS AND MONSTERS

Opening Oct. 12 at JANM

Comics are big in pop culture these days. The Japanese American National Museum takes advantage of this with the thought-provoking show *Marvels & Monsters: Unmasking Asian Images in U.S. Comics, 1942-1986*. The exhibit, which opens Oct. 12, explores how Asians have been portrayed in comics over four decades, touching on, for example, their treatment during times of war and unrest. The exhibit even digs into a number of Asian comic archetypes such as Guru, Brain, Kamikaze and Lotus Blossom. *Marvels & Monsters*, curated by Asian Pop columnist Jeff Yang, culminates with a library of modern graphic novels by Asian Americans.

At 100 N. Central Ave., (213) 625-0414 or [janm.org](http://janm.org).



Yellow Claw #1 (October 1956), Marjorie Maganac Corp. (Atlas)



photo from the Komische Oper Berlin by Iko Freese / drama-berlin.de

# The Magic Flute

Nov. 23-Dec. 15  
at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion

Mozart's fantastical creation is among the most delightful in all of opera. In Downtown, L.A. Opera Music Director James Conlon will conduct a highly stylized production directed by Barrie Kosky in combination with the British troupe 1927 — in addition to beautiful singing, expect live performers to coexist with film animation. It's all highly unusual and filled with spectacle, but somehow that sounds fitting for a show set in a dark forest and featuring a character known as the Queen of the Night. Laurence Brownlee plays Tamino and Erika Miklosa is the queen — for the record, she has sung the part more than 400 times.

At 135 N. Grand Ave., (213) 972-8001 or [laopera.org](http://laopera.org).

# THE SUNSHINE BOYS

Through Nov. 3 at the Ahmanson Theatre

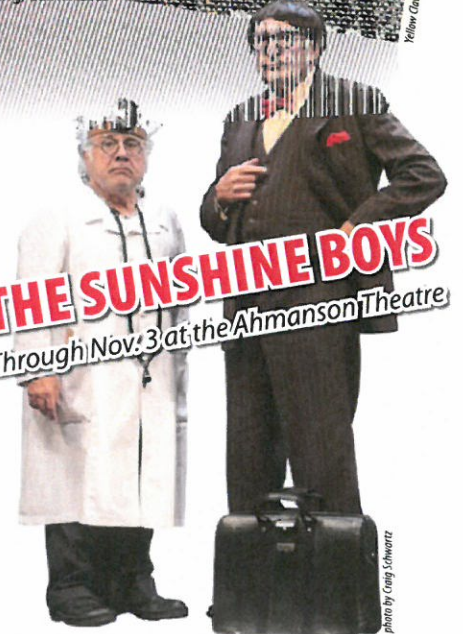


photo by Craig Schwartz

As the decades pass, Neil Simon remains a staple at the Ahmanson Theatre. So it is again with *The Sunshine Boys*, which opened last week. The play directed by Thea Sharrock is a revival of Simon's 1972 work (it became a movie three years later starring George Burns and Walter Matthau) about a couple of Vaudeville performers — amusingly named Lewis and Clark — who had an acrimonious split but, wouldn't you know it, have the opportunity to come together one more time to make some money on television. Art mirrors life with the casting: The roles are assayed by former "Taxi" actors Danny Devito and Judd Hirsch.

At 135 N. Grand Ave., (213) 972-4400 or [centertheatregroup.com](http://centertheatregroup.com).

Trent Reznor was an angry kid with a love of dark, industrial yet catchy music when he burst onto the scene in 1989 with the album *Pretty Hate Machine*. Nearly a quarter century later he seems pretty much the same, except for being older and having an Oscar for scoring *The Social Network*. The new record *Hesitation Marks* is unmistakably Nine Inch Nails, and when Reznor and his band hit Staples Center on Nov. 8, they'll find an adoring crowd, 99% of whom will be wearing black. Reznor is a ferocious performer, so expect him to attack hits from his back catalogue (think "Head Like a Hole" and "March of the Pigs") as well as the new material. On this night, there might be blood.

At 1201 S. Figueroa St. or [livenation.com](http://livenation.com).



# Nine Inch Nails

Nov. 8 at Staples Center

photo by Nadine Ringerson



## **40 For Fall: The Concerts, Shows, Exhibits and More That Will Fill Downtown's Cultural Calendar**

Posted: Monday, October 7, 2013 11:38 am | Updated: 4:46 pm, Tue Oct 15, 2013.

**By Jon Regardie**

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - Summer was fun. We did a lot. Concerts, theater, outdoor movies, etc. Fortunately, in Downtown Los Angeles, fall is just as busy. In the next three months, the Central City will be filled with scores of events, shows, museum exhibits and more. Below, Los Angeles Downtown News details 40 of the best things to do.

Think of this as a starting point, not an exclusive list. Now, get out and do something.

### **Invisible Cities: Oct. 19-Nov. 8 at Union Station**

Even in a community that embraces the avant-garde, there has never been anything like *Invisible Cities*. Upstart company The Industry is using an Italo Calvino novel as the jumping-off point for a site-specific opera in which performers will weave through Downtown's historic train station. You may ask, won't it be hard to hear the gorgeous voices in a busy transit hub? Of course, which is why audience members will wear wireless Sennheiser headphones. The story concerns a meeting between the emperor Kublai Kahn and explorer Marco Polo. The dancers come from Benjamin Millepied's L.A. Dance Project. This limited run will likely be talked about for a long time.

At 800 N. Alameda St. or [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com).

Link: [http://www.ladowntownnews.com/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/for-fall-the-concerts-shows-exhibits-and-more-that-will/article\\_b05ac064-2f7f-11e3-b8f3-0019bb2963f4.html](http://www.ladowntownnews.com/arts_and_entertainment/for-fall-the-concerts-shows-exhibits-and-more-that-will/article_b05ac064-2f7f-11e3-b8f3-0019bb2963f4.html)

**TECH PRESS**



# WIRED

Is This the Opera of the Future?

BY JEFFREY MARLOW

10.22.13



The Invisible Cities Opera plays out in Union Station's historic spaces. (Image: Invisible Cities, Hummingbird Media)

At 10:34 PM on a recent evening, passengers at Los Angeles' Union Station scurried down well-worn linoleum hallways toward departing trains, running to catch the evocatively-named *Coast Starlight* (Seattle), *Pacific Surfliner* (San Luis Obispo), or *Sunset Limited* (New Orleans). Among the crowds was a man carrying a backpack, sauntering between the rows of chairs and singing to himself. The scene was far from unusual given the station's diverse and colorful clientele, but there was something different about this singer – people were actually paying attention. An entourage of spectators, all wearing matching black headphones, traced the man's path, hanging on every word.

A traveler humming a quiet tune to passers-by turned into a full operatic production for the headphone-equipped, voices joining with an orchestral score in swirling synergy.

This is *Invisible Cities*, a renegade new opera from The Industry, the LA Dance Project, and Sennheiser, which runs through early November in downtown Los Angeles. The work is based on Italo Calvino's 1972 novel, which imagines a dialogue between Kublai Khan and Marco Polo, describing some of the cities within the emperor's vast holdings. Set to the music of composer Christopher Cerrone, the opera is a stark contemplation on culture, decay, and the ravaging effects of time on civilization.

*Invisible Cities* may be thematically timeless, but it represents the leading edge of operatic innovation – a bold effort to create individualized experiences within the context of a communal performance. “Everyone will miss something; everyone will have a perfect view,” explains director Yuval Sharon cryptically before the final dress rehearsal. “It’s an ambulatory experience; the audience is moving freely and having a highly subjective experience.”

In an age of personalized everything – from medicine to marketing – personalized performing arts is increasingly in vogue. Punchdrunk has taken immersive theater to new heights in London, while artists like Janet Cardiff create installations that cultivate distinctive experiences. But for an institution like opera, inextricably rooted in tradition, innovative modes of delivery can be a tough sell. “This is the invention of something new here,” says Stefanie Reichert, Sennheiser’s Director of Strategic Marketing, “cutting-edge stuff that European opera companies wouldn’t dare to do.” But after talking Union Station management into the idea, Sharon took *The Industry* – his opera company that intentionally leaves “opera” out of its title – into uncharted waters. “LA is a frontier of experiential creativity,” he claims; “it’s much harder to pull off this kind of thing where everything is already established artistically.”

The movement toward personalized performing arts accomplishes two goals, beyond opening new creative avenues to artists. Within the context of a choose-your-own-adventure performance, audience members are forced to make conscious choices rather than sit – and more than occasionally sleep – in their seats. As Reichert puts it, “with this type of delivery form, people pay more attention, and we do the artists more justice.” What’s more, the format is inherently piracy-proof; a bootleg recording of the performance would be about as intelligible as a shredded set of Ikea instructions.

To make this high-concept production a reality, *The Industry* linked up with Sennheiser, the German audio company with a proclivity for technical production challenges. The crisp sound coming through the headphones belies a complicated configuration of microphones, transmitters, and cables positioned around the repurposed performance space.

A live orchestra plays in an ancillary part of the station, and singers move throughout courtyards, waiting rooms, and ticket halls. Sixteen “floor” microphones are mixed with the orchestra’s output and beamed to the headphones through radio waves from four “antennae farms”.

Like the much-maligned local freeways, the airwaves over the country’s second-largest city are dense with traffic, as law enforcement and radio stations carve out sonic space. As a result, extraneous noise threatens to derail the contemplative, personalized experience at any moment. To minimize the chance of disruption, “the frequency is tuned in and adjusted before the show,” says Reichert; “it requires scanning and testing every night.” Actually, two different frequencies are identified; if an intruding transmission overruns the primary frequency during the show, singers can turn a switch on their transmission packs to start broadcasting in an alternate wavelength. The building itself – packed with sound attenuating metal in the walls and lead in the windows – didn’t make things any easier.

“We knew it was going to be difficult,” says Sennheiser technician David Missall, “and since the interference changes every night, we need to constantly monitor the area. It’s certainly harder than doing a football game or a Broadway musical.”

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As the crowd collected in the grand ticketing hall for the final sequence, a head phoned Danielle Agami trailed behind, watching the performance with a particularly critical eye. After all, Agami is the show’s choreographer, and she’s not fully convinced her staging is quite right.

For Agami and the dancers, the unique set of *Invisible Cities* presents new challenges. “You never know what your spacing will be during the show,” she explains, “or what the setting around you will be. One night could be rough, one night could be lonely, one night could be claustrophobic.”

It was precisely because of these issues that Sharon tapped Agami for the job; as a veteran of the Batsheva Dance Company, Agami is an in-demand choreographer of the improvisational Gaga style (“nothing to do with the singer,” she offers preemptively). The dancers can hear the full sonic landscape through subtle earpieces, but without the visual cues of a conductor, Agami finds it easier to create a kinetic framework rather than dictate each flourish. “We

have signals in the music, but we're not moving completely in response to the music," she says. "We're using it as an envelope – it's our background, our wallpaper."

To Sharon, the sound transmission challenges are just the latest example of technological development in the service of artistic expression. In many productions, "technology was advanced mostly by artists who wanted new ways to tell stories," he says, citing Wagner's innovations in stage technology and lighting effects pioneered for his *Ring* cycle.

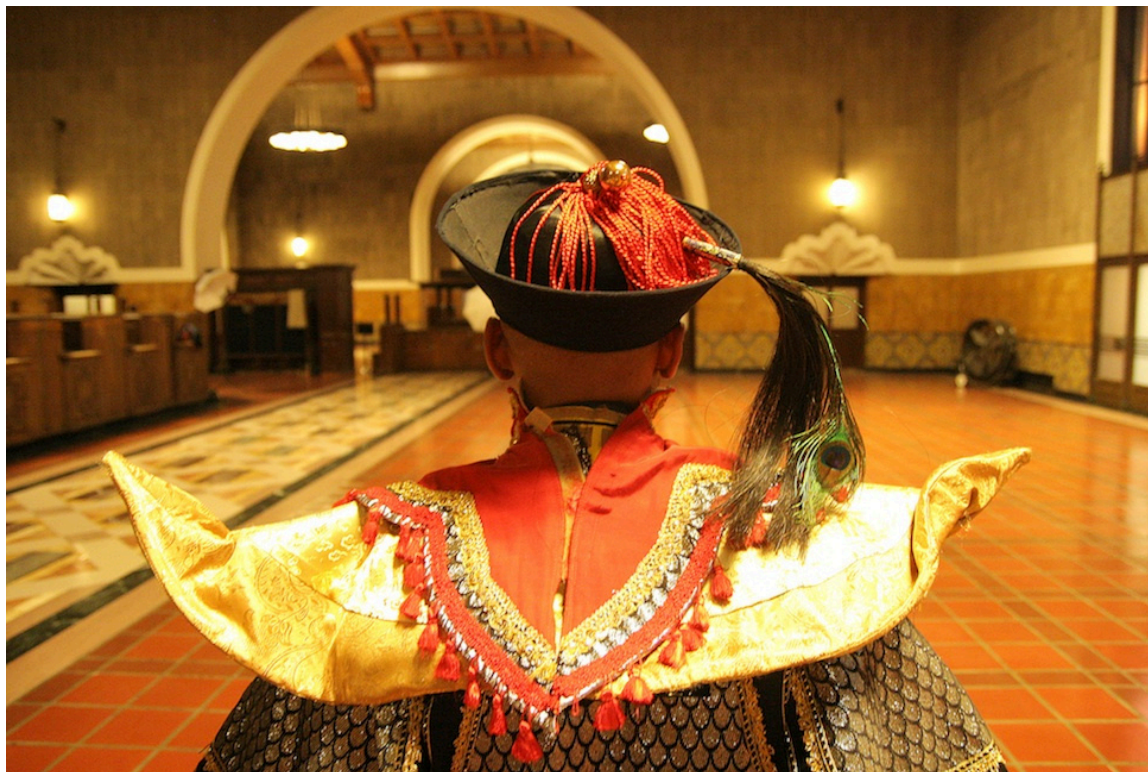
Sharon sees the headphone opera, with its personalized nature and disembodied voices, as the latest link in a long chain of operatic advancement. "When you can divorce the voice from the person singing," he suggests, "the ear can watch and the eyes can listen, and the headphones are an ideal tool for that."

"It's a new way of creating an opera."

Link: <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2013/10/is-this-the-opera-of-the-future/>

# GIZMODO

[A Secret Opera Erupts Inside California's Biggest Train Depot](#)



Headphones are part of daily life at train stations, an urban necessity used by commuters to drown out the flurry of action around them. But the other night at Union Station in Los Angeles, as I watched a woman crawl across the top of an information booth while a man's voice from another room whispered in my ear, the headphones I wore became a way to enhance, not ignore, the experience—like tuning into a pirate radio broadcast where the plot began to come to life before my eyes.

[Invisible Cities](#) is an opera by Christopher Cerrone based on the novel by Italo Calvino that's produced by [The Industry](#) and [LA Dance Project](#) and staged in public within the station. The show, which runs until November 8, is a fully immersive and sometimes extremely jarring choose-your-own-adventure experience as you wander the dramatic architecture at night, listening to the voices which—thanks to the wireless sound equipment on your ears—feel like they're quite literally in your head.

Although this kind of headphone-assisted performance isn't that unusual—if you went to art school, you likely attended at least one silent disco/rave—director Yuval Sharon had never seen it done with a live singers and a live orchestra before. "I started thinking about what a performance would be like that could use headphones in a medium that is all about the human voice," he says. "That you could distance yourself from the physical body of the singer, that you could just hear voice of the singer, was an incredibly powerful idea."

To execute the technologically complex idea, Sharon turned to German audio company [Sennheiser](#), which is known for its collaboration with artists. A former bagel shop at the center of the station acts as Sennheiser's command center, where engineers produce the performance without seeing any of it in person. Gathering sound from wireless microphones taped to the cheeks of the performers, the engineers create six different mixes which are simultaneously outputted back out to the headphones of the performers, musicians and audience members.

Since the orchestra is sealed in a room away from much of the action, a large part of the engineers' job is constantly monitoring to make sure they're on strong, open frequencies—and, because it's a train station in a major city, there's a lot of chatter. Any audio drops will result in the performers missing their cues. The biggest challenge was Union Station itself: the thick walls and lead-paned windows of the 1939 building created additional barriers and interference, so the engineers needed to build four separate antenna farms throughout the building (including running a cable in a tunnel beneath the building to reach a courtyard).



The performance began by checking out a pair of wireless headphones from a booth in the old ticket hall of the station (so appropriate). I was told to make my way to the Fred Harvey Room, a former restaurant that's now used

as an event space. As I slipped on my headphones, one of those disembodied male voices began reciting a passage in Italian, soothing but also a little unnerving.

When I reached the room, the orchestra was warming up inside of it, and Sharon stepped forward and welcomed everyone. When the performance began we could go wherever we wanted, he said. We'd know if we walked too far astray, because we'd no longer hear the audio (there were also red-shirted staffers stationed at the perimeter, just in case). He also cautioned, somewhat mysteriously, that we wouldn't be able to see every part of the performance. "You'll all miss parts of it, and you'll all have front row seats."



People I spoke to had different strategies for "watching" the opera. Some wandered the building. Some people parked themselves in one place for almost the entire night. I found myself following the performers, either physically—I'd see them and walk behind them—or audibly—I'd hear them sing and walk through the rooms until I found them in person. Sometimes you'd round a corner and everything would get a little Eyes Wide Shut, with ominous music, lots of masks and the feeling that you were stumbling upon a very personal moment between two people.



Most of the time I actually had a really hard time telling who the performers were. The paying audience was all clearly labeled with our headphones. But I encountered dozens of passengers I swore were in costume, some of

whom I stopped following when I realized they weren't going to break into harmony. And layered upon that were all the regular sounds and activities of the station—"ATTENTION AMTRAK PASSENGERS TRAVELING ON BARSTOW BUS 491 ALL ABOARD" bellowed through the hall during a scene—which made it much more interesting than just watching an opera on stage.



I discovered that I didn't even have to follow the story to have a transcendent experience—it was more like I was stepping in and out of different conversations between the music, the public and the building. I walked outside through the garden, stood in the waiting room with the other passengers; I even sat at the bar in the station for a while and took off my headphones, jumping along with the rest of the drinkers when a man in a wheelchair



suddenly began singing nearby, his vibrato echoing a capella into the arches of the main hall. (Yes, he was one of the performers—although I can imagine there will be some interesting stories about passerby who try to become part of the act.)



I almost wish I could have stumbled upon the opera by accident, just to have that moment of discovery. Throughout the evening it was often more fascinating to watch the reactions of the station's passengers. Sometimes it felt like a prelude to a flash mob or, like when I watched a family awkwardly attempt to wheel their suitcases around some oncoming dancers, a clip from America's Funniest Home Videos.

But the most captivated audience members didn't seem to have anywhere in particular to go. These were the people sitting in the wooden chairs of the waiting area, many of them trying to sleep while singers swirling around them.

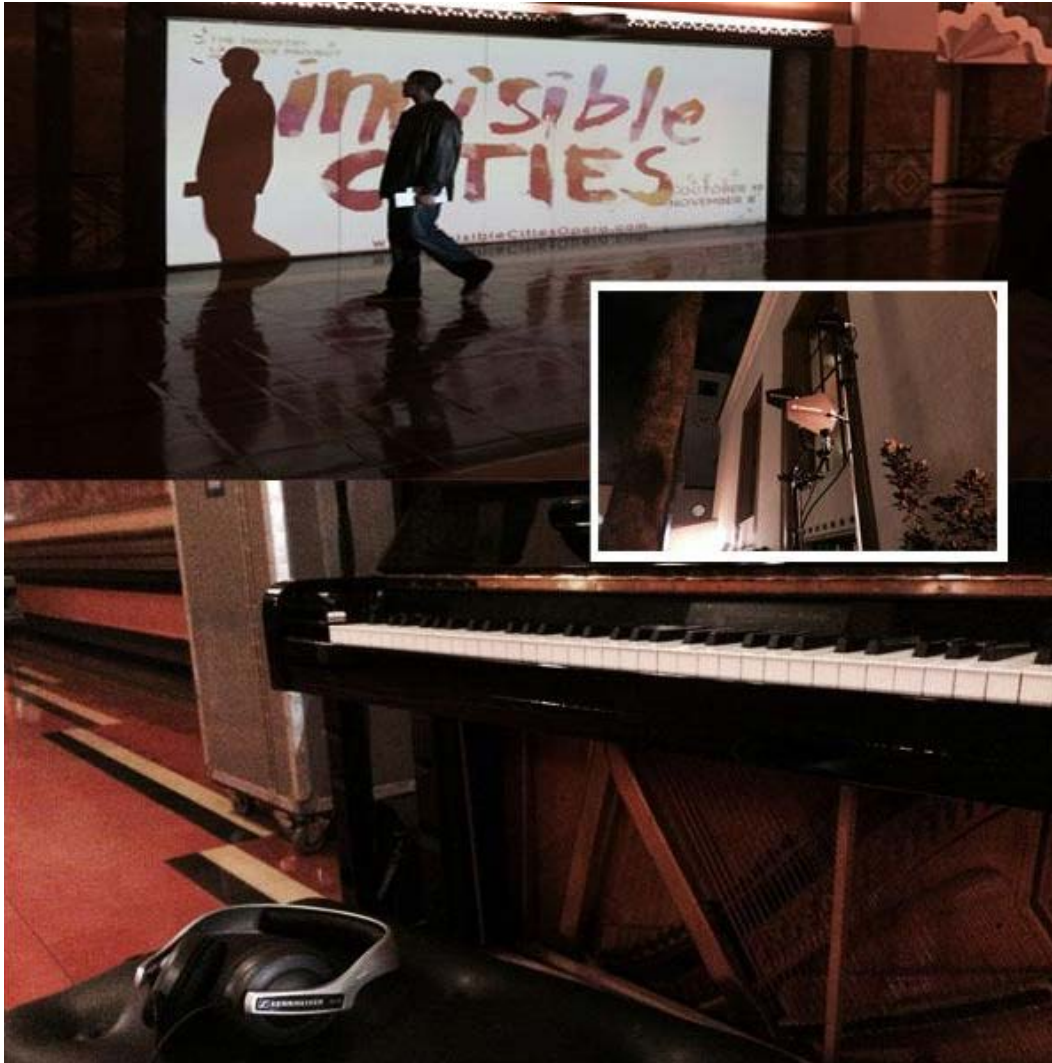
I managed to capture what might have been my favorite moment of the night, when a man took off his headphones and passed them to another man seated amidst several large bags. His eyebrows shot up when he heard what the rest of us could hear. He smiled as he listened, and he became part of the performance, too.

Link: <http://gizmodo.com/a-secret-opera-erupts-inside-californias-biggest-train-1447832488>

# SOUND & VISION

Invisible Cities: The Seamless Meeting of Art and Technology

By Lauren Dragan • Nov 22, 2013



Have you ever listened to a pair of headphones and thought that it seems as though the music was being performed right in front of you? Or maybe you're in a public place, listening to music as you walk, and all the day to day mundanity around you takes on a more profound glow? Or sometimes, if you pay attention, it seems as though events are lining up to the rhythm: someone is walking to the beat, or speaking at just the right moment? Now imagine that all of those things were happening at the same time and you'll have a small idea of what it was like to attend *Invisible Cities*, an opera composed for headphones and performed live at a functioning, bustling train station.

*Invisible Cities* is, first and foremost, an opera about a king, Kublai Khan, whose city is suffering from a “decay of excess” and an explorer, Marco Polo, who the king calls upon to assist him in finding the reason for the city’s decline, and the key to its future. The opera moves through several scenes where Marco Polo describes his travels, and Kublai Khan gains wisdom that enables him to find direction. That, in itself, is pretty intense stuff, and the score reflects this very well; shifting from broad and sweeping to haunting and delicate, bringing the listener along for the ride as Marco Polo describes city after city, each with its own musical flavor. The score and libretto are wonderfully crafted and hold up on their own. I mention this lest you think the experience I’m about to describe in any way gimmicky. In fact, the entire piece works because each aspect: the musicians, the performers, and the technology all were wielded with discretion, and only when it suited the larger whole.

So. Now that you understand the story, here’s how it unfolded: The entire performance took place at the iconic [Union Station in Los Angeles](#). Its architecture is largely inlaid marble and gorgeous, and it has several gardens as well as meeting rooms and restaurants. As the entire performance took place, business at the station continued as usual. People were in the waiting area, running to catch a train, meeting up with friends in the garden after a long trip. Only the two meeting rooms (one of which was the old ticket booth hall, and another a Harvey House restaurant) were closed to the public. In one of the closed rooms was where we received our headphones: wireless Sennheiser RS 120. We were then directed to the other closed-to-the-public room where there sat an 11 piece orchestra. Each musician was miked from above and close-miked with Neumann and Sennheiser microphones to enable the sound designer to precisely control the mix. As the conductor finished the overture, the doors to the room opened, and the surreal experience began.

Let me pause here to explain that this opera didn’t happen in just one room. No, it happened in 3 rooms and 2 gardens, and it was a technological wonder. Sennheiser worked with Bexel and made a wireless antenna farm that allowed the audience to roam from room to room, inside and out, experiencing scenes that entered and retreated from various places as quickly as a musical phrase passed from our hearing. Each performer wore not only 2 small wireless microphones, but in-ear monitors that enabled them to wander long out of hearing range of the actual orchestra. Each received a precise mix of the music, other performers, and themselves. The audience received a separate mix, created to represent the two hemispheres of the brain. All of this data was sent out wirelessly through the multiple antenna farms spread throughout the space, which had to be placed very carefully each night so as not to disrupt the functionality of the train station, nor the historic architecture. You read that right. For the several week run, the entire operation: antennas, transmitters, and the 2,500 feet of fiber optic cable that ran under the station and through a parking garage to the mixing board had to be struck and re-positioned every single night. As you process that thought, consider that all of this was performed live and mixed on the fly through a complex Digital 9000 receiver that it took Sennheiser 10 years to develop.

Not enough plates spinning in the air for you yet? How about we add some dancers. Yes, not only were the characters of the opera singing live, often doing duets from separate rooms, but there were members of the Los Angeles Dance Project that performed in a beautiful modern style in the midst of people waiting for trains. To onlookers not wearing headphones, these people were dancing in silence, separating and merging, then walking away and disappearing into the night.

Sounds like chaos, right? Ah, but in the midst of all of the insanity is where art is often born, and *Invisible Cities* is no exception. Watching the performance became a participatory act. As an audience member, I chose which

room to walk into, or out of, and when. I searched for who was singing, and paused to watch the dancers. I lent my headphones to a few curious onlookers and savored their faces when they heard the music that was silently streaming around them. I sat in the garden and patiently waited for a new character to enter. Sometimes the characters were dressed in plain clothes, sometimes in costume, so often it was tough to know who was a part of the performance.

And that, I think, is the very point. Often technology alienates us. We stare at our phones as we stand in a crowd of people. Yuval, The Industry's artistic director, said the goal of using the technology as part of the opera was to "bring people together rather than to separate." With a performance that peeled away from everyday life, and unfolded among it, we all became a part of the piece. Ordinary became extraordinary when viewed in the light of the music.

At the end of the opera, Marco Polo describes to Kublai Khan what he believes it is like to die. Khan laments the futility of life if it is all to end in an infernal place. Polo corrects him and says that the inferno is already all around us. But we have a choice: become a part of the inferno or to "seek and find who and what, in the midst of the inferno are not the inferno. Make them endure. Give them space." As for me, in the midst of the inferno of excess that is Los Angeles, I found *Invisible Cities* just the sort of work that I hope will endure, and find more space.

*Invisible Cities* will be featured in a documentary on KCET on December 12th 2013 at 9:30 PM PT. The documentary will also stream live for viewers around the world.

Link: <http://www.soundandvision.com/content/invisible-cities-seamless-meeting-art-and-technology>

# VARIETY



## ***New tech helps L.A. performance troupes bring culture to the train station***

**By: [Maane Khatchatourian](#)**

NOVEMBER 16, 2013

It's billed as the future of opera, live performance, technology and art, at least according to German audio company [Sennheiser](#). But to judge from "[Invisible Cities](#)," the new opera for wireless headphones performed in L.A.'s Union Station, the future of immersive theater is already here.

The collaboration between [The Industry](#) and L.A. Dance Project operates 24 Sennheiser wireless microphones in its orchestra pit, 16 wireless mics strapped onto performers (with each of the eight performers double-mic'ed), 160 audience headphones and 15 in-ear monitors for the wireless feat. The tech allows "Invisible Cities" to break the boundaries between musicians, audience members and casual passersby, expanding the stage into the public space at Union Station.

"Technology, which we often think has a way of distancing us from everything around us and separating us from everybody else around us, can actually be a force that brings us together," director Yuval Sharon told press Nov. 15 before that night's performance. "And we can have experiences that allow us to be individuals and allow us to be in our own isolated world, but among a larger group, and allow us to also notice the world around us in an even more powerful way."

Here that's made possible by a fiber-optic digital modulation system (set up in the front of house, disguised as a bagel shop in the middle of the station) that took ten years to develop, as well as four antenna farms that had to

be built throughout the building. Because they couldn't have cable through in the building, the wires had to be run out from behind the control room, down the staircase, underneath the parking lot and up through the parking entrance.

"We have about 2,500 feet of wire to make something wireless," broadcast service provider Bexel's Rod Allen joked.

The show — written by Christopher Cerrone and based on Italo Calvino's 1972 novel — follows Marco Polo's descriptions of new cities, but has no set narrative. Because each person's experience differs as they roam the train station on a collision course with actors, terminal passengers and transients seeking shelter, each person's interpretation of the drama varies as well.

"The piece, which is so intimate and so warm and so fragile, would best be suited being heard as if it's being whispered in your ear," Sharon said. "It's a story that's really meant to take you to a very internal place. It's not about a traditional narrative and more about experience as narrative."

Although most passersby are bemused when they find themselves in the midst of a live show, they're not always so welcoming. "During the final dress run, one guy just started beating up another guy with one of the chairs and we had to stop the show," said lead sound designer Martin Gimenez.

After assurances that there's no right or wrong way to see the show, the 11-piece orchestra began playing in a detached event space outside the main station. Once the Harvey House doors opened, the audience was free to explore and observe the performance as they saw fit. Many people trailed the performers; others stationed themselves in a single spot during the entire show while some wandered aimlessly throughout the building, listening instead of watching.

"I've often thought that one of the joys of opera is that your ears get to watch and your eyes get to listen," Sharon explained. "The more you can create scenarios in which that confusion of the senses, that cognitive dissonance, becomes a part of your experience, that's a way which we can expand all of our senses."

Some people took off their headphones to be fully present in the moment. Others even shared the expensive technology with passersby who were unaware of what they had stumbled into. Some bystanders watched gleefully, but the majority went about their business, whether that was sleeping in an armchair or wheeling a bike through the crowd.

The most unanticipated audience response came from a patron who decided to join the performance. With headphones perched on his head and a coffee cup in hand, the theatergoer joined a group of dancers marching in the hall.

More irksome than that was the woman taking iPhone pictures inches away from dancers' faces to capture their beads of sweat. Maybe technology can be intrusive, after all.

Link: <http://variety.com/2013/legit/news/invisible-cities-immersive-opera-1200841486/>



## What's that whisper? Wireless headphone opera in busy train station



November 18, 2013

By [Mary Milliken](#)

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - It's Friday evening at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles, and, like always, commuters are catching trains to their bedroom communities and weekend travelers are jumping on the Pacific Surfliner.

And then there's a less harried crowd milling around the old wooden seats under the arches of the grand waiting room, headphones clamped down over their ears. They are told to respect those using the station, especially the homeless who take sanctuary there and the people running to trains.

A few hundred people are here to enjoy the opera "Invisible Cities" - through headphones - performed by 15 singers and dancers and an 11-piece orchestra throughout the station, even in the Mission-style courtyards.

It is billed as the first large-scale opera for wireless headphones and it may be coming to a train station near you. While the maiden run for "Invisible Cities" ended Sunday after 21 performances, the artists and technologists behind it say other cities like Bordeaux in France are keen to see wireless opera performed in their train stations.

"Invisible Cities" is based on the 1972 novel by Italian writer Italo Calvino, and its music and libretto is written by 29-year-old Christopher Cerrone of New York City. He and director Yuval Sharon, 34, began discussing it in 2008 and by 2012 had settled on an immersive, ambulatory and wireless format.

In "Invisible Cities" Venetian explorer Marco Polo soothes the troubled emperor Kublai Khan, who sees his empire as a "vast and formless ruin," with tales of travels to great cities.

"We decided that the piece, which is so intimate and so warm and so fragile, would best be suited being heard as if it is whispered in your ear," said Sharon, artistic director of the opera company The Industry.

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EXPLORING L.A. LIFE

Sharon moved to Los Angeles three years ago and was fascinated by Union Station, the last large-scale train station built in America and completed in 1939. He thought if they had the tools to let the audience wander freely, no other building would be better to explore the life of L.A., both its glories and its weaknesses.

"There is a beautiful line in the piece in which Marco Polo says, 'I will create a perfect city made of all the fragments of cities I have ever been to,'" Sharon said.

Martin Gimenez, lead sound designer, was inspired by the audio tours by docents in museums and the "silent discos" where people gather and listen to music by headphones. But scaling those ideas to a larger space with more people was a challenge.

Most of the technology was provided by audio manufacturer Sennheiser, maker not only of the headphones but also of the wireless system set up around the station so the audience experiences the music with clarity wherever it goes.

The wireless system works for the performers, too. The orchestra and conductor sit in a defunct restaurant while the company roams the station for the 70-minute performance, never getting a glimpse at the conductor. Los Angeles Times music critic Mark Swed called "Invisible Cities" a "startlingly ambitious project" - one that "could be, and should be, done anywhere."

As the opera unfolds, Marco Polo sits at a restaurant table singing while three businessmen at the next table carry on with a conversation, oblivious to the fact that they are in the midst of performance. The words are projected on to the station wall.

Dancers convulse and contort on the floor of the waiting room, as homeless men and women and passengers nap, bedding and belongings tucked under their feet. Some in the audience share their headphones with people who don't have tickets.

At the end, the audience is encouraged to linger, enjoy a drink at the station bar with friends and discuss the experience. They may be at the leading edge of opera-going.

"I believe that opera is always at the forefront of what we are doing as artists," Cerrone said. "It's always been this forward-thinking art form, embracing new technologies, at least in the 19th century. It just seemed natural to try new things."

(Editing by Bill Trott)

Link: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/18/entertainment-us-wirelessopera-idUSBRE9AH0RK20131118>



OMAN **Observer** OMAN **عُضَائِقُ** DAILY

Wireless headphone opera in busy train station

Saturday 30th, November 2013

Written by Oman Observer



By Mary Milliken — It's Friday evening at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles, and, like always, commuters are catching trains to their bedroom communities and weekend travellers are jumping on the Pacific Surfliner. And then there's a less harried crowd milling around the old wooden seats under the arches of the grand waiting room, headphones clamped down over their ears. They are told to respect those using the station, especially the homeless who take sanctuary there and the people running to trains. A few hundred people are here to enjoy the opera "Invisible Cities" — through headphones — performed by 15 singers and dancers and an 11-piece orchestra throughout the station, even in the Mission-style courtyards.

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"We decided that the piece, which is so intimate and so warm and so fragile, would best be suited being heard as if it is whispered in your ear," said Sharon, artistic director of the opera company The Industry. "It is a story that is really meant to take you to a very internal place."

Exploring LA life Sharon moved to Los Angeles three years ago and was fascinated by Union Station, the last large-scale train station built in America and completed in 1939. He thought if they had the tools to let the audience wander freely, no other building would be better to explore the life of LA, both its glories and its weaknesses. "There is a beautiful line in the piece in which Marco Polo says, 'I will create a perfect city made of all the fragments of cities I have ever been to,'" Sharon said.

Link: <http://main.omanobserver.om/?p=34873>

# Classicalite

## **L.A. Dance Project's 'Invisible Cities' at L.A. Amtrak's Union Station**

Nov 21, 2013



Members of the L.A. Dance Project perform the opera "Invisible Cities" at the Amtrak's Union Station in Los Angeles November 15, 2013 (Photo : REUTERS/FRED PROUSER)

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(Reporting by Mary Milliken, editing by Bill Trott)

Link: <http://www.classicalite.com/articles/3983/20131121/l-a-dance-project-invisible-cities-at-l-a-amtrak-union-station.htm>



### World's first live 'wireless opera' baffles commuters at L.A.'s Union Station

Evan Shamoon @giantmecha

Oct 18, 2013 12:37 PM

In an era of digitally projected IMAX 3D movies, on-demand television and hyper realistic, open world video games, the centuries-old art form of opera might appear to have become something of a technological relic. But in an effort to breathe new life into the medium, a trio of companies has come together to create something never before attempted: an opera whose soundscape exists entirely in the audience's headphones, and a performance that bleeds directly into the physical space of its surroundings.

Thursday night I attended the invitation-only private dress rehearsal for *Invisible Cities*, a collaboration between three complementary organizations: Los Angeles production company The Industry, the nonprofit L.A. Dance Project, and German audio company [Sennheiser](#).

Rather than sitting down and watching a performance, attendees were equipped with wireless headphones and wandered the enormous main station hall—as well an adjacent waiting area and outdoor courtyard—following the similarly untethered performers as they emerged from all directions. There was no stage, no music broadcast over speakers, and no clear separation between performer and audience. This was opera made interactive.



Dancers from the L.A. Dance Project perform an aspect of a many-faceted performance of the *Invisible Cities* opera. As in its source, the 1972 Italo Calvino novel, this reimagining of *Invisible Cities* still takes place in 13<sup>th</sup> century Mongolia, but is here transported into Los Angeles' majestic transit hub, Union Station—while the station is actually operating. (For those who might be unfamiliar with it, Union Station is L.A.'s equivalent of Grand Central Terminal. Built in 1939, it's an enormous, spectacular piece of Art Deco architecture that stands as the largest railroad passenger terminal in the Western United States.)

And indeed, the station was operating at normal capacity; passengers sat waiting for their train to arrive, while station restaurants and shops did business as usual. Some travelers slept, looking like they'd been here for days; others sat in business attire, paging through newspapers and Kindles, eagerly awaiting their trip home. All was normal, save for the fact that a live opera was about to take place about the terminal, close enough that commuters could literally reach out and touch the cast.

The performers brushed past us as they moved throughout the station, their vocals beamed back to the mother brain, where they were mixed with the orchestra and layers of sound design before being beamed right back into our headphones.

As the director Yuval Sharon assured us, there is no "right" way to experience *Invisible Cities*; the opera has no must-see set pieces, and he encouraged everyone to follow their instincts through the cavernous station. "Each of you," he said, "has the best seat in the house."



The "wired" orchestra could be heard in the headphones of the singers, dancers, and audience members as they roamed throughout Union Station.

Before the action started, however, each of the several hundred audience members was provided with his or her own set of [Sennheiser HDR120](#) wireless headphones. We were then ushered into one section of the sprawling station, where the orchestra awaited us.

This was where the prelude began; each of the instruments was outfitted with a microphone, the audio signals from which were run through the brains of the operation—a custom wireless audio rig built by Sennheiser, using state-of-the-art receivers and transmitters.

A feed of the audio mix (the orchestra, as well as the opera singers) was sent to our headphones over RF, while the performers received a separate mix (each of them was equipped with wireless microphones, as well as a wireless in-ear monitor). In fact, three custom antenna and mixing rigs were required to bring the production to life: one for the performers' wireless microphones, one for their in-ear monitors, and one for the audience's wireless headphones. It was a free-roaming audiovisual experience, enabled by some serious technical heavy lifting on the part of Sennheiser's back-end electronics.





Members of the opera cast were outfitted with small wireless microphones and in-ear headphones, courtesy of Sennheiser.

From there the opera spilled out into the main hall, with performers emerging seemingly everywhere at once. We audience members could clearly hear the orchestra through our headphones, carefully mixed with the voices of the opera singers and the backing tracks. And this mixing was done perfectly.

As for those innocent bystanders not wearing headphones, they could hear only the voices of the singers who happened to be near them, and perhaps the sound of the orchestra in a distant part of the station.

The line between performer, audience member, and onlooker blurred; the experience was somewhere between a traditional opera, an alternate reality game (ARG), and a piece of high-tech performance art. Audience members wandered around and amidst the action, temporarily perching against a tiled wall, or taking a seat next to a bewildered traveler.



Audio technicians spent months setting up an elaborate network of antenna farms to enable the two-way audio of the Invisible Cities production.

Regular eye contact was made between audience members as they felt their way around the new format, but never with performers. Despite the close quarters, the fourth wall was never broken.

And the headphone factor should not be undersold; the result of hearing the performers in such an intimate way was beguilingly unfamiliar. Set inside the vast, historic space with hundreds of other people, we heard the live audio in a way that felt at once personal and communal, passive and active, immediate and displaced. The performers brushed past us as they moved throughout the station, their vocals beamed back to the mother brain, where they were mixed with the orchestra and layers of sound design before being beamed right back into our headphones.



Bystanders look on with a mix of amusement, fascination, and confusion.

The opera was written by [Christopher Cerrone](#). Its narrative centers on explorer Marco Polo, who must report to an elderly Emperor Kublai Khan about his travels to cities far and wide. Polo's fanciful descriptions are imagined and fantastical, appropriately expressed through dance in a way that feels modern and relevant. The themes converge in a satisfying way, offering the audience a chance to contemplate the essence of travel as they wander through Union Station, playing with our subjective experience of environment and time as we move through public space in a uniquely private way.

*Invisible Cities* makes its public premiere at Union Station on Saturday, Oct. 19 for a limited run through Nov. 8. For more information, visit [www.InvisibleCitiesOpera.com/tickets](http://www.InvisibleCitiesOpera.com/tickets).

Link: <http://www.techhive.com/article/2056180/worlds-first-live-wireless-opera-baffles-commuters-at-l-a-s-union-station.html>

# Forbes

Why Curated Experiences Are The New Future Of Marketing

By: Krisztina "Z" Holly

November 5, 2013



Audience members for the Invisible Cities opera can choose their own adventure throughout LA's Union Station (photo by @krisztinaholly)

It is 10pm on a Thursday night, and fifty or sixty homeless people are scattered about the vaulted space of Downtown LA's Union Station, settling in for the night.

Imagine their surprise when a random traveler suddenly breaks out into dance, and a rotund man with a backpack starts belting out opera from a nearby dinner table. Meanwhile, 200 young people in Sennheiser headphones intently move about the space, watching.

No, this isn't an invasion of a new band of tourist. This is The Industry LA's "Invisible Cities" opera, a live production immersed in the busiest public transit hub West of the Mississippi. It is heard entirely by wireless headsets, and beckons the audience to make their own adventure based on where they wander.

The runaway success of this new, limited-run opera isn't just a window into a new trend in art. It is a peek into a new future of entertainment, branding, and marketing that companies can't ignore: live and immersive experiences. And companies are now starting to explore the power of experience marketing to reach into the hearts and minds of their customers.

Give 'em something to tweet about Bonnie Raitt once sang, "Let's give 'em something to talk about." But in the clutter of social media, companies are struggling to create reasons for their customers to share.

"The easiest way to create sharability is to give people an experience," offers Franz Aliquo, Creative Director at ad agency RPM. "Something that turns their mundane day-to-day into something magical."

Aliquo should know; not only does he worry about corporate brands in his day job, he's the creative force behind numerous immersive experiences that have gone viral in recent years. His creations include a pervasive 30 day, 24/7 water gun assassination tournament called Street Wars; Rental Car Rally, a competition that's part food-fight, part-

Burning Man, part Cannonball Run; and Flavor Tripping Parties. (Full disclosure: I'm working with Aliquo on a new experimental project.)

"Look at how people use Facebook," continues Aliquo. "We all want to share the amazing things that happen in our lives – the things that make our lives seem less mundane. People post about what they do, that's what's really sharable."

Last weekend, were you inundated by friends who tweeted and posted about running the NYC marathon? Whether it's new races like The Color Run and Tough Mudder, or underground dining parties, organizations are dreaming up new ways to tap into people's desire for unique experiences and camaraderie that makes them want to share.

### **A sense of adventure**

Traditional media doesn't break the "fourth wall" that separates the audience from the performers, but media companies have been experimenting with transmedia and second screen approaches – with mixed results.

Participatory art and immersive theater take things a step further; although they have a long history, they've really been taking off in the past few years. Most notably, the theater experience "Sleep No More" is set in an abandoned building in Manhattan. Participants follow characters and explore five stories of an elaborately designed "hotel," as numerous threads of a performance inspired by Macbeth unfold in parallel throughout the building. From the buzz in the bar afterwards, you know the audiences will be sharing stories for a long time.

With passive entertainment lulling us into a sense of complacency, this kind of interactive experience satisfies our craving for something more. "And once people feel that experience, they become addicted," concludes Aliquo. "It triggers that piece of their brain that was active as hell when they were kids."

Triggering that same spot in the brain, the Invisible Cities opera has seen phenomenal success. They added 5 shows to the original 13 performances, and sold out in 48 hours. They added two final performances last weekend and sold out in 10 minutes.

Christopher Cerrone, composer of Invisible Cities, puts that in context: "I have never heard of a new opera—especially one written and produced by a young band of performers—sell out 20 consecutive performances before. This really is unprecedented."

Yuval Sharon, Creative Director of the opera company, is thrilled and thinks he understands the appeal: "It engages with the audience's desire to take ownership, rather than being subjected to the artwork." Each person's experience is a different adventure, and in some ways very personal.

The resulting sense of adventure can take many forms, like the new "Room Escape" trend sweeping China and 66 Minutes in Damascus, a theater production where you, as an audience member, are kidnapped and harassed as part of the performance.

If that isn't edgy enough for you, for thousands of dollars you can hire Extreme Kidnapping ("the #1 kidnapping adventure service provider in the country") to kidnap and torture you for four hours.

### **Learning by doing**

If marketing is a way to get someone to learn about your product or service, companies would benefit from looking at how learning happens. In 1983, Howard Gardner published his seminal book, "Frames of Mind: The Theory of

Multiple Intelligences.” Through this lens, we now know that some people have high kinesthetic intelligence, and learn much better by touching and doing.

That same year, David Kolb published “Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development” It outlined the Experiential Learning Theory model still embraced by educators today, with four cycles important in the learning process: reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, concrete experimentation, and active experimentation.

Different people respond to different learning approaches. But why is it that most marketing focuses only on the first two passive modes? Companies have an untapped opportunity to engage a whole new form of learning through hands-on and immersive experiences.

### **Personal – at scale**

The biggest appeal of mass marketing is its instant broad reach. But this is a challenge of immersive experiences – how does one scale them?

Companies are starting to experiment with hybrid approaches. Last fall, Coca-Cola turned train commuters in London into secret agents for 70 seconds to promote Coke Zero and the movie Skyfall. The experiences of a small number of people was the basis of content that could then be shared in mass media and enjoyed vicariously. (The resulting video got more than 10 million hits.)

Two years ago, General Motors hired creative firm Syyn Labs to design and build an online interactive experience for the launch of their Chevy Sonic. They set up a Sonic to bungee jump off a stack of shipping containers. The experience could be accessed via browser from anywhere around the world. and with the click of a mouse, viewers could help push the car closer and closer to the edge, until it literally “launched” over the edge into a kiddie pool. Not only did they garner 2.4 million clicks that day, they further leveraged the event for a Superbowl ad that created buzz and nearly doubled interest in the vehicle.

But the most powerful models create a framework for people to participate and empower the community to take ownership of scaling the experiences. TED conferences have developed a global network of evangelists with their TEDx movement, leading to 6,500 events around the world. Similarly, Burning Man empowers the 60,000 “residents” of Black Rock City to create a giant arts festival in the desert, and the third largest city in Nevada, for a week.

### **“You just had to be there.”**

There is something about a moment in time that can’t be replicated, an experience that is your very own, an adventure with others that is deeply personal and memorable. It is something that can’t be achieved by a high-budget celebrity endorsement or a large ad buy.

“We’re entering a shift from mass marketing to experience marketing,” says Aliquo.

The medium is still evolving and the future is in the early stages of being written. But these days, if you’re not thinking about getting your customers to run through a train station or assassinate a stranger with a water gun, you’re probably getting lost in the crowd.

Link: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/krisztinaholly/2013/11/05/why-experience-marketing-is-the-new-future-of-engagement/>

# THE VERGE

The mysterious, invisible opera in LA's Union Station Calvino's 'Invisible Cities' unfolds as a wireless dream

By Trent Wolbe

November 7, 2013



Except for all the antenna farms, it looked like a normal night at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles: skater kids ran to the Gold Line, shoeless transients read yesterday's *Times*, businessmen yakked into phones. But in the opulent dining hall off the main concourse an orchestra tuned up for the opening strains of *Invisible Cities*, the operatic adaptation of Italo Calvino's 1972 novel. As the music began with a flurry of timpani and discordant woodwinds, guests in the room heard a perfectly balanced stereo mix on Sennheiser HDR 120 wireless headphones.

It didn't feel that strange until the lyrics began — because the singers were nowhere in sight. The opera would play out simultaneously in different parts of the terminal and spectators would “only be limited by the range of the wireless signal,” director Yuval Sharon prefaced. “Everyone will miss something beautiful.”



Sharon designed his production to induce a sense of cognitive dissonance, and guests spent the next 70 minutes trying to resolve it through unguided exploration. After exchanging confused glances with one another, we streamed out into the courtyard to seek the source of the voices that were being fed invisibly into our ears. Upon closer inspection I noticed that some of the weary travelers lounging in the concourse wore wireless headsets that looked suspiciously more complex than a simple Bluetooth unit. Taking off the headphones, you could hear voices echoing through the halls from far away, but the acoustics in the opulent hall made it difficult to trace their source. Eventually I stumbled on a scene that looked like something out of *Eyes Wide Shut* — a young woman in a toga and sandals walked slowly down the center of the terminal with a huge tray of fruit in her hands. Those headset-wearing travelers stood up one by one and began to dance in time with the music, and all around the terminal voices began to sound both in the hall and in the headphone mix.



The actors in Yuval Sharon's performance collective [The Industry](#) weren't the only ones who needed to worry about choreography. In another hall, a team of engineers from [Bexel](#) was busy creating four separate headphone mixes of the live audio: one for the orchestra, one for guests, one for singers, and another for the production team. Circular-polarized antennas hovered above the ground at strategic locations inside and out of the Union Station — they had been precisely calibrated by Sennheiser engineers to overcome the huge amount of RF interference endemic to public transit gateways.





Before I saw this production I was only vaguely aware of Calvino's plot: Kublai Khan and Marco Polo engage in a wide-ranging discussion on the concepts of home and travel, with tangents into metaphysical aspects such as memory, language, happiness, and death. And there is a final point. "In living day to day," Marco Polo sums up, "we have two options: to become part of the inferno, or to diligently seek and find who and what not part of the inferno is, and then make them endure, give them space."



Witnessing an opera is rarely about understanding every nuance of the libretto — this was especially the case as I wandered between disjointed scenes and characters in Union Station amongst passersby who had no idea what was going on around them. It was only during the opulent finale, as dancers leaped across ancient ticket booths, that I began to feel a cohesive emotion about *Invisible Cities*: technology and choreography had transformed a normally benign space into something incomprehensibly amazing. Every attendee became Marco Polo as they donned wireless headphones, forced to explore a pedestrian landscape and find pieces of moving art that were definitively not part of the inferno. Yuval Sharon had molded Calvino's message into a production that explored the outer limits of what art and technology can do as humans thrive in the spaces handed to them by history.



*Invisible Cities* runs through Friday at Union Station in Los Angeles. Tickets and more information [here](#).

Link: <http://www.theverge.com/2013/11/7/5076486/the-mysterious-invisible-opera-in-las-union-station>



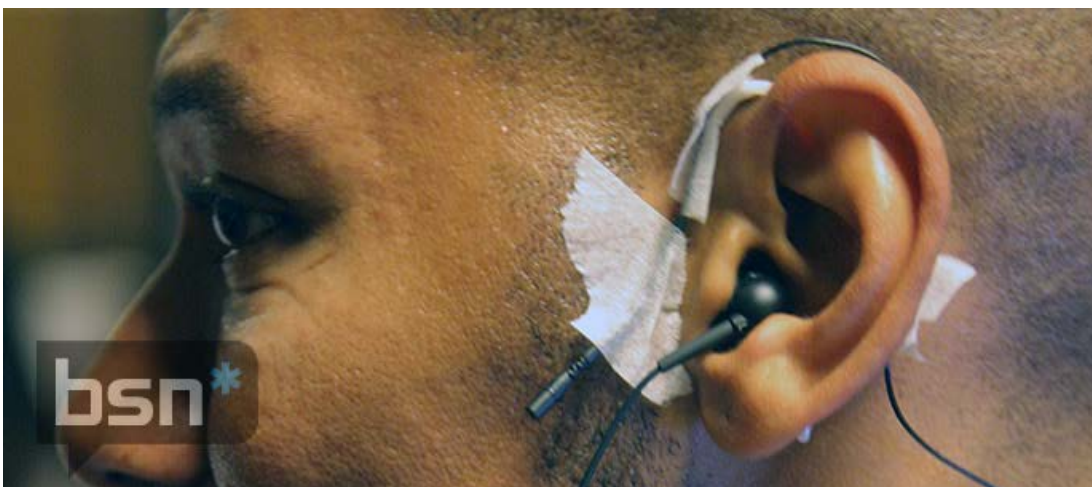
## Sennheiser Powers First “Wireless” Opera in LA

10/21/2013 by: Matt Brodnick

The iconic Union Station in Los Angeles, California is not only the largest rail station in the western United States, but also the bustling hub of many historical and pop culture events since its opening in 1939. With its beautiful architecture inside and out, this landmark has also brought inspiration to the fine arts. Its large, ominous walls were showcased in classic noir flicks like *In the Mood*, and its cavernous, former ticketing hall was used several times for *The Dark Knight* trilogy.



This week - *Invisible Cities*, an opera about Marco Polo’s descriptions of his journeys to Emperor Kublai Khan, was the first of its kind to be performed, processed, and delivered live wirelessly to a “roaming audience”, who were experiencing it all in an active public space. But because every cast member, singer, and dancer is integrated into the environment (think “flash mob”), each audience member experiences different elements of the unfolding events depending on his or her location, giving it a more personal feel.



Senneheiser, a leader in wireless equipment for live events, provided key components to ensure that this 70-minute production, from capture to delivery, was as clean and uninterrupted as possible in a large, RF-heavy environment. The vocal performances were captured with Sennheiser's Digital 9000 Wireless Systems, transceiving uncompressed signals with great dynamic range. Each performer also received customized audio feeds of vocal and orchestral buses, powered by Sennheiser's 2000-series IEM (in-ear monitor) systems, to make sure everybody was on the same page.

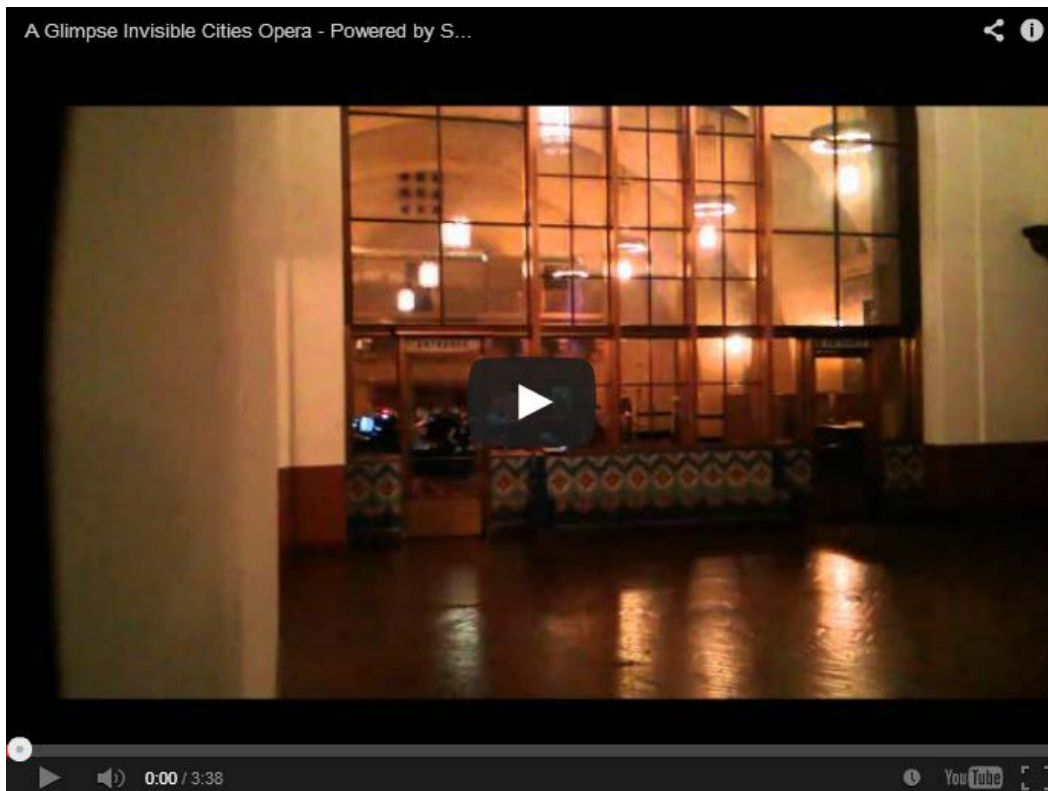


The humble orchestra, outfitted with an array of Sennheiser and Neumann condenser microphones, performed the opera inside Union Station's Harvey House restaurant, which was mixed and connected by a fiber optic line to the control room, 1000 feet away in the main hall. Inside there, the vocals, music, and effects were processed, compressed, panned, and prepared for delivery to each audience member's RS-120 headphones via FM stereo broadcast, managed by Bexel antenna systems.



So what was it like? Well, we could post up a video, however with such an event where the audience is individually and personally experiencing it on headphones, the result would be frustratingly out of context. In fact, if you took off your headphones during the show, you're instantly thrown out of the experience, and all you see is a lone man

appearing to sing to himself amongst waiting passengers and the homeless, inside a crowded, noisy train station. Basically, you just “had to be there”. I can offer this quick glimpse though, with my cans pressed up against my smartphone (sorry about the shakiness):



From the video, you can probably hear that the delivery isn't as remarkable as the attention to detail given to all the steps beforehand. Granted, this was a makeshift recording on a mobile device, and should be taken with a grain of salt. The overall mix was broadcast over FM radio for the best coverage to more than 50 listeners roaming around a wide area, and so it needed to be compressed to fit the bandwidth. Ironically, this limits the resulting quality, and introduces noise and RF interference issues to what these engineers painstakingly prepared for in the capture and processing stages. But this preparation ensured the best accompaniment possible for a mesmerizing evening.

If you're interested in experiencing the next show (I highly recommend it!) limited tickets are available at the Invisible Cities site until mid-November 2013, with some special discount pricing available. For more information, visit: [www.invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://www.invisiblecitiesopera.com)

<http://www.brightsideofnews.com/news/2013/10/21/sennheiser-powers-first-e2809cwirelesse2809d-opera-in-la.aspx>

# Sound & PICTURE

The Wireless Sounds of an Invisible City

BY DARON OCTOBER 23, 2013



When Jeff Touzeau of Hummingbird Media emailed me late August with a subject that read “Wireless opera at L.A.’s iconic Union Station,” I didn’t think much of it. When he circled back a few days later wondering what my thoughts were... I began to take notice. I mean, most operas use wireless nowadays so what was this “huge deal” he was mentioning? I reversed, read it and realized what this stoic moment was about: Audio specialist Sennheiser was helping to create LA’s first opera where the audience would be able to wander around freely listening on wireless headphones. Experimental? Yes. But so was Ben Franklin and look where that got him? History books. Meh. Who wants that?

Coined as a “headphone opera,” artistic director Yuval Sharon took on Invisible Cities to pave this historic moment for his company, The Industry. Just their sophomore production, Yuval mentions the real credit for the idea belongs to sound designer Martin Giminez. “Martin came to me and said ‘what if we did an opera with headphones’... I liked it, but I wanted something bigger. More grandiose,” says Sharon. It wasn’t until Invisible Cities came along and grounded it to the architecture inside Union Station that it made sense. When Sennheiser stepped in to assist from a technical standpoint, they knew they had something.



Yuval Sharon & Christopher Cerrone

Invisible Cities is adapted from the novel by Italo Calvino of the same name and its music and libretto are by Christopher Cerrone. The story illustrates a young Marco Polo entertaining Kublai Khan with descriptions from cities the Italian visited on his journeys through Khan's empire. Both fictitious and imagined from the mind of Polo, the two did not share the same language making the depiction of Polo's city imagery open to the individual.

Now open until November 8th, the 75 minute production provides entertainment in any direction you want it to come. Invited to an early dress rehearsal, I was given a pair of Sennheiser RS 120 wireless headphones and shuffled into a room with another 100 or so on-lookers, where conductor Mark Lowenstein and his eleven piece orchestra sat waiting. I could see the excited tension etched on their faces as they warmed their strings.

A few moments later, Yuval stepped in, grabbed a microphone, and spoke. His animated tones filled my headphones with crystal clear audio and told us there was no wrong way to experience this opera. To enjoy it as you saw fit. After ten minutes of orchestra, the doors opened behind us and we were free to roam. Free to sit and watch the musicians turn their pages of music. Free to sit at the bar and buy drinks. Free to take off the headphones just to enjoy the dancers' performances. Free to walk among everyone else. Endless possibilities. Endless experiences.



Conductor Marc Lowenstein leading his orchestra

I decided to park at a bench just outside the orchestra and marveled at the technology behind this moment as it whispered into my ears. I could see the flute was mic'd with a Neumann KM 184. So was the harp, the clarinet and the violin. The piano was tuned to a Neumann U 87. A Sennheiser e 914s for the horn and 908s on some of the percussion and harmonics. Down near the main hall of Union Station, I could see a massive antenna system. Passive A2003-UHF directional antennas were paired with A5000-CP UHF antennas – four to the group.

I sat and watched. Watched as the mass of people turned their heads to follow the performance. Watched as they shuffled their feet through the long corridor around the corner. Coming towards me was a girl flying a plane in hand, holding a briefcase. She stopped beside me and shared my bench. It was Maria Elena Altany – the opera's soprano. She sang. Right there. Right next to me as if I wasn't there at all. As if I was part of her show at that moment. She looked at me, turned and walked away. I thought, what else was I missing? I stood and followed.

I later learned all the singers feathered their voices through Sennheiser MKE 1 lavaliers with SK 9000 bodypack transmitters and EM 9046 multi-channel receivers. The backbone of the entire production was on Sennheiser's Digital 9000 series – 8 channels were used in parallel.

David Missall from Sennheiser along with Andrew McHaddad and Rod Allen at Bexel played an intricate role in the design and support to help map the frequency enigma. "For Invisible Cities, Bexel implemented a system using a variety of components based on our MAS-500 series of modular RF terminal products which allowed the Sennheiser-provided transmitters and receivers to work seamlessly throughout the performance space," says McHaddad.



The antenna system atop convenience store

In all, four antenna systems were placed inside Union Station, utilizing seventeen A2003-UHF and A5000-CP antennas – one on top of the convenience store in the Main Hall, another outside the South Garden, one near the main entrance across Traxx Bar and another in the North Courtyard.

Since the performance was in a public place, safety was always a concern, so cables were run underneath Union Station and back to the Bagel Shop that acted as the control room during production. "The use of ultra low-loss cables was impractical due to the public space issues. We had to get creative with amplification and signal routing to

deliver the maximum allowable energy to each transmitting antenna and provide the cleanest signal for the wireless microphone receivers,” adds McHaddad.



Directly behind the cloaked man is Macro Polo played by Ashley Faatoalia

After an initial RF scan with the 9000 series, they learned they could turn down the RF to negate any unusual interference, but in doing so, they needed to add a few more antennas to make up for the loss. What may be even more surprising is after each night’s show, the crew will tear down and set everything back up again for the following show.

When I reached the Main Hall of Union Station, I shadowed a man in a green cloak walking towards the South Courtyard. Outside, water nymphs inhabited the garden, contorting, dancing and singing the city imagery of Polo’s Armilla. I turned off my headphones and watched their rhythmic nature as the unbeknownst walked by with opened, wondering eyes.

Both the singers and dancers were equipped with a Sennheiser 2000 series in-ear-monitoring system. EK 2000 IEMs and SR 2050 twin transmitters were matched with IE 4 earphones. 18 different receivers were put into play during each performance.





Kublai Khan (Cedric Barry) looks on to the dead faces of Adelma

As the story came to a close and the city of Adelma spawned the undead, we were transfixed, watching Kublai Khan and Marco Polo take leave of one another in the large lobby of Union Station. I stood next to Ashley Faatoalia, who played Marco Polo, no more than an arm's reach away. I watched as he softly bellowed his lines into my headphones. I took them off to hear the raw talent of his voice. I turned to watch the choreography Danielle Agami created for the undead dancers in front of us. There were no rules. No wrong way. Just an experience that I undoubtedly won't forget.

You can find out more information about Invisible Cities by visiting: [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com)



Link: <http://soundandpicture.com/2013/10/the-wireless-sounds-of-an-invisible-city/>



[Invisible Cities Opens to Sell-Out Performances at Los Angeles' Union Station as Sennheiser Technology Enables 'Artistic Creation Without Borders'](#)

By Wire

October 25, 2013



**Los Angeles – October 25, 2013** – *Invisible Cities*, the world's first large scale opera for wireless headphones, opened to critical acclaim on October 19th at the iconic Union Station, where it was issued a Proclamation by the City of Los Angeles. The visionary production, which was written by Christopher Cerrone and produced by The Industry and L.A. Dance project, is made possible through the professional and consumer technology of leading audio manufacturer [Sennheiser](#).

*Invisible Cities*, which is based on the 1972 novel by Italo Calvino that explores Marco Polo's descriptions of fantastical cities as described to Emperor Kublai Khan, turns the classic operatic archetype on its head, transforming Los Angeles' iconic Union Station into a constantly moving and artistically unique experience for each participant. *Invisible Cities* pushes the limits of artistic production and is made possible through Sennheiser's wireless headphone and microphone technology. This enables patrons to experience a vastly repurposed art form both as independent participants and as a connected, communal audience.

"Over the last decade, we have seen technology increasingly become a primary driver in the creation of art," commented Stefanie Reichert, director of strategic marketing, Sennheiser. "*Invisible Cities* relies on a very

creative application of Sennheiser's leading edge wireless microphone and headphone technology to deliver an ingenious, pioneering artistic experience to its audiences. As *Invisible Cities* illustrates, Sennheiser's wireless microphone and headphone technology enables the consumer to be more of a *participant* in the artistic performance itself."

Sennheiser's wireless headphones enable participants to have a unique perceptual experience based on an almost infinite number of vantage points from which they can view the performance. At the same time, participants are gathered together in the highly 'communal' environment of a train station and all wearing headphones. Union Station, with its illustrious history and exquisite architecture, serves as the perfect backdrop to this tale of people in imaginary cities as cast members intermingle with both active audience members and ordinary passers by.

"Being in your own space, yet still being part of a community is a very common style of today's generation," Reichert said. "As social media and personalized listening experiences permeate the lives of modern consumers, *Invisible Cities* illustrates that people can share a communal experience with others while still enjoying art independently. This production actually leverages this phenomenon into its dramatic presentation, creating a deeper and more meaningful experience for participants."

With its unorthodox approach and creative use of Sennheiser wireless technology, *Invisible Cities* successfully reinvents the traditional opera in many ways. For example, with no opera house or assigned seats, audience members are free to move about the entire performance space — a public train terminal — as the opera progresses. This often puts them directly 'onstage' aside actors and performers. Regular terminal passengers and bystanders — perhaps initially unaware that a dramatic event is unfolding before their eyes — become an impromptu element in the performance as someone standing directly beside them dressed in 14th century attire, suddenly breaks out into beautiful song.

In addition to Sennheiser's RS 120 consumer headphones worn by participants, *Invisible Cities*' technical production also relies on Sennheiser's state of the art Digital 9000 professional wireless system, which transmits pristine audio for the duration of the performances. This system, which was launched last year after having been under development for over a decade, is the most advanced wireless system in the world and used in top level theatre, music and broadcasting events.

For more information on *Invisible Cities*, including performance dates and ticket information, please visit <http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/>.

### **About The Industry**

The Industry is a new home for new and experimental opera in Los Angeles. Founded and led by director Yuval Sharon, The Industry creates ambitious productions that expand the traditional definition of opera and explore new paradigms for interdisciplinary collaboration. Mark Swed of the *Los Angeles Times* writes "The Industry is quickly and dramatically becoming an essential component in American opera. It's now indispensable to the LA scene." The Industry's inaugural production, Anne LeBaron and Douglas Kearney's *Crescent City*, was instantly hailed as "reshaping LA opera" (*Los Angeles Times*) and "changing the face of music-theater in this city overnight" (*Out West Arts*). The large-scale multimedia production, featuring the work of six visual artists in a 25,000 sq. ft. warehouse in Atwater Village, performed over three weeks in May 2012 to capacity audiences. The Industry recently presented *First Take*, a west coast opera workshop showcasing excerpts from six new operatic works-in-progress by the legendary Pauline Oliveros, and rising star composer Mohammed Fairouz at the Hammer Museum's Billy Wilder Theater. For more information visit: [www.TheIndustryLA.org](http://www.TheIndustryLA.org)

### **About L.A. Dance Project**

L.A. Dance Project is an artist collective founded in 2012 by renowned choreographer and dancer Benjamin Millepied, along with composer Nico Muhly, art consultant Matthieu Humery, producer Charles Fabius, and film producer Dimitri Chamblas. L.A. Dance Project's mission is to create new work and to revive seminal collaborations from influential dance makers. Programs include full-length evenings in traditional theater venues as well as various modular performances in non-traditional environments. New works by the company endeavor to be multidisciplinary collaborations with various artists: visual artists, musicians, designers, directors and composers. L.A. Dance Project promotes the work of emerging and established creators, contributing to new platforms for contemporary dance. For more information visit: [www.ladanceproject.com](http://www.ladanceproject.com)

### **About Sennheiser**

Sennheiser is a world-leading manufacturer of microphones, headphones and wireless transmission systems. Established in 1945 in Wedemark, Germany, Sennheiser is now a global brand represented in 60 countries around the world with U.S. headquarters in Old Lyme, Conn. Sennheiser's pioneering excellence in technology has rewarded the company with numerous awards and accolades including an Emmy, a Grammy, and the Scientific and Engineering Award of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. You can find all the latest information on Sennheiser by visiting our website at [www.sennheiserusa.com](http://www.sennheiserusa.com) or by contacting:



Wireless headphones turn LA's Union Station into an opera stage

by Liz Shannon Miller

October 28, 2013

**SUMMARY:** *How can technology transform a train station into an opera theater? The answer is more than just headphones, and the experience created is more than unique.*



An opera performance typically only requires three things: A virtuoso cast, an orchestra and an attentive audience. However, the needs of *Invisible Cities*, a high-tech experimental opera from The Industry and LA Dance Project include multiple antennas, an elaborate control room wired with fiber optic cable, and dozens of wireless headphones.

That's because the original production is performed in a public space — specifically, Los Angeles' historic Union Station.

As an audience member participating in *Invisible Cities*, here's what you get: A pair of Sennheiser headphones, tuned to a frequency broadcasting a sharp yet fragile symphony, while all around you, performers (wearing microphones and wireless headsets) mingle and wander the Union Station terminal and outdoor patios. To follow the story of Marco Polo describing his explorations to Kublai Khan, you follow actors who intrigue you, letting the audio guide you to various unexpected tableaus, all of them eventually cumulating for an epic finale at the ticket counter.

As a person who happens to be catching a train or bus from Union Station, here's what you get: The opportunity to watch a bunch of people wearing headphones as they follow around opera singers, who are inexplicably singing into the vast space of the terminal.

While *Invisible Cities* is quite different from any opera production you might have seen before, the event is as much a technological feat as it is an artistic feat. During a press event held during dress rehearsals for the production, director Yuval Sharon said that while he'd had the idea for a mobile opera for a while, it wasn't until Sennheiser came on board as a "creative partner" that the project became feasible.

For *Invisible Cities*, on a technological level, is more than just headphones for audience members. The "engine room," located inside an out-of-business bagel shop in the terminal, monitors the singers' sound levels and is connected by a thousand feet of fiber optic cable to a separate room, where the 11-piece orchestra performs the music. A custom-built managed antenna system connects the dozens of microphones, in-ear monitors and headsets, which are receiving two transmissions in and two transmissions out, in case of any issues.



*The afore-mentioned bagel shop/control room.*

Because the location provides no shortage of challenges. Any time a film or television production is shooting nearby, there's a danger that its walkie-talkies will jam the broadcast signal. Due to lead in the building walls, antennas are needed both inside and outside the terminal. Plus, after every performance, the antennas and cabling need to be broken down until the next show, so that Union Station can serve its usual duties unhindered.

However, the effort may just be worth it. What makes *Invisible Cities* such an interesting experience is the use of technology to enable performance in a public space. Theater productions such as Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* have experimented with the idea of an ambulatory audience, but the combination of headphones and live performance means that any public space, given the right implementation, can become a theater.

And there's something profound about that element — it's one thing to be moved to tears by an aria while sitting in a dark theater, quite another to experience the same emotions in a brightly lit hall, surrounded by people. Oddly, though, what makes it work are the headphones — somehow, having your own individual listening experience creates a sense of intimacy, even amongst the crowds.

All evening, tourists and travelers were watching the clumps of people following around performers in costume, and for a brief time I was one of them; I happened to show up a little early for the press event, which meant I got to observe the first of the evening's dress rehearsals from the point of view of pure spectator.

It was an odd experience — incongruous opera, essentially performed a capella. But with or without headphones, Union Station is still a beautiful place, with beautiful acoustics. And their voices carried.

*Invisible Cities* runs until November 8th; all shows are currently sold out, but according to the official site, there is a "possibility" of extended performances.

# AVNetwork

## Sennheiser Powers Opera for Wireless Headphones

By AV Network Staff

October 09, 2013

Sennheiser's technology will play an integral part of *Invisible Cities*: the world's first large scale opera for wireless headphones. The production, a collaboration among The Industry, L.A. Dance Project and Sennheiser, will stage its world premiere on Saturday, October 19th at Los Angeles' Union Station — the largest railway terminal in the western United States.



*Invisible Cities*, a collaboration among The Industry, L.A. Dance Project and Sennheiser, will stage its world premiere on Saturday, October 19, at Los Angeles' iconic Union Station — the largest railway terminal in the western United States. (Photo Credit: Dana Ross).

The *Invisible Cities* opera, written by Christopher Cerrone and based on the 1972 novel by Italo Calvino, combines historical fiction with surrealist elements to create an 'invisible opera for wireless headphones'. The opera's narrative, which centers on explorer Marco Polo's descriptions of fantastical cities to Emperor Kublai Khan, transforms Calvino's novel into a unique experience for each participant — combining a classic art form with modern technology. By using wireless headphones from Sennheiser, audience members will be connected to the storyline, while having the ability to roam freely as the opera moves throughout the terminal.

"Art-making is not just about great ideas but about ingenious execution — making a vision something real," said Yuval Sharon, artistic director, The Industry. This production would not exist without Sennheiser's commitment to make this a magical experience for audiences."

"Our world is characterized by fast-paced, interactive communication and consumers seek experiences that touch them on a much deeper and more meaningful level. *Invisible Cities* caters to this desire and delivers an innovative performance to its audience," said Stefanie Reichert, director strategic marketing, Sennheiser. "We have worked in close cooperation with Sennheiser global relations, including project manager Kristy Jo Winkler, to make this a seamless experience for the entire audience. *Invisible Cities* showcases how technology and artistic vision drive innovation in the arts."



While Invisible Cities is an opera at its essence, it is unconventional in many ways. For example, there is no opera house and no assigned seats — audience members are not restricted in their movement and encouraged to roam freely. Also, whereas audience members at a conventional opera typically rely solely on natural building acoustics to hear an operatic production, Invisible Cities will utilize Sennheiser's wireless technology to convey both dialogue and music to listeners. Performers will be outfitted with Sennheiser wireless microphones and attendees will use Sennheiser's RS 120 wireless consumer headphones for a complete audio experience.

At the heart of Invisible Cities' technical production will be Sennheiser's Digital 9000 wireless system. An 11-piece orchestra consisting of strings, brass and percussion will perform an original score and will be miked using a selection of Sennheiser and Neumann microphones. Singers, dancers and performers in the production will also be outfitted with Sennheiser wireless microphones, and will be able to listen to their performances and director cues using Sennheiser's in-ear monitoring system (IEMs). The performance audio will be sent to a multi-channel digital console, where it will be mixed and broadcast via wireless RF technology to attending patrons, each of whom will be donning Sennheiser wireless headphones.

Bexel, based in Burbank, Calif., custom-built a Managed Antenna System (MAS) that allows for extended coverage of Sennheiser's wireless microphones, in-ear monitors and headsets.

On the audio side, Bexel also supported Sennheiser's microphones with a DiGiCo SD11 paired with a DiGiCo D-Rack. The orchestra, located approximately 1,000 feet from the main hall, is connected via fiber. The DiGiCo system allows the audio mixer to control the mic preamp from that distance.

We are delighted to partner with Sennheiser and the The Industry's audio professionals on Invisible Cities," said Rod Allen, Bexel business segment manager, Audio West. "Sennheiser, who is providing the RF integrity, along with Bexel engineering and the rest of the audio team, has a big task to make that mix relevant no matter where the main focus happens to be in the venue, because the listener has only one stereo mix to reference. It was an intriguing assignment to help launch this event in a working public train station with the talent roaming throughout the venue."

Link: <http://www.avnetwork.com/latest/0013/sennheiser-powers-opera-for-wireless-headphones/91938>



## EXPERIMENTAL OPERA UNFOLDS LIVE IN DOWNTOWN TRAIN STATION [PICS]

By: Ross Brooks  
October 23, 2013

*Invisible Cities* is a fully immersive opera by Christopher Cerrone that takes place in Los Angeles' Union Station and uses wireless sound equipment to make you feel like the performers are inside your head. The public display is based on the novel by Italo Calvino and produced by [The Industry](#) and [LA Dance Project](#).

The public opera is a choose-your-own-adventure experience that unfolds as you stroll around the station at night, although some listeners chose to stay put in one place and focus on the music. Even though silent discos are nothing new, this appears to be the first time wireless headphones have been used in conjunction with a live orchestra and performers.



German audio company Sennheiser took care of the technical side, setting up their command center in a former bagel shop at the center of the station. Engineers were responsible for gathering sounds from wireless microphones taped to the cheeks of the performers, which were then translated into six different mixes and simultaneously fed back to the headphones of the performers, musicians and audience members.

Despite the challenges of maintaining a strong frequency throughout the performance, everything seems to run smoothly, with the station's architecture and ambience providing a unique operatic experience. You can see some pictures from the event, which runs until November 8th, below.





Link: <http://www.psfk.com/2013/10/experimental-opera-train-station.html>



## Invisible Cities: A Wireless Opera Comes To Union Station

November 6, 2013 by [Bo Boddie](#)

In the latest production of L.A.'s [The Industry](#), the traditional stage is jettisoned in favor of a larger and less restrictive venue: Downtown L.A.'s iconic Union Station. This past Saturday saw the world premiere of "Invisible Cities", a new opera written by composer Chris Cerrone, inspired by Italo Calvino's 1972 novel of the same name.

The Industry, a young and progressive opera company founded by director Yuval Sharon, has a mission to bring new relevancy to operatic presentations by using inspiration from contemporary experimental theater and performance art pieces. The Industry was founded three years ago, and this is only their second major production here in L.A. Partnered with L.A. Dance Project, founded by noted dancer Benjamin Millepied, "Invisible Cities" incorporates a well-rounded collection of disciplines, both traditional and technical, to fascinating effect.



Invisible Cities (during open dress rehearsal)

Calvino's novel imagines a meeting between Kublai Khan and Marco Polo during which the Khan asks Polo for descriptions of various cities in his empire. Polo's lyrical and imaginative responses make up the context for the opera, providing composer Cerrone with ample opportunity for inspirational color and creative flight. The music itself was superb, blending elements of the traditional with thoroughly modern techniques incorporating found objects as instruments along with elements of playback; a contemporary yet accessible score, and at a length of 70 minutes, also perfect for the contemporary attention span.

To bring “Invisible Cities” fully into the present tense, wireless technology and an unusual venue were the key drivers. Downtown L.A.’s Union Station, the largest rail terminal in the western U.S., provides the backdrop for “Invisible Cities”, and made no pretense of maintaining business as usual as performers wove their narrative through crowds of travelers waiting for trains or buses. The only thing that differentiates anyone who happens to be in the station from an audience member is a pair of wireless headphones. You see, “Invisible Cities” unique identifier is that it is the world’s first wireless opera, delivering all audio directly to each audience member through personal headphones. The performers are untethered from a traditional stage, and the audience is free to wander around and view any aspect of the performance they might find intriguing; creating a highly personalized experience for each audience member.



Wireless audience

Thanks to partner Sennheiser, the technological aspect of the production was pulled off without a hitch when I attended a dress rehearsal in mid-October. While modern live performance and wireless tech are old bedfellows at this point, there is no question that the demands of this performance had some unique wrinkles. Specifically, given that each audience member requires a pair of headphones, a strong broadcast signal had to be maintained through a large part of Union Station to prevent any dropouts or weaknesses in the audio signal.

To accomplish this, [Bexel](#), based in Burbank, CA, was brought on board to custom build a managed antenna system to supplement broadcast coverage for both the headphone system and the wireless microphones and in-ear monitors used by the performers. Coupled with Sennheiser’s new [Digital 9000](#) wireless system, there was nary a flaw in sound quality.

While the performance takes place and actively moves around the venue, an 11-piece orchestra provided live accompaniment from another unused part of the station, 1,000 feet from the main performance areas.

The opera begins with the overture, which the audience is invited to watch the orchestra perform; and it’s unusual for sure to be standing in the same room, yet still listening through headphones. Given that the orchestra remains stationary for the duration of the opera, a traditional setup could be employed: A DigiCo D-Rack took all the

microphone feeds over fiber, through the garage beneath the station, directly into the control room (in this case an old bagel shop) to be mixed along with all of the wireless signals through a [DigiCo SD11 console](#).

Upon completion of the overture, the audience is invited to walk anywhere they like within the areas of the station where full broadcast signal is achieved. This encompassed quite a bit of real estate, and initially, the audience needed to do a little legwork to figure out where exactly key elements of the performance were actually taking place. This was definitely where the experience became individualized, between four major characters, four additional singers, and eight dancers, there was plenty of intrigue to be experienced; all of which could be heard clearly if not always seen.



Sennheiser Digital 9000 Wireless antenna array

One might be concerned that the technical aspects of “Invisible Cities” might detract from the ability to take it at face value. This was definitely not the case. Everything seemed to work flawlessly during my experience, and it was exciting to be able to choose exactly what I wanted to take in from the performance at any given moment. However, at times, this could make taking in the narrative thread a challenge.

There were moments when I found myself wondering if I had just missed something important or exciting. Left to their own devices, I wonder if it might have been easier for the audience to take in the performance had there been a slightly more formalized structure to the staging. Having limitless access to a myriad of stimuli at times seemed to create a lack of ability to focus on the real star of the show: the music.

All that said though, “Invisible Cities” was an unquestionably exciting and unique experience that I would highly recommend checking out.

(Invisible Cities was to be performed in a limited run through Friday, November 8, 2013. However, 5 more performances have been added due to high demand. For more information and tickets visit [www.invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://www.invisiblecitiesopera.com))



Director Yuval Sharon. Photo by Dana Ross.



Walking through Union Station.



Composer Chris Cerrone taking a bow.

Link: <http://www.soniccoop.com/2013/11/06/invisible-cities-a-wireless-opera-comes-to-union-station/>



## The present and future of post production business and technology | Philip Hodgetts

November 17, 2013

### Visiting the Intersection of Technology and Liberal Arts

Apple frequently talk about being at the “intersection of Technology and Liberal Arts” but we rarely experience that other than through their hardware and software. Thanks to the encouragement of our friend Cirina Catania, we (Cirina, my partner Greg and myself) experienced the [Invisible Cities](#) Opera in LA’s Union Station. That’s a really unusual place to stage an opera, and indeed this was a most unusual artistic experiment and experience, involving large amounts of production skills – staging, singing, etc – and some amazing technical chops from [Sennheiser](#) and [Bexel](#) (Burbank CA).

The concept to stage an opera in a public space, feeding the music to the audience via headphones, while they move freely within the spaces around Union Station was the brainchild of lead sound designer Martin Gimenez. The opera was a fascinating experience. I’m not qualified to critique the opera or performance, but they seemed top notch to my inexperienced ears.

What was fascinating was the integration of technology into the artistic form: the topic of this post. Sennheiser and Bexel did an amazing job supporting a 12 piece orchestra in a remote function room feeding via optical fiber to the main mix room. There were 15 radio microphones on the singers, and two “listening” radio system: one for the ear buds singers and dancers wore, and the other for the audience using Sennheiser RS 120 wireless headphones designed for in-home listening repurposed to cover most of Union Station.

There were four distinct zones and all three wireless systems had to work in all spaces, while allowing performers and audience to move freely between the zones with no interruption. Bexel did the frequency coordination and antenna setup that took more than a week to fine tune. This is an amazing achievement, since most of the antenna farms had to be taken down at the end of each performance and set up again – with precise accuracy – for the next performance.

The technology worked flawlessly, except the very occasional crackle in the headphones in very quiet passages in some of the more remote locations. While we were there as another Lumberjack test, the experience was simply amazing and unique.

And with all well designed technology, it disappeared at the service of the creative team. Congratulations to all, especially (from my perspective) the technical team.



Performers and audience mingle almost chaotically.

Link: <http://www.philiphodgetts.com/2013/11/visiting-the-intersection-of-technology-and-liberal-arts/>



## Invisible Cities : An Invisible Opera for Wireless Headphones

Uploaded on 11/8/2013



### About

The Invisible Cities opera, written by Christopher Cerrone and based on the 1972 novel by Italo Calvino, combines historical fiction with surrealist elements to create an 'invisible opera for wireless headphones'. The opera's narrative, which centers on explorer Marco Polo's descriptions of fantastical cities to Emperor Kublai Khan, transform's Calvino's novel into a unique experience for each participant — combining a classic art form with the ultimate in technology. By using wireless headphones from Sennheiser, audience members will be intimately connected to the storyline, while having the ability to roam freely as the opera moves throughout the terminal at Union Station in Los Angeles, California.

### Credits

**Music and libretto by**  
CHRISTOPHER CERRONE

**Based on the novel by**  
ITALO CALVINO

**Director**  
YUVAL SHARON

**Conductor**  
MARC LOWENSTEIN

**Choreographer**  
DANIELLE AGAMI

**Lead Sound Designer**  
E. MARTIN GIMENEZ

**Costume Designer**  
E.B. BROOKS

**Projection Design**  
JASON H. THOMPSON

**Properties Designer**  
SARAH KRAININ

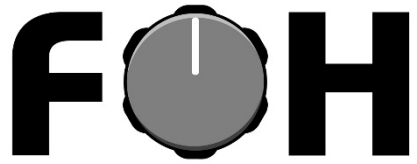
Footage courtesy of The Industry LA & ARTBOUND

### Technical Info

SOUND POWERED BY SENNHEISER

Footage courtesy of The Industry LA & ARTBOUND

Link: <http://www.productionhub.com/videos/details/30770>



FRONT OF HOUSE  
THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR LIVE SOUND

## Wireless Opera Project Debuts

» **LOS ANGELES** — Invisible Cities, a new large-scale opera heard via wireless headphones, opened Oct. 19 at L.A.'s Union Station. The show pushes the limits of artistic production and is made possible via Sennheiser wireless headphone and microphone technology, which enables patrons to experience a vastly repurposed art form both as independent participants and as a connected, communal audience.

Union Station, with its illustrious history and exquisite architecture, served as the perfect backdrop to this tale of people in imaginary cities as cast members intermingle with both active audience members and ordinary passers by.

In addition to Sennheiser's RS 120 consumer headphones worn by participants, Invisible Cities' technical production also relies on Sennheiser Digital 9000 wireless system, which transmits pristine audio for the duration of the performances.



» The project used Sennheiser's Digital 9000 wireless for a communal, yet individual listening experience.



» Creative director Yuval Sharon, right, was honored by the city of Los Angeles for bringing opera to a wider audience.



**News**

**Sennheiser Supports Invisible Cities Wireless Opera Project at Los Angeles' Union Station**

Written by Trevor Roberts

Monday, 28 October 2013 08:55



LOS ANGELES, CA – Invisible Cities, a new large scale opera heard via wireless headphones, opened Oct. 19 at Union Station here, where it was inaugurated with an official City of Los Angeles Proclamation. The visionary production, which was written by Christopher Cerrone and produced by The Industry and L.A. Dance project, is supported by Sennheiser gear.

More details from Sennheiser (<http://en-us.sennheiser.com/>):

***City of Los Angeles Issues Proclamation to Invisible Cities as Sennheiser Delivers Highly Personalized, Yet Communal Artistic Experience to Consumers***

Invisible Cities, which is based on the 1972 novel by Italo Calvino that explores Marco Polo's descriptions of fantastical cities as described to Emperor Kublai Khan, turns the classic operatic archetype on its head, transforming Los Angeles' iconic Union Station into a constantly moving and artistically unique experience for each participant. Invisible Cities pushes the limits of artistic production and is made possible through Sennheiser's wireless headphone and microphone technology. This enables patrons to experience a vastly repurposed art form both as independent participants and as a connected, communal audience.



"Over the last decade, we have seen technology increasingly become a primary driver in the creation of art," commented Stefanie Reichert, director of strategic marketing, Sennheiser. "*Invisible Cities* relies on a very creative application of Sennheiser's leading edge wireless microphone and headphone technology to deliver an ingenious, pioneering artistic experience to its audiences. As *Invisible Cities* illustrates, Sennheiser's wireless microphone and headphone technology enables the consumer to be more of a participant in the artistic performance itself."

Sennheiser's wireless headphones enable participants to have a unique perceptual experience based on an almost infinite number of vantage points from which they can view the performance. At the same time, participants are gathered together in the highly 'communal' environment of a train station and all wearing headphones. Union Station, with its illustrious history and exquisite architecture, serves as the perfect backdrop to this tale of people in imaginary cities as cast members intermingle with both active audience members and ordinary passers by.

"Being in your own space, yet still being part of a community is a very common style of today's generation," Reichert said. "As social media and personalized listening experiences permeate the lives of modern consumers, *Invisible Cities* illustrates that people can share a communal experience with others while still enjoying art independently. This production actually leverages this phenomenon into its dramatic presentation, creating a deeper and more meaningful experience for participants."



With its unorthodox approach and creative use of Sennheiser wireless technology, *Invisible Cities* successfully reinvents the traditional opera in many ways. For example, with no opera house or assigned seats, audience members are free to move about the entire performance space — a public train terminal — as the opera progresses. This often puts them directly 'onstage' beside actors and performers. Regular terminal passengers and bystanders — perhaps initially unaware that a dramatic event is unfolding before their eyes —

become an impromptu element in the performance as someone standing directly beside them dressed in 14th century attire, suddenly breaks out into beautiful song.

In addition to Sennheiser's RS 120 consumer headphones worn by participants, Invisible Cities' technical production also relies on Sennheiser's state of the art Digital 9000 professional wireless system, which transmits pristine audio for the duration of the performances. This system, which was launched last year after having been under development for over a decade, is the most advanced wireless system in the world and used in top level theatre, music and broadcasting events.

For more information on Invisible Cities, including performance dates and ticket information, please visit <http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/>.

Photo captions:

- 1) The Invisible Cities opera, written by Christopher Cerrone and based on the 1972 novel by Italo Calvino, combines historical fiction with surrealist elements to create an 'invisible opera for wireless headphones'. (Photo Credit: Dana Ross)
  
- 2) Yuval Sharon, artistic director of The Industry, is presented with a proclamation from The City of Los Angeles on Saturday, October 19. (Photo Credit: Dana Ross).
  
- 3) The Invisible Cities production included an 11-piece orchestra using Sennheiser and Neumann microphones. (Photo Credit: Dana Ross)



## Invisible Cities Opens to Sell-Out Performances at Los Angeles' Union Station as Sennheiser Technology Enables 'Artistic Creation Without Borders'

*Livedesignonline*

*Oct. 25, 2013*

City of Los Angeles Issues Proclamation to Invisible Cities as Sennheiser Delivers Highly Personalized, Yet Communal Artistic Experience to Consumers

**Los Angeles – October 25, 2013** –*Invisible Cities*, the world's first large scale opera for wireless headphones, opened to critical acclaim on October 19th at the iconic Union Station, where it was issued a Proclamation by the City of Los Angeles. The visionary production, which was written by Christopher Cerrone and produced by The Industry and L.A. Dance project, is made possible through the professional and consumer technology of leading audio manufacturer [Sennheiser](#).



*Invisible Cities*, which is based on the 1972 novel by Italo Calvino that explores Marco Polo's descriptions of fantastical cities as described to Emperor Kublai Khan, turns the classic operatic archetype on its head, transforming Los Angeles' iconic Union Station into a constantly moving and artistically unique experience for each participant. *Invisible Cities* pushes the limits of artistic production and is made possible through Sennheiser's wireless headphone and microphone technology. This enables patrons to experience a vastly repurposed art form both as independent participants and as a connected, communal audience.

"Over the last decade, we have seen technology increasingly become a primary driver in the creation of art," commented Stefanie Reichert, director of strategic marketing, Sennheiser. "*Invisible Cities* relies on a very creative application of Sennheiser's leading edge wireless microphone and headphone technology to deliver an ingenious, pioneering artistic experience to its audiences. As *Invisible Cities* illustrates, Sennheiser's wireless microphone and headphone technology enables the consumer to be more of a participant in the artistic performance itself."



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In addition to Sennheiser's RS 120 consumer headphones worn by participants, *Invisible Cities'* technical production also relies on Sennheiser's state of the art Digital 9000 professional wireless system, which transmits pristine audio for the duration of the performances. This system, which was launched last year after having been under development for over a decade, is the most advanced wireless system in the world and used in top level theatre, music and broadcasting events.



For more information on *Invisible Cities*, including performance dates and ticket information, please visit <http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/>.

### **About The Industry:**

The Industry is a new home for new and experimental opera in Los Angeles. Founded and led by director Yuval Sharon, The Industry creates ambitious productions that expand the traditional definition of opera and explore new paradigms for interdisciplinary collaboration. Mark Swed of the *Los Angeles Times* writes “The Industry is quickly and dramatically becoming an essential component in American opera. It’s now indispensable to the LA scene.” The Industry’s inaugural production, Anne LeBaron and Douglas Kearney’s *Crescent City*, was instantly hailed as “reshaping LA opera” (*Los Angeles Times*) and “changing the face of music-theater in this city overnight” (*Out West Arts*). The large-scale multimedia production, featuring the work of six visual artists in a 25,000 sq. ft. warehouse in Atwater Village, performed over three weeks in May 2012 to capacity audiences. The Industry recently presented *First Take*, a west coast opera workshop showcasing excerpts from six new operatic works-in-progress by the legendary Pauline Oliveros, and rising star composer Mohammed Fairouz at the Hammer Museum’s Billy Wilder Theater. For more information visit: [www.TheIndustryLA.org](http://www.TheIndustryLA.org)

### **About L.A. Dance Project:**

L.A. Dance Project is an artist collective founded in 2012 by renowned choreographer and dancer Benjamin Millepied, along with composer Nico Muhly, art consultant Matthieu Humery, producer Charles Fabius, and film producer Dimitri Chamblas. L.A. Dance Project’s mission is to create new work and to revive seminal collaborations from influential dance makers. Programs include full-length evenings in traditional theater venues as well as various modular performances in non-traditional environments. New works by the company endeavor to be multidisciplinary collaborations with various artists: visual artists, musicians, designers, directors and composers. L.A. Dance Project promotes the work of emerging and established creators, contributing to new platforms for contemporary dance. For more information visit: [www.ladanceproject.com](http://www.ladanceproject.com)

### **About Sennheiser:**

Sennheiser is a world-leading manufacturer of microphones, headphones and wireless transmission systems. Established in 1945 in Wedemark, Germany, Sennheiser is now a global brand represented in 60 countries around the world with U.S. headquarters in Old Lyme, Conn. Sennheiser’s pioneering excellence in technology has rewarded the company with numerous awards and accolades including an Emmy, a Grammy, and the Scientific and Engineering Award of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. You can find all the latest information on Sennheiser by visiting our website at <http://www.sennheiserusa.com>.

### Photo captions:

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(Photo Credit: Dana Ross)

# LISTINGS

# Los Angeles Times

November 3, 2013

LATIMES.COM/CALENDAR

Los Angeles Times

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2013 E13

## THE GUIDE

**Arts & Music:** A selective listing from Calendar's critics and writers of noteworthy arts and music this week, by category, in chronological order except for continuing events.

### THEATER

**Capsule reviews are by**  
**PHILIP BRANDES (P.B.), E. KATHLEEN FOLEY (K.F.), MARGARET GRAY (M.G.), CHARLES McNULTY (C.M.) and DAVID C. NICHOLS (D.C.N.)** Compiled by MATT COOPER.

#### Openings

**The Black Suits** World-premiere musical about four suburban teens with dreams of rock 'n' roll stardom. Kirk Douglas Theatre, 8820 Washington Blvd., Culver City. Today, 6:30 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 and 8 p.m.; next Sun., 1 and 6:30 p.m.; ends Nov. 3. \$30-\$85. (310) 628-2772. **Story on p. E23**

**Bob Hope's Birthday** World premiere of Jeri Baszoff's dramedy about a "Grandmother with Alzheimer's disease. Zombie Joe's Underground Theatre Group, 4850 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood. Today, next Sun. 7 p.m.; ends Nov. 24. \$15. (818) 202-4120.

**Titus Andronicus, A Vaudeville** A re-imagining of Shakespeare's violent tragedy. Stella Adler Theatre, 6773 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood. Today, 7 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 7 p.m.; ends Nov. 17. \$15. (323) 967-7770.

**Love on San Pedro** Cornerstone Theater Company presents the world premiere of James McManus' drama set on Skid Row, with a cast of professional actors and community members. Los Angeles Mission, 363 E. 5th St., L.A. Thu., 8 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 7:30 p.m.; next Sun., 2:30 p.m.; ends Nov. 24. Pay what you can. (213) 613-7700.

**The Intergalactic Nemesis - Book Two: Robot Planet Rising** Friendly sci-adventure sequel mixes radio drama and projected comic-book images. Samueli Theater, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa. Fri., 7 p.m.; Sat., 1 p.m.; next Sun., noon, 4 p.m. \$20-\$39. (714) 556-2121.

**The Middle Class Nobleman** Parson's Nose stages Molière's satire about an unscrupulous social climber. Linage Performing Arts Center, 89 S. Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena. Fri.-Sat., 7 p.m.; next Sun., 3 p.m.; ends Nov. 24. Pay what you will. (626) 403-7967.

**Breaking and Entering** Darkly comic thriller about a reclusive writer and an obsessed fan. Zombie Joe's Underground Theatre Group, 4850 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood. Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; ends Nov. 29. \$15. (818) 202-4120.

**Elvis's Tonnell** World premiere of "Fionnuala Kenny's drama about a pregnant runaway in 1960s Ireland. Sidewalk Studio Theatre, 4500 Riverside Drive, Suite D, Toluca Lake. Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 3 p.m.; ends Dec. 8. \$15. (805) 838-3066.

**Theater** 1345 W. 1st St., L.A. Sat.-next Sun., 2:30 p.m.; ends Jan. 5. \$20; free for children under 3. (323) 250-9995.

**Barymore** Gordon Goodman portrays legendary actor John Barrymore in William Lauer's bio-drama set in 1942. Ormsway Court Theatre, 544 N. Fairfax Ave., L.A. Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 7 p.m.; ends Dec. 1. \$25. (323) 655-7670.

**Boeing Boeing** Marc Camoletti's romantic farce about a twirling bechele in 1950s Paris. Long Beach Playhouse, 5025 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach. Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 2 p.m.; ends Dec. 7. \$14-\$24. (562) 494-4044.

**Miracle on South Division Street** West Coast premiere of Tom Dudzinski's comedy about a dysfunctional Polish American family in Buffalo, N.Y. Colony Theatre, 555 N. Third St., Burbank. Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 2 p.m.; ends Dec. 15. \$35-\$25. (661) 358-7900.

**Much Ado About Nothing** University of San Diego theater students present Shakespeare's romantic comedy. The Old Globe, 1925 Old Globe Way, San Diego. Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 2 p.m.; ends Nov. 17. \$36. \$19. (619) 234-5623.

**Legal Briefs: Lawmakers and Activists** Native Voices at the Autry's third-annual festival of Native American-themed short plays. Wells Fargo Theater at the Autry National Center, 4700 Western Heritage Way, L.A. Next Sun., 1:30 p.m. \$8, \$12. (323) 697-2000.

**Twelve Angry Men** Revival of Reginald Rose's classic jury-room drama, performed by a cast of black and white actors. Pasadena Playhouse, 39 S. El Molino Ave., Pasadena. Next Sun., 5 p.m.; ends Dec. 1. \$38-\$125. (626) 356-7238.

#### Critics' Choices

**El Grande de Coca-Cola** Prolifically produced for almost 40 years, this lunatic revue, set in a seedy cabaret somewhere south of the border and delivered mostly in gibberish Spanish, has been directed by Alan Shearman and stars Ron House, both of whom have been with the show, as writers and performers, since its inception. Formerly two acts, the play has been judiciously pared to a breezy 75 minutes — and the comic momentum never flags. Wearing a hairpiece that looks like a small animal in distress, House is the lynchpin of a superlative, marvellously agile cast. If you don't like broad slapstick, give "El Grande" a very wide berth. But if you want to get goofy and giggle, this could be your ticket. (F.K.F.) Ruskin Group Theatre, 2000 Airport Ave., Santa Monica. Today, 2 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 2 p.m.; ends Nov. 23. \$20, \$25. (310) 397-3244.

**Evita** This touring edition of director Michael Grandage's revival of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's Tony-winning phenomenon doesn't reinvent the popera, just gives it a shrewd makeover. The show's liabilities have not vanished. Yet Grandage and cho-

reminds anew of how theater provides context in ways no other form can match. (D.C.N.) Davidson/Valentini Theatre, 1225 N. McCadden Place, The Village at Ed Gould Plaza, Hollywood. Today, 7 p.m., Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 7 p.m.; ends Nov. 24. \$20, \$25. (323) 860-7300.

**Pericles, Prince of Tyre** Arguably largely written with a mediocre collaborator, Shakespeare's hectic play has a baffling array of referential subplots. However, buoyed by solid acting and superb technical elements, director Julia Rodriguez/Elliott wisely embraces the random nature of the piece in this biastly eclectic production, which succeeds surprisingly — and sublimely. (F.K.F.) A Noise Within, 3353 E. Foothill Blvd., Pasadena. Thu., 7:30 p.m.; ends Nov. 24. \$24 and up. (626) 356-2000.

**Toten** This latest entry from the matches Quebec-based franchise nominally concerns the evolution of mankind. Yet in the masterful hands of writer-director Robert LePage, a meismatic creative team and 46 Olympic-worthy athletic artists, it's really about transformation in totum, not to mention humanity's determination to achieve superhuman feats. (D.C.N.) Part of Los Angeles, 3311 South Miner St., San Pedro. Today, 1 and 4:30 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 4:30 and 8 p.m.; ends next Sun., 1 and 4:30 p.m. \$43-\$105. (213) 480-3222.

**A View From the Bridge** Arthur Miller's durable drama about an Italian-American longshoreman's incestuous obsession with his orphaned niece is helmed by co-directors Martin Fox and Dana Jackson, whose wretchedly truthful staging, while larger-than-life, never lapses into overstatement. (F.K.F.) Pacific Resident Theatre, 703 Venice Blvd., Venice. Today, 3 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 2 p.m.; ends Nov. 24. \$20-\$28. (310) 822-8392.

### MUSIC

#### Pop

**Picks from AUGUST BROWN, CHRIS LEE and MIKAEL WOOD**

**HARD TOY** Of the Dead Dabney! king-pin Skrillex and the EDM wisecracker Deadmau5 will headline its fall festival. The fest, now a two-day affair, sports just as much headline muscle as its summer cousin. Nero, Calvin Harris, Eric Prydz, Boys Noize and Pretty Lights are among the immediate undercard; underground-leaning acts include Jamie Jones, Benoit & Sergio, Maya Jane Cole, Tokimonsta, Soul Clap and Wolf + Lamb. Of particular note: a rare set from disco progenitor (and Daft Punk muse) Giorgio Moroder. (A.B.) L.A. State Historic Park, 1345 N. Spring St., L.A. 1 p.m. Sun. \$70-\$270. **hardtoyevents.com**

**Charli XCX** With impressive disregard for widespread hand-wringing over the glamorization of violence in media, Charli XCX released a new music video in which the English pop singer more or less throws a raw inside a gun factory. (M.W.) El Rey Theatre, 555 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. 8 p.m. Mon. \$22. **Theatre.com**

#### Classical

Compiled by MATT COOPER

**Vivaldi with Perlman** Violinist Itzhak Perlman joins the L.A. Phil for a program that includes works by Vivaldi, Weber and Berlioz. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 11 S. Grand Ave., L.A. Today, 2 p.m. \$68-\$205. (323) 856-2000.

**Being Fabulous Isn't Easy** Five emerging singers perform arias and duets by Mozart, et al., and selections from Stephen Sondheim's "Sweeney Todd" in this Opera Buffa presentation. Zipper Hall at the Colburn School, 200 S. Grand Ave., L.A. Today, 2:30 p.m. \$5, \$25. (323) 851-5204.

**Estonian National Symphony Orchestra** Program includes works by Dvorak and Arvo Part. Soka Performing Arts Center, 1 University Drive, Aliso Viejo. Today, 3 p.m. \$48, \$58. (949) 480-4278.

**Le Salon de Musiques** Program includes Schoenberg's "Scherzo Nach" for string sextet, and Wagner's "Wesendonck Lieder" for soprano and piano and "Siegfried Idyll" for string quartet. Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 54th Floor Salon, 135 N. Grand Ave., L.A. Today, 4 p.m. \$29-\$95. (310) 488-0257.

**Masterpiece Series** Pianist Andrew von Oeyen joins New West Symphony for works by Haydn and Prokofiev; program also includes Prokofiev's Classical Symphony and Mozart's Symphony No. 35 in D Major. K. 385. Barnum Hall Theater, Santa Monica High School, 600 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica. Today, 4 p.m. \$25-\$98. (866) 778-9400.

**Verdi's Requiem** Pacific Chorus celebrates the composer's 200th birthday in its season opener. Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa. Today, 5:30 p.m. \$19-\$129. (714) 556-2121.

**Carmina Burana** Los Angeles Master Chorus performs Orff's choral work and Verdi's Te Deum. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 11 S. Grand Ave., L.A. Today, 7 p.m. \$29-\$129. (323) 972-7282.

**A Tribute to Astor Piazzolla** Colburn students perform pieces by the tango composer and others. Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre. Today, 7 p.m. \$15, \$20. (626) 355-4338.

**Piano Trio Voco** The trio performs pieces by Mozart, Ravel and Dvorak in this Music Guild presentation. University Synagogue, 1860 Sunset Blvd., Brentwood. Mon., 8 p.m. \$15-\$50. Also, Daniel Recital Hall, Cal State Long Beach, 1550 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach. Tue., 8 p.m. And Adat Ari El Temple, 12000 Burbank Blvd., Valley Village. Wed., 8 p.m. (310) 556-3000.

**Invisible Cities** The Industry and L.A. Dance Project combine art and technology in this interactive, site-specific performance piece. Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St., L.A. Tue., Fri., 7:30 and 10 p.m. \$25-\$75. (866) 801-4111.

**Michael Cavanaugh: Songs of Elton John and More** The Broadway star helps open Pacific Symphony's 35th-anniversary Pops season with a salute to the British rock legend. Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa. Thu.-Sat., 8 p.m. \$35-\$185. (714) 756-5799.

\$65. (902) 436-3203.

**Shattered Glass** Jacaranda marks the 75th anniversary of Kristalnacht with a program that includes Samuel Adler's "Klemmer Fantasy," Steve Reich's "Different Trains" and Eric Zelen's "Hebrew Requiem." First Presbyterian Church, 1220 2nd St., Santa Monica. Sat., 8 p.m. \$20, \$45. (310) 483-0225.

**Smoke & Mirrors** Percussion duo performs. Rolling Hills United Methodist Church, 28438 Crenshaw Blvd., Rolling Hills Estates. Next Sun., 2 p.m. Free.

**Camelata Pacifica** Pianist Adam Neiman performs Beethoven's 33 Variations and Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-Flat Major. Meister Hall, Temple Beth Torah, 7620 Foothill Road, Ventura. Next Sun., 3 p.m. \$40. (805) 884-8418.

**The Hanover Square Rooms: A Confluence of Style** Period music ensemble Les Sauvages Américains performs favorites from the late 18th century. Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre. Next Sun., 7 p.m. \$15-\$30. (626) 355-4338.

**Organ Recital** Ulrich Böhm performs works by Bach, Liszt, et al. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 11 S. Grand Ave., L.A. Next Sun., 7:30 p.m. \$35.90-\$65. (323) 850-2000.

### MUSEUMS

Reviews by CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT (C.K.), AND SHARON MIZOTA (S.M.). Compiled by GRACE KRILANOVICH.

#### Critics' Choices

**Forrest Bess: Seeing Things Invisible** In 1946, when he was 35, Bess began to transcribe his abstract visions into paint on canvas. Now 52 of those visionary paintings are on view in a show of heartbreaking beauty. According to best estimates, it includes between a third and a quarter of his output. Why it took so long is difficult to say, but we can be grateful that it finally happened. (C.K.) Hammer Museum, 10890 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood. Tue.-Wed., Fri.-Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Thu., 11 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed Mon.; ends Jan. 5. (310) 443-7000.

**Face to Face: Flanders, Florence and Renaissance Painting** It's easy to forget that travel and trade in the early 15th century was frequent. Yet cosmopolitan interchange played an indispensable role in the blooming notion of a Renaissance. One of the most important of these interchanges is the subject of this exhibition. The result is a knockout, the fall's first great museum show. (C.K.) Huntington Library, 115 Oxford Road, San Marino. Mon., Wed.-Fri., noon-4:30 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 10:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; closed Tue.; ends Jan. 13. (626) 405-2100.

#### Continuing

**James Welling: Monograph** The dramatic, glossy black shapes in Well-

**James Turrell: A Retrospective** Light, the essential ingredient for sight, is Turrell's principal medium. Spiritual perception is his art's aim. The ancient metaphor of light as the engine of enlightenment is couched in a modern way. (C.K.) Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 5065 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. Mon.-Tue., Thu., noon-8 p.m.; Fri., noon-9 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 11 a.m.-9 p.m.; closed Wed.; ends April 6. (323) 857-6000.

**2013 California-Pacific Triennial** The shift of focus from California to that of the vast Pacific Rim can make the happily ambitious show feel thin. It surveys current painting, sculpture, photography, video and installation art in 15 countries as diverse as Honduras, Thailand, the West Coast of Canada and more — but there are only 32 artists. It's a thumbnail sketch. (C.K.) Orange County Museum of Art, 850 San Clemente Drive, Newport Beach. Wed., Fri.-Sun., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Thu., 11 a.m.-8 p.m.; closed Mon., Tue.; ends Nov. 17. (949) 750-1222.

### GALLERIES

Reviews by LEAH OLLMAN (L.O.) Compiled by GRACE KRILANOVICH.

#### Continuing

**Sebastião Salgado: Genesis** Salgado crowns his project with a biblical title that suits the majesty of his subjects and offers the work as a beautifully articulated prayer for preservation and respect. (L.O.) Peter Petterman Gallery, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica. Tue.-Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; ends Jan. 4. (310) 453-6463.

**Joe Sola** What is the opposite of a blockbuster exhibition? The pomp-free micro-show inaugurating TF Sigfrids: Hollywood gallery. It occupies a space roughly the size of a hazelnut. It takes but a nanosecond to see. (L.O.) TF Sigfrids, 1507 Wilcox Ave., L.A.; ends Jan. (323) 907-9000.

### DANCE

Compiled by MATT COOPER

**Diana Vishneva: On the Edge** Program features two new dance pieces created especially for the prima ballerina. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa. Wed.-Sat., 7:30 p.m.; next Sun., 2 p.m. \$35-\$125. (714) 556-2122. **Story on Page B7**

**The Groundskeepers** Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre returns with a new site-specific multimedia work about the past, present and future of the Boyle Heights neighborhood. Linda Vista Hospital, 60 S. St. Louis St., Boyle Heights. Thu.-Sat., 8 p.m. \$20, \$25. (888) 784-8669.

**Est/Exist** Gregory Maqoma and his Vuvuzala Dance Theatre mix African oral and musical traditions with contemporary movement in this West Coast premiere. REDCAT, 631 W. 2nd St., L.A. Thu.-Sat., 8:30 p.m.; next

# LA WEEKLY

October 31, 2013

p.m.; through Nov. 17. (323) 462-8660, ext. 300, LovellEstell.com

**THE LIGHT BULB** If there were a genuine laugh anywhere in playwright Joshua Ravetch's stale new satire of cut-throat corporate culture and the moral bankruptcy of the advertising world, director James Mellon's stylish staging and sterling ensemble most certainly would have found it. However, despite its embarrassment of production riches (including Kevin Bailey's austere set, Luke Moyer's accomplished lighting and Connie Tibbets-Miner's droll costuming), Ravetch's incongruous mix of glibness and sledgehammered melodrama makes *Mad Men* seem like Molière by comparison. Jon Acosta leads an acid-tongued, backbiting marketing department that is facing cutbacks under its icy new sociopath of an incoming chief (an adept Karesa McElhenny). To save their jobs, the team must launch a newly invented perpetual light bulb in a big way. But not even standouts like Irene Rosen or William Rose-Hines can finally sell the tired ball of retrofitted tropes and genre clichés that Ravetch tries to pass off as farce. NoHo Arts Center, 11136 Magnolia Blvd., N. Hollywood, Fri. Sat., 8 p.m., Sun., 3 p.m.; through Nov. 9. (818) 763-0086, thehoartscenter.com. (Bill Raden)

**RUMINATION** This one-act celebrates the prolific works of 13th-century Persian poet and Sufi mystic Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi — commonly known as Rumi. A sampling of Rumi's sacred poetry is delivered as choral readings, employing dance, gesture and song to supplement his magical (though nonrhyming) verse. Conceived by Amir Khalighi, the selected poetry examines various facets of love, emotions, nature, truth and beauty, delving into the essence of human existence. Running just 40 minutes, it's a swift but somewhat sensual immersion into the soul of one of history's most romantic poets. The sentiments expressed feel as fresh and relevant today as when they were composed almost eight centuries ago. The declamatory skills of the ensemble of nine are generally mediocre, with no truly revelatory performance from any individual. A stronger sound design and more thoughtful musical accompaniment would have elevated the experience. Zombie Joe's Underground, 4850 Lankershim Blvd., N. Hollywood, Sun., 7 p.m.; through Oct. 27. (818) 202-4120, zombiejoes.homestead.com. (Pauline Adamek)

**GO TOTEM** A digitally enhanced marsh forms the backdrop for Cirque du Soleil's latest big-top spectacular, a whimsical look at evolution that's more art than science. Directed by Robert Lepage (who also helmed *Ka* in Las Vegas), the show traces humanity's evolution from our simian ancestors to modern man. At opening, performers loitering around a turtle's carapace — a nod to the tortoise's significance in several creation myths — before whizzing onto the parallel bars and flinging themselves out of prehistoric muck onto land. Humanity takes flight then, soaring through the air via suspended rings, somersaulting onto springy planks no wider than a balance beam and dangling from a fixed trapeze. Some of the top acts include a masterful unicycle precision team and a mesmerizing foot juggling duo wearing lycra bodysuits studded with 3,000 crystals apiece. (Nym Barrett designed the costumes, a mosaic of seasonal themes and cultures from Bollywood to the Mayans.) Carl Fillon's versatile set and Pedro Pires' projections integrate beautifully, evoking landscapes both terrestrial and celestial. Occasionally we take a break from the action to observe a Darwinian doppelganger pondering earth's mysteries. Creationists might grumble but this production bursts with wonder at mankind's feats. Cirque du Soleil, Port of Los Angeles, Berth 46, 3011 S. Miner St., San Pedro; Fri.-Sat., 4:30 & 8 p.m. (no 4:30 p.m. performance Nov. 8); Sun., 1 & 4:30 p.m.; Thurs., Oct. 24, 8 p.m.; Wed., Oct. 30, 8 p.m.; through Nov. 10. cirquedusoleil.com. (Jenny Lower)

**DANCE**

**ASHLEY HENDRA AND THE POLYLYINGUAL OUTFIT**  
**SOMATIC CHURCH OF I LOVE YOU**: Places We've Never Been is the title of this program of dance and story about warrios and espionage. Sat., Oct. 26, 8:30 p.m., Pieter, 420 W. Ave. 33, Los Angeles, pieterpad.com.

**GO COMPLEXIONS CONTEMPORARY BALLET**: This exciting, New York-based contemporary company led by Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson offers a program of high-energy dance. Tues., Oct. 29, 8 p.m., \$20-\$40, Pepperdine University, Smothers Theatre, 24255 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu, 310-506-4522, arts.pepperdine.edu/tickets/.

**INKED DANCE NIGHTMARES**: Halloween is next week, but Inked Dance offers an early chance to be spooked with *Nightmares*, a brew of dance and film that promises audiences will be thrilled and terrified. Director-composer Brian Moe joined forces with lighting designer Nicholas Davidson and videographer Danny Brown. Oct. 25-26, 8:30 p.m., \$20, \$15 students & seniors, 18th Street Arts Center, 1639 18th St., Santa Monica, 310-453-3711, 18thstreet.org.

**INVISIBLE CITIES**: Historic meets high-tech as audiences equipped with the latest wireless headphones wander through L.A.'s iconic Union Station, following dancers and musicians in *Invisible Cities*, described as an "invisible opera." Saturdays, 7:30 & 10 p.m.; Thursdays, 7:30 & 10 p.m.; Tuesdays, 7:30 & 10 p.m.; Fri., Nov. 8, 7:30 & 10 p.m.; through Nov. 5, \$25, Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St., Los Angeles, 213-683-6897.

**GO L.A. CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY**: Mark Tomasic considers the temporary insanity of love, Andrew Pearson provides a new-age minuet, Melissa "MJ" Jackson looks at giving oneself over to an experience without expectation or control, and artistic director Kate Huffer contemplates the deeper and more complex humanity that lies beneath simplified categorization. Through Oct. 26, 8 p.m.; Sun., Oct. 27, 7 p.m., \$20 online, \$25 at door, Diavolo Performance Space, 616 Moulton Ave., Los Angeles, 323-225-4290, laedc.brownpaperickets.com.

**SHANGHAI BALLET**: Known for its technical precision, this company offers full-length story ballets: *La Sylphide* (Saturday), the tragic tale of a Scotsman who pursues an enchanting wood sprite and offends a vengeful witch; and one of the company's signature works, *The White Lotus* (Sunday), blending classical ballet and Chinese folk dance in a tale of thwarted love. Sat., Oct. 26, 8 p.m.; Sun., Oct. 27, 3 p.m., \$25-\$65, Valley Performing Arts Center, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge, 818-677-8800, valleyperformingartscenter.org.

**THE UNDERGROUND**: Street dance moves to the concert stage in *Street Chronicles*, with dancers sharing the

stage with the group Fiveology. Sat., Oct. 26, 8 p.m., \$20, ebonyrep.org/#five. Nate Holden Performing Arts Center, 4718 W. Washington Blvd., 323-964-9768.

—Ann Haskins

**COMEDY**

**THE COMEDY & MAGIC CLUB**, Gabriel Iglesias: Tues., Oct. 29, 8 p.m. 1018 Hermosa Ave., Hermosa Beach, 310-372-1193, comedyandmagicclub.com.

**COMEDY CENTRAL STAGE**, Iris Bahr: *Machu My Picchu*: Tues., Oct. 29, 8 p.m. 6539 Santa Monica Blvd., Hyw., 323-960-5519, ccinsider.comedycentral.com.

**FIRST & HOPE**, Uncabaret: With Caitlin Bergh, Kyle Duranigan, Corinne Kim, Powdercoat. Sun., Oct. 27, 8 p.m. 520 710 W. First St., dwtwbn.uncabaret.com.

**FLAPPERS COMEDY CLUB BURBANK**, Paul Ogata: Fri.-Sat., Oct. 25-26, 8 & 10 p.m. 102 E. Magnolia Blvd., Burbank, 818-845-9721, flapperscomedy.com.

**THE IMPROV**, KT Tatar: Fri., Oct. 25, 8 p.m. Hollywood Bubble: With Kevin Smith and Ralph Garman. Fri., Oct. 25, 10 p.m. Kurt Braunohler: With Kyle Kinane and Melissa Villaseor. Sat., Oct. 26, 8 p.m. Mo' Beta Monday Mondays, 8 p.m. Dov Davidoff: Tues., Oct. 29, 8 p.m. Flyover Comedy: With David Koschines, Wayne Federman, Moshe Kasher. Tues., Oct. 29, 10 p.m.

**Talkin' Toes**: With Rob Paulsen, Maurice LaMarche, Billy West. Wed., Oct. 30, 8 p.m. 8162 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, 323-651-2583, improv.com.

**THE JON LOVITZ COMEDY CLUB**, The Comics of Bad Advice Radio: Fri., Oct. 25, 10 p.m. Craig

Shoemaker: Sat., Oct. 26, 8 p.m. 1000 Universal Studios Blvd. No. 222, N. Hollywood, 818-824-6545, thejonlovitzcomedyclub.com.

**LARGO AT THE CORONET**, *Wheels Off: The Rhet Miller Show*: Mon., Oct. 28, 8:30 p.m. \$25. *The Thrilling Adventure Hour: A Halloween Beyond Belief*: Wed., Oct. 30, 8:30 p.m. \$25. 366 N. La Cienega Blvd., 310-855-0350, largo-la.com.

**NERDIST SHOWROOM AT MELTDOWN COMICS**, Satan, Serial Killers & the Murder of Dana Plato: Fri., Oct. 25, 7 p.m. \$10. *LoopdeLoop Screening: Hallucinations*: Fri., Oct. 25, 9 p.m. Free. Set List: *Stand-Up Without a Net*: Sat., Oct. 26, 8 p.m. \$8. *Harmonium*: Sun., Oct. 27, 8 p.m. \$10. *The Benson Interruption*: Mon., Oct. 28, 8 p.m. \$10. *HorrorShow*: With Adam Murray, Bill Kottkamp, Laura Crawford, Rivers Langley, John Ungaro, Joe Bowling, Monika Scott, Natalie Hazen, Jake Baumgart, Ben Dunn, Billy Small. Thurs., Oct. 31, 8 p.m. Free. 7522 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood, nerdmella.com.

**UPRIGHT CITIZENS BRIGADE THEATER**, *ASSCAT*: Saturdays, 8 p.m.; Sundays, 7:30 p.m. *Billy the Mime*: Sun., Oct. 27, 9:30 p.m. \$5. *Baked With John Flynn*: Wed., Oct. 30, 8 p.m. *Natasha Leggero: In London!* *Plat!* *Costoe*: Thurs., Oct. 31, 8 p.m. \$5. *The Last Resort / Those Magnificent Moments: A Halloween A-Haunting*: Thurs., Oct. 31, 9:30 p.m. \$5. *Late in Night With Frankentastic*: Thurs., Oct. 31, 11 p.m. \$5. 5519 Franklin Ave., Hyw., 323-908-9702, losangeles.ucttheatre.com.

—Derek Thomas

For more listings, please go to [laweekly.com](http://laweekly.com).

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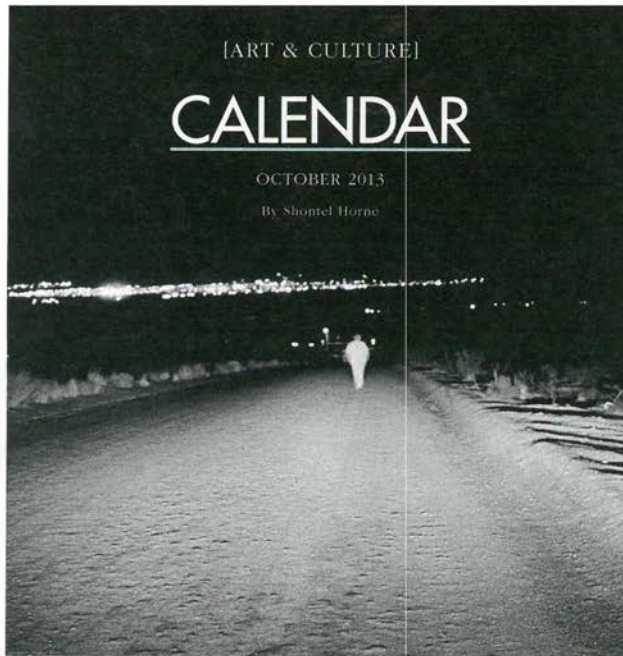
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 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

**THURSDAY OCT 31 2013 6:00-10:00PM**

**AFTER PARTY TO FOLLOW**

# Angeleno

October 2013



[ART & CULTURE]

## CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2013

By Shontel Horne

DOWN THE ROAD John Divola's iconic California prints inhabit LACMA this season.

**OCT. 3-6**  
**WestEdge Design Fair**  
The inaugural event expands the SoCal home-design scene with culinary activities, panel discussions and exhibits. Tickets from \$25. *The Barker Hangar, 3021 Airport Ave., Santa Monica, westedgedesignfair.com*

**OCT. 5**  
**Permission to Come Aboard**  
Join a deep-sea fishing adventure in Santa Monica Bay with Café del Rey's chef, Daniel Robert—dinner is the day's catch. Tickets from \$40. *Dock 52, 13759 Fiji Way, Marina del Rey, 310.823.6395, cafedelreymarina.com*

**OCT. 5**  
**Veuve Clicquot Polo Classic**  
This fourth annual event returns for another star-studded match co-hosted by Nacho Figueras. Tickets from \$50. *1501 Will Rogers State Park Road, L.A., vepoloclassic.com*

**OCT. 6**  
**The Artisan Market**  
The W Los Angeles - Westwood hosts an array of artisanal food masters at the hotel's stylish Wet pool. Free. *930 Hilgard Ave., Westwood,*

310.208.8765,  
*wlosangeles.com*

**OCT. 8-NOV. 17**  
**Wait Until Dark**  
Three criminals terrorize a young woman in the updated staging of the classic thriller. Tickets from \$37. *Geffen Playhouse, 10886 Le Conte Ave., L.A., 310.208.2028, geffenplayhouse.com*

**OCT. 9-13**  
**Los Angeles Antiques Art + Design Show**  
Top-tier exhibitors display the finest in

art and furnishings at the annual showcase. Tickets from \$20. *3Labs, 8461 Warner Drive, Culver City, 708.366.2710, losangelesantiqueshow.com*

**OCT. 10**  
**Once Upon a Dream Starring the Rascals**  
Rock concert meets Broadway stage with this Steven Van Zandt-produced reunion of the original 1960s Rascals. Tickets from \$35. *The Greek Theatre, 2700 N. Vermont Ave., L.A., 323.665.5857, greektheatre.la.com*

**OCT. 11-13**  
**Einstein on the Beach**  
This provocative, abstract revival challenges classic opera. Tickets from \$24. *Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave., L.A., 213.972.8001, laopera.com*

**OCT. 13**  
**Pier del Sol**  
Local Special Olympics athletes benefit from a day of family-friendly games, music, art and gourmet fare. Tickets from \$45. *200 Santa Monica*

*Pier, Santa Monica, 562.502.1135, sosc.org/pierdelsol*

**OCT. 14**  
**MUSE/IQUE: Uncorked**  
The Beatles' *The White Album* gets an all-new sound courtesy of director/conductor Rachael Worby. Tickets from \$50. *The Rose Palace, 835 S. Raymond Ave., Pasadena, 626.539.7085, muse-ique.com*

**OCT. 16-MARCH 3**  
**Tiberius: Portrait of an Emperor**  
The Roman ruler's centuries-old bronze statue reigns over the Getty Villa during a brief United States stint. Free. *Getty Villa, 17985 E. Pacific Coast Highway, Pacific Palisades, 310.440.7300, getty.edu*

**OCT. 19-NOV. 8**  
**Invisible Cities**  
Experience a live opera, sans stage, as you move through Union Station, listening to singers and a live orchestra via headphones. Tickets from \$25. *Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St., L.A., 516.652.7805, invisiblecitiesopera.com*



Invisible Cities  
Time Out says



In the main hall of Union Station, where train travelers wait for the next departure, headphones are a common sight. Opera singers in the middle of a performance, however, are less common. "Invisible Cities," a new opera by Christopher Cerrone, combines all three. Attendees will wander through Union Station wearing wireless headphones as they listen to a live performance of the opera, in which Kublai Khan and Marco Polo ponder the existence of cities and imagination, happening in the same space. The Industry, an experimental opera company, is collaborating with the L.A. Dance Project, headed by choreographer and dancer Benjamin Millepied.



## **Weekend Roundup**

**Find the best Los Angeles things to do for the weekend of 10.18.13**

### **EVENTS**

#### **Invisible Cities**

**Oct. 19, 24, 26, 29, 31; Nov. 5, 8.** Downtown's bustling Union Station serves as stage and backdrop in this innovative, participatory opera from the Industry and the L.A. Dance Project. As a score by Christopher Cerrone plays wirelessly through their headphones, spectators wend through the station, discovering vocalists and dancers among the passersby. Performances at 7:30 and 10 pm nightly except for Oct. 19 opening (7 p.m. only). \$25–\$75. Union Station, 800 N. Alameda Ave., downtown. [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com)

Link: <http://wherela.com/blog/2013/10/17/la-weekend-events-roundup-10-18-13/#events>





## Invisible Cities



Composed and adapted by Christopher Cerrone (hailed as "a rising star" by the New Yorker), this fragile, quiet score attempts to capture "decaying sounds" through the use of found objects as instruments and pre-recorded voices interweaving with live voices. The instrumental music will be a mixture of pre-recorded and live performances from an eleven person orchestra. During the course of the performance, all vocalists will sing live as they freely move throughout Union Station, appearing and disappearing into the everyday fabric of the building. Dancers from the L.A. Dance Project, the company founded by artistic director and choreographer director Benjamin Millepied, are featured in a site-specific new choreography by the LA-based Danielle Agami.

**When** Recurring every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

Through Friday, November 8, 2013.

**Time** Check website for days & times

**Price** Check website for prices

**Venue** [Union Station](#)

800 N. Alameda Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

800-266-6883

# DISCOVER Los Angeles

UMV: 281,000



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## OVERVIEW

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Imagine yourself in LA's historic Union Station, surrounded by passengers and passerby, wearing a state-of-the-art pair of Sennheiser wireless headphones, and experiencing a new opera happening...

Saturday, October 19 12:00pm

**Venue:**  
Union Station  
800 N Alameda St  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Region:**  
Downtown / LA Metro

**Admission:**  
\$25-\$75

**Accessibility:**  
Wheelchair Accessible

[Metro Trip Planner](#)

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UMV: 47,800

INVISIBLE CITIES is the new opera by Christopher Cerrone to be heard via Sennheiser wireless headphones in the spectacular setting of Union Station. The wireless headphones allow the audience to roam freely through the station, following individual characters or creating their own adventure. The performance will offer an “invisible trace” underneath the everyday operations of the station.

Kublai Khan asks Marco Polo: do the cities in my empire exist, or are they figments of my imagination? Does any city truly exist, or are they the construct of our desires and expectations? The Industry’s second production promises to be an unforgettable site-specific exploration of Calvino’s masterpiece, set by rising-star composer Christopher Cerrone.

**Cost**

\$45-\$75

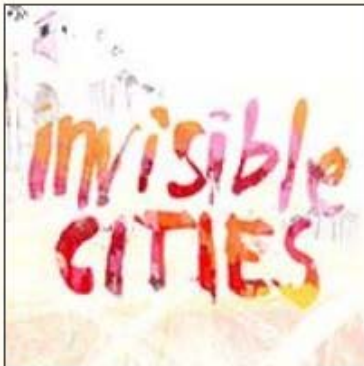
**Details**

[Contributed](#)

**Website:** [invisiblecitiesopera.com](http://invisiblecitiesopera.com)



## Invisible Cities



[larger view](#)

**When:**
**Upcoming Date/Time(s):**

- **Date:** October 24, 2013  
**Time:** 7:30 PM
- **Date:** October 26, 2013  
**Time:** 7:30 PM
- **Date:** October 29, 2013  
**Time:** 7:30 PM

[more dates...](#)

- [Email this Event](#)
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**Where:**

Union Station (Downtown LA)  
800 N Alameda St, Los Angeles, 90012,  
 [Metro Trip Planner](#)  
 [Driving Directions](#)

**Cross Streets:**

Alameda / Caesar Chavez

**Admission:**

tickets \$25 - \$75  
 [Buy Tickets](#)

**Phone:**

(866) 811-4111

**More info:**

<http://www.invisiblecitiesopera.com>

## Description

Imagine yourself in LA's historic Union Station, surrounded by passengers and passersby, wearing a state-of-the-art pair of Sennheiser wireless headphones, and experiencing a new opera happening all around you live.

Over the next 70 minutes, you will discover a secret level of reality at the station, isolating singers and dancers from pedestrians, soaking in LA's architectural gem, and having a highly private experience in this public space.

**Food Services:** 10% DINNER AT TRAXX Show your ticket receipt and receive 10% off dinner before all 7:30pm performances at the elegant TRAXX Restaurant.


**Accessibility:** Yes

**Submitted By:** The Industry

**Tags:** Music, Dance, Educational, Live Theater, Wheel chair access



- Los Angeles, CA, USA
- Union Station (Downtown LA) 800 N Alameda St, Los Angeles, 90012,
- Where: Union Station (Downtown LA) 800 N Alameda St, Los Angeles, 90012,
- (866) 811-4111
- <http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/p>

	Oct 19, 2013 07:00
	Oct 19, 2013 12:00

Imagine yourself in LA's historic Union Station, surrounded by passengers and passersby, wearing a state-of-the-art pair of Sennheiser wireless headphones, and experiencing a new opera happening all around you live. Over the next 70 minutes, you will discover a secret level of reality at the station, isolating singers and dancers from pedestrians, soaking in LA's architectural gem, and having a highly private experience in this public space.



**Invisible Cities**

Imagine yourself in LA’s historic Union Station, surrounded by passengers and passersby, wearing a state-of-the-art pair of Sennheiser wireless headphones, and experiencing a new opera happening all around you – live.

Over the next 10 minutes, you will discover a secret level of reality at the station, isolating singers and dancers from pedestrians, soaking in LA’s architectural gem, and having a highly private experience in this public space.

**Where:**

Union Station

800 N. Alameda St.

Los Angeles, CA, 90012

**Event Website**

KCCEET



October 10, 2013

## [Invisible Cities: The Dematerialization of the Opera](#)

[Yuval Sharon](#)



*Artbound provides an exclusive look at the avant-garde opera, "[Invisible Cities](#)," culminating with a special hour-long Artbound episode that airs exclusively on KCET on Dec. 12, 2013 at 9 p.m. The special will capture the complete creative narrative of "Invisible Cities," featuring scenes from the live opera performance, artfully interspersed with robust multimedia footage taken during the making of the production.*

We had just survived "Crescent City," our first production as an artist-driven new opera company called The Industry, when the sound designer Martin Gimenez approached me with a tantalizing notion: "What do you think about an opera on wireless headphones?"

Maybe he caught me at the perfect time, or maybe he had already figured out my manic love for creating impossible scenarios and discovering how to make them a reality. But his suggestion immediately provoked a process of imagining how wireless headphones could create a new operatic experience -- and maybe even expand the definition of opera. Now, a year-and-a-half later, that initial conversation is about to be realized as a performance of Christopher Cerrone's "Invisible Cities" -- a live opera using wireless sound transmission, to be performed in L.A.'s historic Union Station.



"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Dana Ross

### The Altered Reality of Headphones



Opera is exciting only when the eye listens and the ear sees -- that is, when the collision and confusion of your senses ignites your imagination. Headphones offer us this experience every time we use them: by detaching sound from image and confusing our sense of proximity, they offer us an altered view of everyday life. Separate from the physical world, the music that only we are hearing opens up a private doorway into reality. As you move through space, you are simultaneously somewhere else, in a cocoon of sound, supernaturally close to the source of the music. Suddenly the external space around you has transformed: a train station is a radically different place for the woman catching her train listening to *Dies irae* than for the man listening to "A Love Supreme." Any potential revelation or meaning they experience is no less truthful for being purely coincidental or different from their fellow commuter.

Beyond the ways headphones have changed our everyday engagement with music, I've had some unforgettable experiences with headphones as an artistic tool -- Janet Cardiff's haunting walk around Central Park, where pre-recorded memories co-existed with the present-day life of the park; Merce Cunningham's EyeSpace, where each audience member was given an iPod shuffle to hear a random selection of Mikel Rouse pieces while watching the same choreography; and Back to Back Theatre's play "Small Metal Objects," where a drug deal takes place among unwitting commuters. When you factor in the "silent disco" phenomenon, headphones have been disrupting trends in a wide spectrum of artistic genres for some time.

Now it seems like opera's time to be disrupted by this high-tech intervention -- and for a genre where the human voice is so essential, the possibilities opened up by wireless headphones are endless.

The next question became: If you no longer have to worry about acoustics and directionality of sound, where would you most love to stage an opera?



[Yuval Sharon's Invisible Cities Guide](#)

### **An Intersection of the City's Past and Future**

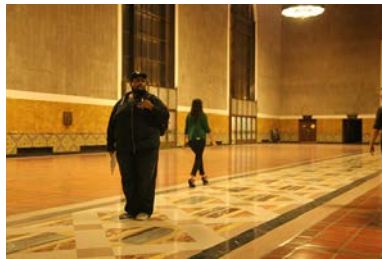
All train stations have an air of romance about them; the best and most beautiful ones transcend their functionality and become an existential expression of life's transience. This is the case with Union Station, its grandeur defying any charges of irrelevance in the ultimate Car City that is Los Angeles. (It's not unusual to meet Angelenos who didn't know a train station even exists here.) Even with the convenience stores and Starbucks, going to Union Station feels like a trip back in time, and unlike the other LA landmarks built by John and Donald Parkinson -- City Hall, Bullock's Wilshire, and the Memorial Coliseum -- the station's beauty feels charged with nostalgia. It's easy to imagine yourself as a traveler from the East Coast in 1939, pulling into Los Angeles as if it were the end of the world, and having your very first impression be of arriving at a Shangri-la: Spanish

architecture, vast space, palm trees. It was the city of the future, with the largest network of public transportation in the country offering its new citizens unbound freedom.

Visiting Union Station always reminded me of the title of the Cut Copy song: "nostalgia for the future." The optimism for what Los Angeles could become, as seen from 1939, still speaks in the tiles and archways. It's a perfect site to understand what the Italian author Italo Calvino meant in his novel "Invisible Cities": "Futures not achieved are only branches of the past: dead branches."



"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Dana Ross

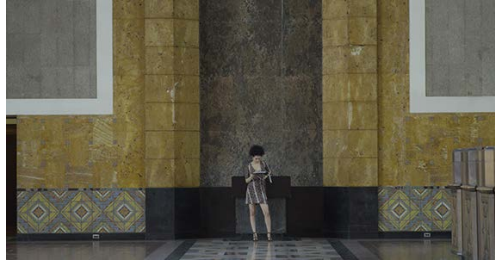


"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Dana Ross

But Union Station is hardly an anachronistic hold-over; instead, on the cusp of its 75th birthday, it's use as a transit hub for local and regional travel is on a significant up-swing. Public transportation is becoming an increasingly viable option in a city that desperately needs an alternative to clogged freeways. Metro's plans for expansion, including high-speed rail, is bringing Union Station back to the forefront of the city's imagination. The station is not simply a relic of the city's past but a beacon for its future.

This puts Union Station in an important moment of transition -- reminding us that Los Angeles is also in a constant state of becoming. Cities are not fixed images but fluid entities that morph because of their inhabitants. We must believe that the time we invest in a city shapes its very geography, both in tangible ways, like building a house, a skyscraper, or a freeway; or intangible ways -- acts of kindness, crimes, fashion statements, or car accidents -- that over time result in something tangible. Spending time in Union Station allows us to meditate on and perhaps even *perceive* this phenomenon -- even more so, I believe, in a pair of headphones that force us to be alone with our own thoughts.

I now had a central character for the headphones experience: Union Station. But which piece would make sense to bring to life in this way? What is the content that would take this beyond the realm of high-tech trick?



"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Joris Debeij



"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Joris Debeij



"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Joris Debeij

### The Perfect Novel

I used to believe a work of art was "perfect" only when it was inconceivable in another medium. "Invisible Cities" is a perfect book because its power is, I thought, purely literary -- not cinematic, not musical, but entirely dependent on the act of reading. So when I opened Christopher Cerrone's proposal for an operatic adaptation for the novel back in 2008, as Project Director of New York City Opera's VOX laboratory for new works, my snap judgment was severe: "This will never work."

In the novel, Kublai Khan hears stories of the cities in his empire by Marco Polo -- but the stories depict impossible cities, fantastical visions. The reader is offered brief descriptions of an invented city built on spiral seashells; or an unseen town built on long, thin stilts that stretch into the clouds; or the realm where the loved ones we lost are reborn but doomed not to recognize us. Calvino's cities reflect the architecture of the reader's own mind and heart. The imaginary travelogue is framed by a series of dialogues between the Mongol emperor and the Italian merchant, which Calvino depicts as philosophical and often cryptic musings on semiotics, the shortcomings of language, and a mistrust of external reality. The result is a book of limitless forking paths, concise like ancient wisdom but contemporary in its view of the world. It is a singular, perfect work.

So why turn this most book-ish of books into an opera? Before reviewing Chris's score, my prejudice against the idea already imagined a cheap musical pastiche, where each city was set to a different style like jazz or '80s rock, and cheesy plastic sets were wheeled on and off on wagons to illustrate each city.

To my amazement, and as a testament to Chris's deeply felt treatment of the novel, his score aspired to capture the book's very evanescence. Chris does not try and graft a traditional operatic structure onto the novel; instead, a serpentine musical structure became the drama of the piece. Chris employs resonance and sonic decay as a poetic realization of the book's atmosphere. He prioritizes experience over narrative, and evocation over illustration.



"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Dana Ross

So my snap judgment was completely wrong, and I selected the piece to be included in that year's workshop presentation. But that didn't solve one of the piece's primary challenges: how do you bring such an inward-looking work to life theatrically? Depicting the cities, materializing them on a stage, would be the death of the piece. When I called him again last June, after many years out of touch, Chris was in despair about the opera and had given up on any possibility of it being staged.

I jumped right in with a rather unorthodox question: "How would you feel about an audience hearing the work entirely on headphones?" For many composers, that request would have resulted in an abrupt dial tone on my end of the phone. But Chris responded: "It's funny, I've been thinking of myself more and more as a composer for headphones." I was relieved -- but not surprised: the haunting beauty of Chris's writing depends on an intimacy beyond what theaters can achieve; in Chris's setting, you want Kublai Khan and Marco Polo to be whispering in your ear. The detachment of sound from image offers a great solution to the problem of representing the cities -- like the book, the cities can truly live in the audience's individual imagination. And you could hardly select a location more philosophically appropriate for the piece than a train station -- especially Union Station.

We now had what every concept truly needs: an alignment of form, content, and expression. The process of articulating and realizing that vision over the intervening year-and-a-half was like a roller-coaster that was being built as we were riding it: moments of despair, when it seemed like the whole project was doomed to stay a figment of our imagination; moments of elation, most significantly when Sennheiser came on board as our sound sponsor and made this concept technically and financially realizable; and moments of wonder, which must accompany any journey of creating something out of nothing.



"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Dana Ross



"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Dana Ross

### "The Audience Completes the Work"

The performance at Union Station will be as close to immaterial as opera can allow while remaining a live experience. You will be offered a pair of headphones and move through the station -- which is not closed to its everyday traffic. The singers and dancers will be all around you, but you may not ever see them. The headphones and Sennheiser's wireless technology will always keep you connected to the story, so what you hear will be the same as everyone else; but what you see will belong to you alone. The performance will become *your* experience, with no wrong choices: everyone will miss something, and everyone will have a perfect view. There will not be anything to explain.

The opera, then, should feel like an invisible layer of reality, always there among the everyday life of the station. A "dematerialized opera" feels like a new exploration, and yet I feel anchored in the historic work by LA-based artists who explored the notion of the invisible so far as to question the need for an actual art object: conceptual artists like Michael Asher, Robert Barry, and Chris Burden almost made "invisible art" its own genre. Marcel Duchamp feels like the beginning of the conversation, with his radical shift away from the artist and towards the spectator. "The creative act is not performed by the artist alone," he said; "the audience completes the work." I don't know how well Calvino knew Duchamp, but it's impossible not to see a connection to Calvino's beautiful reformulation of Duchamp's statement in "Invisible Cities": "It is not the voice that commands the story, it is the ear."



"Invisible Cities" | Photo: Joris Debeij

If there is one overarching theme among the labyrinths in this production of "Invisible Cities," it would be that concept: It's not about appreciating the message but about the act of interpreting that message. The hope is for the audience to go beyond that idea as a purely aesthetic conceit and realize that the interpretive act of the spectator is the process we all undergo everyday; it's how we make sense of the world and realize our own individual attitude to life. The voices you will hear in your headphones act less as traditional operatic characters and more as guides to creating your own experience. And that experience, like the cities described in the novel, can be a tool to get us closer to ourselves: the past, present, or future version of us, which, like the city we live in, is in a constant state of transformation.

After all, even at the core of Calvino's most formal experiment, *If on a winter's night a traveler*, is an unforgettable life lesson: "You are always a potential You."

Link: <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/yuval-sharon-union-station-invisible-cities.html>



October 15, 2013

[Invisible Cities: The Science of a Silent Opera](#)

[Martin Gimenez](#)



*Artbound provides an exclusive look at the avant-garde opera, "[Invisible Cities](#)," culminating with a special hour-long Artbound episode that airs exclusively on KCET on Dec. 12, 2013 at 9 p.m. The special will capture the complete creative narrative of "Invisible Cities," featuring scenes from the live opera performance, artfully interspersed with robust multimedia footage taken during the making of the production.*

In one of my graduate school classes, our teacher posited the following question to the class, "What is the largest challenge faced by the modern sound designer?" While we all waxed poetic on the lightning-quick development of professional equipment, our teacher reached into his pocket and took out his answer: an iPod. He postulated that the accessibility and availability of high quality audio, once sequestered to movie theaters, hi-fi listening rooms and concert halls, has raised audience expectations so high that meeting them requires an extraordinary sonic experience. We will be able to achieve such an experience for "Invisible Cities" in a site-specific location, thanks primarily to the advanced technology, ingenuity, and support from Sennheiser.



The technology of "Invisible Cities" | Photo: Joris Debeij

### Silent Opera?

On a typically damp August night in Edinburgh a few years ago, some friends invited me to a Silent Disco. "What's that?" I asked, and they described a room where people listened to a DJ spin but with no traditional sound system, just a bunch of wireless headphones. What makes this experience truly unique is the inability of a passerby to not hear what all the commotion is about unless the drunken crowd brays along with the chorus at the top of their lungs (guilty as charged!). I was taken by this communal event where the element of sound allowed for both an intimate and collective experience.

Flash forward a year, and I'm working with some friends of mine on a show at the Getty Villa. During a lunch break, I decide to decompress by taking a guided tour of the Villa by one of their talented docents. Once we convened, instead of the docent speaking loudly to this small group, we were all handed a wireless receiver and headphones networked with the docent, so we could roam freely within a range and still receive the information which they practically would whisper into our ears. Very quickly, I began to think of the artistic possibilities of such a system.



The technology of "Invisible Cities" | Photo: Joris Debeij



My initial vision was something smaller and simpler than "Invisible Cities," revolving around a small portable system receiving only one or two wireless microphones to a portable mixer, and beaming that back to a group of people on a tour which would appear to get more surreal as the tour progressed. (Conveniently, Sennheiser also makes museum tour audio systems, so for me, this idea is certainly not dead!). But after a conversation with Yuval, we came to the conclusion that the piece had to be more of an intervention on an unexpected public place, rather than a quirky exploration of a museum space. Once Union Station was bandied about as a possible location, another friend from The Industry's family mentioned he had contacts at Sennheiser. One thing led to another, and they quickly jumped into the deep end with us!

### **No (static) Squealing (static) Feedback!**

Once the space and the piece were in place, I had to start to devise the complete sound system required to make this work. Obviously, this called for some out-of-the-box thinking, and I quickly enlisted the aid of some of my wilder colleagues, as well as one of the top production houses here in L.A., Bexel ASG. The conversations we had outlined many of the quirks of this production idiom, which at the same time make this project easier and harder for my team and I.



The technology of "Invisible Cities" | Photo: Joris Debeij

One problem faced by sound engineers everywhere is a basic question of physics. No matter how hard we try in a traditional live sound environment, no one will hear exactly what we hear. The acoustics of a room make every seat a slightly different aural experience from the next, and the mere physical presence of an audience absorbing sonic energy changes the acoustic nature of the room. For the headphone conceit, we are creating the entire aural environment from the ground up, so I know what goes to all 150 headphones will be exactly the same -- my mix is your mix, period!

The other major advantage we have is a complete lack of feedback, or those annoying squeals you hear when a microphone is too loud near a speaker that sound is coming out of. Since the sound is coming directly from the microphones to the headphones, in order for feedback to happen in this equation, those microphones would need to be placed between your ears and the headphones, and somehow I think that will be physically difficult to do.



The technology of "Invisible Cities" | Photo: Joris Debeij

Far and away, the biggest challenges on this project are the wireless issues. Professional wireless microphones utilize frequencies in the old UHF television bandwidth (everything over channel 13). In the olden days before the advent of digital TV, within a given channel there would be individual data spikes within a TV channel and we could sneak wireless microphones in between those spikes, but with digital TV, the entire channel range is full of data thus making it harder to place frequencies within the spectrum. Thankfully, Sennheiser's newest wireless microphone systems (the 9000 series), all have spectrum analyzers built in so we can quickly and efficiently set microphone frequencies.

All of this technology is quite amazing, but what really warms my heart is the response I got from our conductor, Marc Lowenstein, when he first put the headphones on at a rehearsal. His amazement level was stratospheric, as was mine since we'd proven to ourselves that this crazy idea will actually work.

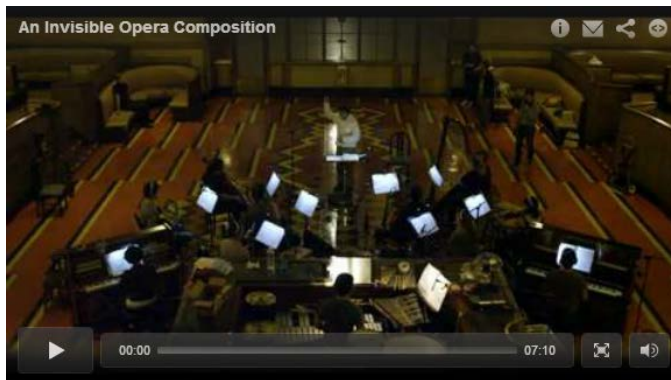
Link: <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/invisible-cities-opera-union-station-martin-gimenez.html>



October 22, 2013

[Invisible Cities: Composing an Opera for Headphones](#)

[Christopher Cerrone](#)



*Artbound provides an exclusive look at the avant-garde opera, "[Invisible Cities](#)," culminating with a special hour-long Artbound episode that airs exclusively on KCET on Dec. 12, 2013 at 9 p.m. The special will capture the complete creative narrative of "Invisible Cities," featuring scenes from the live opera performance, artfully interspersed with robust multimedia footage taken during the making of the production.*

I discovered Italo Calvino when I was an undergraduate. As a young composer interested in combining words, visual art, and music, I was immediately drawn to his books. Their combination of conceptualism, postmodernism, but also his luxurious prose were all highly appealing to me. Unlike many other postmodern writers whose imaginative works I greatly admired -- DeLillo, Wallace, even Nabokov -- Calvino's writing was always lyrical, and inspired a strong musical response in me.

I tore through half of Calvino's catalog -- "If on a winter's night a traveler," "Cosmicomics," "Mr Palomar," "the Baron in the Trees," "Marcovaldo" -- before finally discovering "Invisible Cities." More than any other of his books, this one cried out to be sung. After reading the first few chapters of the novel, I sat down in a practice room at Yale, where I was a graduate student at the time. The opening of the opera just flowed out of me.



"Invisible Cities"

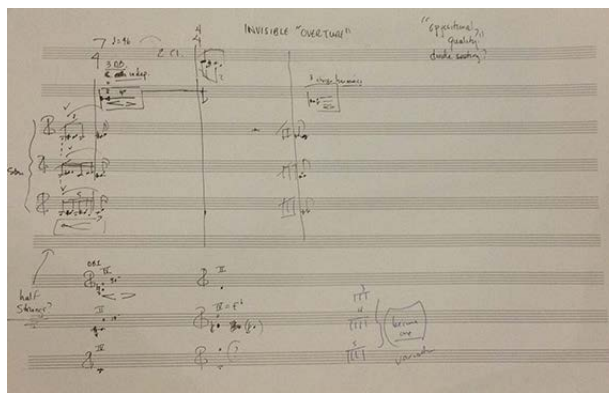


As I began composing the work, I tried to image what "Invisible Cities" would sound like. I wanted the entire opera to germinate from just a few musical ideas, just like Marco Polo's ideas of cities also coming from his memories of Venice. I began with the idea of decay, and how sounds resonate and change as they resonate. The Khan's empire was decaying; this seemed like the perfect sonic metaphor. I would record myself playing piano, and cut off the attacks, just getting the ringing and resonating sound.

Listen to piano decay:

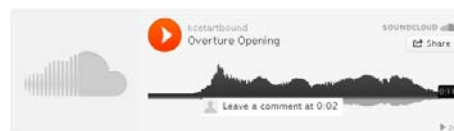


As I wrote the overture, these sounds found their way into my orchestration, so that every instrument in my orchestra would be an extension of this evolving piano resonance.



Sketch of the overture to "Invisible Cities"

As the overture begins, we hear the pang of Kublai Khan's anxiety, followed but the lush sounds of decaying harmonies.



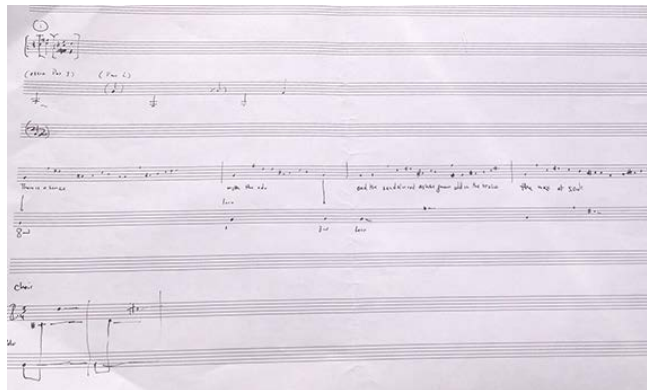
This gesture is one of the musical touchstones of the opera. It returns again and again, reminding us of Kublai Khan's worries, his anxieties, his fears. It opens the explosive attacks in the third scene, "Language," where Kublai is confronted by a phalanx of ambassadors, none of whom speak his language.



These sounds of anxiety return later in the opera, as Marco Polo takes us to "Adelma," the city of the dead, and addresses what Kublai Khan fears most: his own end.

### Water-Music

The gesture of anxiety is one of the main musical elements of the opera, but it is complemented with an ever-present flowing, water-music, which opens the prologue.



Sketch for Scene 1: Prologue

This music is placid and pulsing, reflecting Kublai Khan's sense of resignation and melancholy. Its simplicity allows the words to predominate and proved very appropriate for Calvino's luxuriant text.



"Invisible Cities"

The water music, like the pang of anxiety, emerges again and again in "Invisible Cities" and forms the basis of the fifth scene, "Venice." In "Venice," rather than having Marco Polo describe cities, Kublai Khan begins to interrogate Marco Polo about a city of his own description. He describes a city with "bridges arching over canals," "palaces with doorsteps immersed in water," "island gardens glowing green in the lagoon's grayness." (What city could that be?) The water music, lush in the prologue now becomes more active. The music is sharper, darker, and has more of an edge.

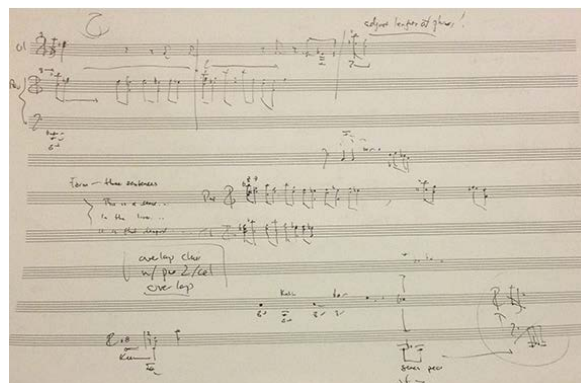
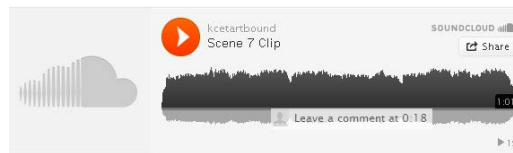


In the city of the dead, "Adelma," both Kublai Khan and Marco Polo confront the specter of their own death. Here the water music is mixed for the first time with the gesture of anxiety.



In the final scene, "Epilogue," after Kublai Khan laments, "but it is useless if the last landing place can only be the infernal city," the water music returns. Finally we get an answer to the questions that Kublai has been posing of Marco throughout the whole opera, the question of what do to in the face of his failing empire, in the face of his own imminent death:

"Kublai Khan  
 seek and find  
 who and what  
 in the midst  
 of the inferno  
 are not the inferno  
 make them endure  
 give them space."



Sketch for prologue, with variations for opening pattern.

**Headphones/Microphones/Opera**

What has excited me most about The Industry's conception for "Invisible Cities" is the way the music will make it into people's ears.

In composing the music for "Invisible Cities," I created a highly diverse fabric of color in my orchestration, with many levels of detail that would evoke the elaborate and fantastical places that Calvino imagines.



With headphones the listener can actually hear a remarkable level of detail in the score. Similarly, there are moments when the singers are called to sing extremely quietly, barely louder than breathing. Here too, headphones can make the sonic world anything we wish.



The acoustic of the music is variable too. A space's acoustics creates a mood as much as anything else. Composers of acoustic music like myself often bemoan our lack of control over the sonic spaces we are given.

With "Invisible Cities," I was able to work closely with the sound design team to create a different acoustic for each scene of the opera. From the acoustic reality, we are now in sonic worlds as diverse and imaginative as the cities that Calvino describes.

### About the Author

Hailed as “a rising star” by The New Yorker and singled out as “the program’s highlight” by The New York Times, Christopher Cerrone (b. 1984, Huntington, NY) is a Brooklyn-based composer of works ranging from chamber music, orchestral works, and [MORE](#) ▶

Link: <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/invisible-cities-opera-composer-christopher-cerrone-union-station-music.html>



October 29, 2013

Invisible Cities: The Choreography of Union Station

By Victoria Looseleaf



*Artbound provides an exclusive look at the avant-garde opera, "Invisible Cities," culminating with a special hour-long Artbound episode that airs exclusively on KCET on Dec. 12, 2013 at 9:35 p.m. The special will capture the complete creative narrative of "Invisible Cities," featuring scenes from the live opera performance, artfully interspersed with robust multimedia footage taken during the making of the production.*

Several people are walking briskly, briefcases and backpacks in tow. Others are slumped in seats, dozing, oblivious. Yet others, sneaker-clad with determined gazes, are marching in unison, individuals occasionally breaking apart from the line, executing crisp turns and making elaborate hand motions before dipping and writhing in full-bodied spasms.

It's an ordinary night in the big city. Or is it?

Welcome to Los Angeles' fabled Union Station -- the largest railroad passenger terminal in the Western United States -- where one feels that time, instead of marching irretrievably forward, with travelers scurrying (or not), to parts known and unknown, has come to a kind of glorious stop. It's here that Yuval Sharon, artistic director and founder of the three-year old, avant-garde opera company, The Industry, is staging "Invisible Cities." Billed as the first "headphone" opera, the work features music by Christopher Cerrone, who also wrote the libretto based on Italo Calvino's 1972 novel of the same name. There are eight singers, an 11-piece chamber orchestra (harp, strings, percussion, horns and winds), led by music director Mark Lowenstein, and eight dancers from L.A. Dance Project, a co-producer of the work. The terpsichorean octet is moving to the savvy choreography of Danielle Agami, a former Batsheva dancer who helms the recently transplanted troupe Ate9. (Agami's work could also be seen on Melissa Barak at the Broad Stage recently in a solo she made for the director of the fledgling Barak Ballet.)

But about those headphones...

Credit the audio firm, Sennheiser, with supplying state-of-the-art wireless equipment (E. Martin Gimenez is the lead sound designer), to the 200 or so audience members expected at each performance. (The show opened Saturday, October 19, and is presented twice nightly on various dates through November 8). These comfy-to-wear headphones allow viewers/listeners to hear everything sung and played as they move freely about the station, choosing which performers to follow in and out of the various rooms.





"Invisible Cities" | Joris Debeij



"Invisible Cities" | Joris Debeij

Explains Sharon, 34, whose last year's hyper-opera, "Crescent City," by Anne LeBaron and librettist Douglas Kearny, was a critical success: "We're blown away by the technology. It's a new adventure for the singers, and definitely for me, too. It's unlike anything any of us have done before, and it's thrilling to be with a group of artists who are also excited about that. It opens up the field of possibilities for the future - not just opera and dance -- but performance in general."

Sharon, of Israeli descent, moved to L.A. in 2009 to be Achim Freyer's assistant director on L.A. Opera's controversial production of Wagner's "Ring" cycle. He says that the Sennheiser technology serves as a crucial story-telling device. "What could come across as a gimmick," he points out, "the wireless technology, the headphones, the space, is actually connected to the concept and content of the piece. It's a perfect way to hear it!"

And the perfect venue. Opened in 1939 and partially designed by the father-son team, John and Donald B. Parkinson, Union Station combines Dutch Colonial and Mission Revival with Streamline Moderne styles, the result a reflection of the city's then obsession with both Spanish Revival and Art Deco. Although this may sound like an architectural mash-up, it works, and is, in fact, a stunning monument to the past, the key word being, 'past.'

Sure, you can catch an Amtrak train or connect to the MTA Red and Gold lines -- as some 60,000 passengers do each day -- but Union Station, the last of the great train terminals built during the peak of rail travel in the States, seems like a destination unto its own. Here, extravagant travertine marble walls and terra cotta tiled floors conjure ghosts of old Hollywood and then some, their secrets yet to be uncovered -- seemingly an ideal backdrop to Calvino's 165-page novel.



"Invisible Cities" | Joris Debeij

An elegiac musing on the yearnings of the human soul, "Invisible Cities" concerns the aging emperor Kublai Khan (Cedric Berry), who asks the intrepid Venetian voyager, Marco Polo (Ashley Faatoalia), to regale him with tales of the wondrous cities he claims to have visited in Khan's decaying empire. What better place than Union Station, then, and what better format than opera, where artistic elements come together in order to elevate emotions. For Agami, 28, who was recommended to choreograph the site-specific work by mutual friends of Sharon and L.A. Dance Project's artistic director, Benjamin Millepied (married to Natalie Portman, he decamps to direct Paris Opera Ballet next year), "Invisible Cities" is a good fit.

"I have choreographed for open spaces in museums and galleries in Israel and Germany," the shaved-headed Agami explains, "and I enjoy taking dance off the stage and out of the studio. I was also very curious about the music, because a lot of times when I create dance, I like to choose sometimes not to use music at all. But I listened to the music, and I love it. It creates more time and more space.



"Invisible Cities" | Joris Debeij

"A lot of people looking at the dancers will not be hearing the music at all, so in a way, whoever's going to be watching it, it will be very relevant and meaningful even if they don't hear the music. It has to co-exist with silence," adds Agami, a powerful performer in her own right, "which gives me so much freedom to enjoy both." As the singers, assuming various guises and in costumes designed by E. B. Brooks (janitors, masked-ball goers, an exotically-garbed Khan), croon, and the dancers slink, slither and sidle about from room to room, entire worlds are created -- visually, aurally, viscerally. But it's the dance element that seems the most extreme, with the performers, all ballet trained, including Charlie Allan Hodges, Anthony Bryant, Aaron Carr, Julia Marion Eichten, Morgan Taylor Lugo, Nathan B. Makolandra, Rachele Ann Rafailedes and Amanda Kramer Well. The octet executes an array of moves that range from rigorous solos and duets to trios, their vocabulary ranging from improvisational and hip-hop-like explosions, to glacially slow stances reminiscent of Robert Wilson. Then there is the Gaga factor, which, contrary to pop culture fandom, has nothing to do with the Lady herself. Israeli-born Agami not only was a member of Batsheva Dance Company, but also was educated in Gaga and

teaches Ohad Naharin's signature discipline. A kind of corporeal multi-tasking that trains the body and also helps the performer gain self-awareness by responding to verbal cues ("See if you can swim with your bones inside of your skin"), this distinct movement vocabulary punctuates the opera.

Explains Agami, whose Ate9 troupe is performing at Venice's Electric Lodge and at Café Club Fais Do-Do in November: "Practicing Gaga first thing in the morning changes how you approach your movement. It changes why you want to move or where you start moving. The images and sensations are not like standing in front of a mirror, making sure that your lines are still high and tight and fine and right -- it's a different morning.



"Invisible Cities" | Joris Debeij

"I come to the studio and tell them that it's okay to be a little ugly and messy and raw, rather than so tuned and polished and self-aware," continues Agami. "Being self-aware is a great thing, but not if the only thing you care about is how you look like. I feel that a lot of the movements I give the dancers I attach to them a little fantasy or story that is nothing to do with how the movement looks like. It's still very much about form, to create form, but I don't tell them this is the most important thing. I find another way to achieve that form by using imagery or story. While they're dancing they're thinking about this texture that they're supposed to achieve and not how it looks like."

Heady stuff, but for the viewer, it's more about those fantastic bodies moving through space -- in this case, Union Station -- and through time -- the reason people are at the Station, a quasi-Einsteinian concept that we're all going somewhere, even when we're standing still.

The dancers are also listening to the live orchestra music via earplugs, which, Agami, says, "takes you apart a bit from what's going on around you, so you can be creating a world that is different than a casual world. It was my decision that the dancers have the music in our ears, because it would help us maintain the small gap between the performers and the pedestrians, the audience. I felt it could help the dancers have a different experience and still be connected to the heart of the creation, connected to music."



"Invisible Cities" | Joris Debeij

Hodges, who has danced with, among others, Twyla Tharp, including in her Broadway show, "Come Fly Away," is a member of L.A.D.P. The diminutive but commanding performer also studied architecture, which makes being inside Union Station even more meaningful for him.

"The architecture is so specific -- the design, the aesthetic and the quality of the building -- has made this a lot of fun. To pull out all those grand and different eras in our material - the 1920's, 1930's, 1950's - it's been wonderful. In L.A.D.P., we're always grateful to collaborate with other artists, choreographers and people -- in this instance, it's with Danielle -- and it's been informative, positive and progressive. She has beautiful analogies and can tap into a concept or idea that changes how you can present the material."

Hodges admits that the dancers' relationship to the microphones is complicated. "It's nice to hear the music, but it's hard to work with the mikes, so when we're rolling on the ground -- it's very physical, the floors, the marble - - you don't want to break the microphone, you want to be cautious with it. You also would like to throw it away and just dance. But," adds Hodges, "it is cool to have that kind of silence. When the headphones are in and you can't hear anything but the music, that creates a performance even though you're in the middle of a public space."

As to interacting with the innocent passersby en route to their lives elsewhere, Hodges says the dancers are aware of them, "in as much as they're dancing in our space, and we are to move around them and with them, but it isn't meant to be hammed up as a performance."

One person's ham may be another person's caviar, with the performance, literally, taking place everywhere in the Station, including on the walls. That's where Jason H. Thompson's projections of the libretto reveal themselves in meditative and intriguing ways, the text adding another tier to the already multi-layered production.



At one point, two women in white (Delaram Kamareh, Ashley Knight), walk stealthily, in stilettos, down the main entrance's cavernous hall, with these words appearing, almost magically, overhead, painting a picture of Venice: "Did you ever happen to see a city resembling this one? Bridges arching over canals, palaces with doorsteps immersed in water..."

Existential, poetic, organic. The opera has everything, including an exquisite finale performed in a room where a row of ticket booths, not used for decades, serves as a catwalk for the dancers, a recessional of arched backs, flat backs, backbends, that mysteriously morph into a parade of souls, hungering, searching, listening, perhaps, for departure times to destinations unidentified.

The last words one sees -- and hears, linger long after the final bows.

"And I hear from your voice the invisible reasons that cities live."

The voice of Yuval Sharon -- and his very talented collaborators -- far from invisible, brings to Los Angeles yet another reason that cities, and all of us living in them, need -- and thrive on -- art.



November 7, 2013

Finding Space in the Inferno: Observations on Calvino's 'Invisible Cities'

By David C. Sloane



*Artbound provides an exclusive look at the avant-garde opera, "[Invisible Cities](#)," culminating with a special hour-long Artbound episode that airs exclusively on KCET on Dec. 12, 2013 at 9:35 p.m. The special will capture the complete creative narrative of "Invisible Cities," featuring scenes from the live opera performance, artfully interspersed with robust multimedia footage taken during the making of the production.*

The stories in the book "Invisible Cities" are often less than one page, with the longest barely more than three or four. Yet, they are so rich, so compelling, so thoughtful, that a generation of USC students have always found new ways to surprise me with how they were touched by a story I had forgotten or not discussed.

As Italo Calvino writes at the end of "Invisible Cities" (1972), if we live in an infernal city -- and, he doesn't mean just L.A., but all modern cities -- how do we survive the inferno? His answer is that most people do so by becoming part of the inferno. He rejects such a stance, encouraging his readers (as they do at the end of the "Invisible Cities" opera), instead to "seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space." In other words, how do we as scholars, activists, and residents not simply accept the racial hatred, economic polarities, and health disparities of the modern age, but instead act and support those who are fighting to create a just, safe, healthy place for everyone? That optimism first drew me to the book. As the "Invisible Cities" opera crowd wandered on Halloween night through Union Station searching for the singers and dancers, I was reminded of two other reasons the book has enthralled me for decades.

First, the book "Invisible Cities" can be read at multiple levels -- a surrealistic modernist classic delving into human psychology, an insightful exploration of social relations, or homage to Venice, the author's hometown. The interpretation that draws me is an exploration of the way the built environment and human life interact. Repeatedly, Calvino highlights issues urbanists debate.

For instance, is it the place or the people that make a difference? In Calvino's fictional city, Perinthia, the astronomers use their calculations (much like modern planners) to plan a perfect city. Yet, a generation later, the houses are filled with "cripples, dwarfs, hunchbacks, obese men, bearded women." Calvino ends the story, as usual, with his knife to the heart of the issue: the astronomers "must admit that all their calculations were wrong and their figures are unable to describe the heavens, or else they must reveal that the order of the gods is reflected exactly in the city of monsters." Back in our world, if the planners did plan Los Angeles, which they did - did we get exactly the city they wanted, the one they imagined, the "better city" we had hoped for?



Union Station | Photo: Joris Debeij



Union Station | Photo: Joris Debeij



Union Station | Photo: Joris Debeij

Similarly, in Calvino's *Fedorans*, he reverses our conception of what is the foundation of society. Two-half cities coexist: one is made up of the roller-coaster, carousel, Ferris wheel and big top; the other holds the banks, factories, and schools. One is permanent, one temporary. Then comes the unexpected conclusion, "every year the day comes when the workmen remove the marble pediments, lower the stone walls, the cement pylons, take down the Ministry, the monument, the docks, the petroleum refinery, the hospital, [and] load them on trailers." Can the buildings of stone really be less permanent than the roller-coaster? Well, if the American economy is driven by consumer spending, not by manufacturing, don't we live in cities of consumption? Don't the retail sales go year round, and the banks get turned into restaurants? Haven't our ideas of permanent and temporary already been turned upside down?

Second, the most recent generation of architectural historians reminds us that the built environment is a dynamic living place that helps shape human decisions. And, other social scientists, especially those battling health disparities and other differences in social outcomes, argue the place you are born affects your life because of the resources available to you differ so dramatically.

Calvino is no social scientist. Instead, he delves into such issues as allusions, even through delusions in stories that present us with cities where everyone who we meet looks like someone we know who has died (Adelma) or another city the living co-inhabit with the dead and the unborn (Laudomia). In *Leandra*, he creates two sets of gods, one of which moves whenever we move (Penates), and one that never moves, staying with the house or office (Lares), Calvino suddenly shakes us from our self-centeredness, arguing that when we move into a house, we move into the memories that come with it. When we move, we take our memories and experiences, pains and joys with us, but we also leave them in the house we have left.



Union Station | Photo: Joris Debeij

When a spouse dies, people tell us, you should move. I never understood this sentiment -- why would we not want to stay in the place where our happy memories of the person who is gone happened? Yet, Calvino helps us see, that place is filled with those memories, will those memories keep us from starting surviving and starting a new life, will they imprison us in the old memories, the old ways, not allowing us to search for new experiences? Would that be okay? He poses these heartfelt questions with this simple story.

"*Invisible Cities*" is a rich text, offering us new insights each time we read it -- whether we care about the people or the places that surround us, he helps us understand them better. And, insistently, he reminds us, we are actors, affecting those around us. It is our city, don't be invisible.



Union Station | Photo: Joris Debeij



Union Station | Photo: Joris Debeij





November 12, 2013

Invisible Cities: The Finale

Artbound



*Artbound provides an exclusive look at the avant-garde opera, "Invisible Cities," culminating with a special hour-long Artbound episode that airs exclusively on KCET on Dec. 12, 2013 at 9:35 p.m. The special will capture the complete creative narrative of "Invisible Cities," featuring scenes from the live opera performance, artfully interspersed with robust multimedia footage taken during the making of the production.*

What does it take to stage a "headphone" opera at Union Station? Over the last few weeks, Artbound's cameras and contributors have provided behind-the-scenes features examining the production components of innovative work "Invisible Cities." From an audio essay by composer Chris Cerrone detailing his inspiration for the opera, to a close-look at the wireless technology utilized by sound engineer Martin Gimenez, and a glimpse at the choreography created by Danielle Agami, here's a roundup with our five featurettes.



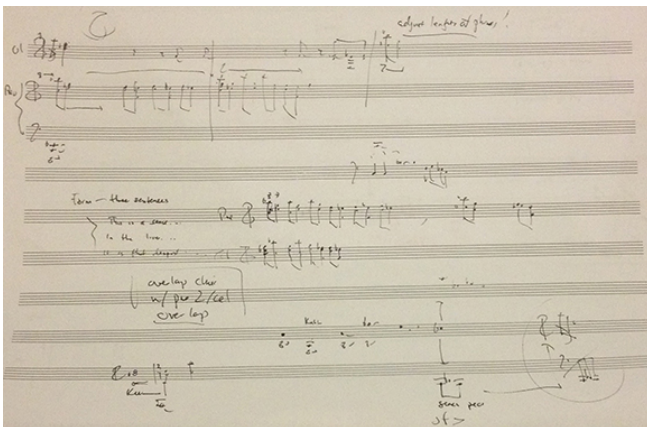
**Invisible Cities: The Dematerialization of the Opera**

The possibilities opened up by wireless headphones are endless. The use of wireless technology in "Invisible Cities" creates a new operatic experience -- and maybe even expands the definition of opera.



### **Invisible Cities: The Science of a Silent Opera**

The sound designer behind "Invisible Cities" explains the challenges of getting wireless technology to deliver the extraordinary sonic experience that befits the unconventional opera.



### **Invisible Cities: Composing an Opera for Headphones**

In composing the music for "Invisible Cities," Christopher Cerrone created many levels of orchestral detail that would evoke the elaborate and fantastical places that Calvino imagines.



### **Invisible Cities: The Choreography of Union Station**

Dancers in "Invisible Cities" execute an array of moves in Union Station that range from rigorous solos to improvisational and hip-hop-like explosions, to glacially slow stances.



**Finding Space in the Inferno: Observations on Calvino's 'Invisible Cities'**

Union Station is an ideal place to realize the opera "Invisible Cities," an adaptation of Italo Calvino's book about relationships between built environments and social and economic life.

Link: <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/invisible-cities-union-station.html>

# SOCIAL MEDIA



 **Harry Shum Jr**   
@iharryshum 

About to see an Interactive Opera Dance experience w/ @hieunho at Union Station.  
[#invisiblecities](#)  
[instagram.com/p/f4KLExmEoe/](https://www.instagram.com/p/f4KLExmEoe/)

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**51** RETWEETS **78** FAVORITES 

9:49 PM - 24 Oct 13

994K Followers; 51 Retweets, 78 Favorites

 **Jesse Tyler Ferguson**   
@jessetyler 

Saw [#InvisibleCities](#) at Union Station last night. Such a beautiful marriage of live music, dance and opera.  
[latimes.com/entertainment/...](https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/...)

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 **Los Angeles Times**

**'Invisible Cities,' the industry's opera, adding 5 more performances**

"Invisible Cities," the new "headphone opera" by composer Christopher Cerrone, based on Italo Calvino's book and being performed at Union Station, is adding five additional performances.







[View on web](#)





**10** RETWEETS **8** FAVORITES 


9:56 AM - 25 Oct 13 Flag media

765K Followers; 10 Retweets, 8 Favorites

 **Jill Soloway**   
@jillwaysolo  

Wow just saw [#invisiblecities](#) at union station. Astonishing and moving and gorgeous. [pic.twitter.com/qRdsX2sBqV](https://pic.twitter.com/qRdsX2sBqV)

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More



7K Followers; 1 Retweet, 8 Favorites

 **Justin Mikita**  
@JustinMikita 

Loved [@industryopera](#)'s 'Invisible Cities'.  
Dance, opera & technology - a daring integrative theatrical experience.  
[latimes.com/entertainment/...](https://latimes.com/entertainment/...)

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[View on web](#)

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**2** RETWEETS **1** FAVORITE 

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4:55 PM - 25 Oct 13 Flag media

21K Followers; 2 Retweets, 1 Favorite



A screenshot of a Twitter post by Michael Schneider (@franklinavenue). The post features a profile picture of a man, the name "Michael Schneider" in bold, and the handle "@franklinavenue". To the right are icons for a dropdown menu and a "Follow" button. The text of the tweet reads: "SEE: 'Invisible Cities,' an immersive dance and opera experience at Union Station [franklinavenue.blogspot.com/2013/10/plenty...](\"http://franklinavenue.blogspot.com/2013/10/plenty...\") @industryopera @AshTheTenor". Below the text are icons for Reply, Retweet, Favorite, and More. A summary bar shows 4 retweets and 3 favorites, with small profile pictures of users who interacted. The timestamp "3:10 PM - 28 Oct 13" is at the bottom.

**Michael Schneider**  
@franklinavenue

SEE: "Invisible Cities," an immersive dance and opera experience at Union Station [franklinavenue.blogspot.com/2013/10/plenty...](http://franklinavenue.blogspot.com/2013/10/plenty...) @industryopera @AshTheTenor

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4 RETWEETS 3 FAVORITES

3:10 PM - 28 Oct 13

11K Followers; 4 Retweets, 3 Favorites



A screenshot of a Twitter post by Sara Gazarek (@saragazarek). The post features a profile picture of a woman, the name "Sara Gazarek" in bold with a verified badge, and the handle "@saragazarek". To the right are icons for a dropdown menu and a "Follow" button. The text of the tweet reads: "Just saw #invisiblecities and it may have been 1 of the more compelling & enjoyable musical experiences of my life! [vine.co/v/hjj1XUQoPYW](\"http://vine.co/v/hjj1XUQoPYW\")". Below the text are icons for Reply, Retweet, Favorite, and More.

**Sara Gazarek** ✓  
@saragazarek

Just saw #invisiblecities and it may have been 1 of the more compelling & enjoyable musical experiences of my life! [vine.co/v/hjj1XUQoPYW](http://vine.co/v/hjj1XUQoPYW)

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12K Followers; 3 Retweets, 6 Favorites

# CELEBRITY ATTENDANCE



Harry Shum, Jr. from "Glee"





Academy Award Winner Natalie Portman



Grammy Award Winner Steven Tyler, lead singer of Aerosmith



Academy Award Winner Natalie Portman



Grammy Award Winner Steven Tyler, lead singer of Aerosmith