

# I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

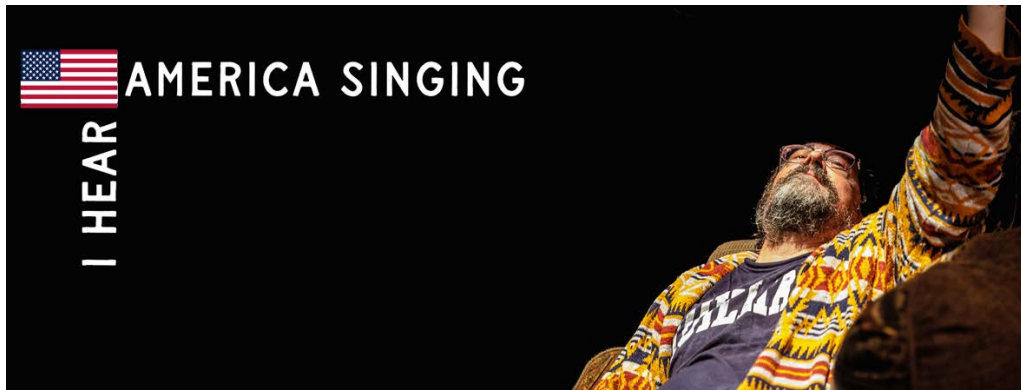
*Another Revolution of the Heart*



Robert Frankenberry  
Desiree Soteres  
Christopher Scott

A New Mercury Collective  
Production  
Conceived, Composed, Written,  
and Directed by

Daron Hagen



Another Revolution of the Heart.

Four Days. Three Friends. One Dream.

### ***Synopsis***

A documentary film crew dogs Broadway composer Robbie Doerfler's final days as he and his friends Roger and Rose prepare for a critical backers' audition. Robbie's world unravels as he compulsively recontextualizes musical and narrative tropes to make sense of his life. Blending operatic and filmic conventions, music history, fantasy, and documentary, the fictional operafilm explores through song themes of creativity, identity, and mortality, culminating in a poignant and thought-provoking question:

“Where do we go when we go up — is it Heaven?”



### ***Director's Statement***

“Together, we've creating something new here that combines the emotional punch of cutting-edge live operatic performance with magical realism and the psychological verisimilitude of gritty, intimate, indie-auteur filmmaking. Neither cinema nor opera, but storytelling that combines multiple filmic, theatrical, and musical languages, directed, and edited to the rhythm of the score by the composer himself, brought vividly to life by brave, fiercely committed performers.”



### ***Specifications***

Project Type: Experimental, Magical Realist Mockumentary Opera/Musical

Genres: Musical Theater, Operafilm, Auteur-independent, Poly-Styletic

Runtime: 1:18:30

Completion Date: January 1, 2025

Country of Origin: United States

Language: English

Shooting Format: Digital

Sound Format: Stereo

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Film Color: Color





## ***THE NEW MERCURY COLLECTIVE***

Formed in 2013 by artistic director Daron Hagen and named after Orson Welles' Mercury Theater, the New Mercury Collective exists to create and sustain a laboratory for artistic exploration, creative risk-taking, and performance in which its members can collaborate on the creation and performance of post-genre works combining theater, music, and emerging technology for audiences of all types underpinned by a fierce commitment to social justice and civic activism.

For ten years, the TNMC has been developing *The Bardo Trilogy*, a sequence of operafilms devoted to the exploration of the liminal zone between life and art, and life and what comes after. [I Hear America](#)

[Singing](#), the third and final installment, wrapped in Pittsburgh at the Rauh Studio Theater and various other settings in Pittsburgh in March 2024 and is currently in post-production for September 2025 release to festivals. Currently still on the international film festival circuit is [9-10: Love Before the Fall](#), an operafilm for six characters set in a restaurant in New York City's Little Italy the evening before the fall of the World Trade Center. [Orson Rehearsed](#), the collective's first project (resulting in a web installation, an Operafilm, and a staged opera integrating film), is currently streaming internationally on all of the major video platforms.



**Daron Hagen** (b. 1961) holds a unique position in American music as both an internationally acclaimed concert music and opera composer, and as a pioneering auteur composer-director-writer-editor of operafilm. His internationally lauded *Bardo Trilogy* films stream worldwide on major platforms including Amazon Prime Video, and are further documented in his forthcoming book, *Exploring Operafilm: Making the Bardo Trilogy* (McFarland, April 2026).

Hagen's career spans five decades. He has composed five symphonies, 12 concerti, 13 operas, and over 250 songs. The world's most distinguished ensembles, such as the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic and Seattle Opera, have commissioned his works. His collaborations with Leonard Bernstein, JoAnn Falletta, Lukas Foss, Kate Lindsey, Paul Muldoon, Gerard

Schwarz, and Gore Vidal reflect his standing among creative leaders.

Hagen is a Guggenheim Fellow, a Lifetime Member of the Corporation of Yaddo, and the founding artistic director of the [New Mercury Collective](#). Past president of the Lotte Lehmann Foundation, Hagen is former artistic director and chair of faculty for the Seasons Festival and has served as an adjudicator for the National Endowment for the Arts, ASCAP, and Opera America. Hagen has received two Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Fellowships, Bogliasco and Camargo Fellowships, two American Academy of Arts and Letters awards, and the Bearns, Barlow, ASCAP-Nissim, and Kennedy Center Friedheim Prizes. Hagen has taught at Bard College, the Curtis Institute of Music, the Chicago College of Performing Arts, and the Princeton Atelier. His memoir, *Duet with the Past*, was published in 2019.

Published by Peermusic Classical and represented by Encompass Arts, Hagen studied at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Curtis, and the Juilliard School and continues his work in Upstate New York.

**Talal Jabari** (Cinematographer) is an Arab-American filmmaker and the producer of *One Night in Tantura* (post-production), a personal journey of discovery into the root of the Palestinian refugee issue and *Tattoo Mike*, the personal story of an 80s pop icon who struggled with his sexuality, drugs and diabetes, in the midst of the underground tattoo movement in New York City. Talal is best known for producing and directing *Full Signal* (Big Sky 2010), which garnered 3 distribution deals after a successful festival run and being screened in Congress. The film continues to be used for advocacy around the world. Talal is also known for *Enemies of the South*, commissioned by Al-Jazeera Documentary Channel, and which spent over a year ranked in the station's Top 30 documentaries. In addition, Talal also co-produced the Critic's Choice-nominated *Speed Sisters* (Hot Docs 2015) and is the cinematographer of *Naila and the Uprising* (IDFA, 2017). His other work includes *24h Jerusalem* (TV documentary-2014) as Contributing Director & Cinematographer as well as *Holy Blood* (TV Documentary Series-2013) as Field Producer. A multi-linguist, Talal has worked extensively in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern and Western Europe as well as North America.



## THE CAST



**Robert Frankenberry (Musical Director / ROBBIE DOERFLER)** leads a multi-faceted career as a vocalist, pianist, educator, actor, and conductor. His credits in musical direction cover the span of opera on film, *Orson Rehearsed* (Principal Coach / Orson #2), and *9/10: Love Before the Fall* (Music Director / Cory) opera on stage, including *Sweeney Todd* (Weathervane Theatre), *The Tales of Hoffmann* (D'Angelo Opera Theatre), *Così fan Tutte* (DaCorneto Opera), Monteverdi's 8th Book of Madrigals (Opera Theater of Pittsburgh), Robert X. Rodriguez' *Frida* (microscopic opera), and the world staged premiere of Daron Hagen's *Vera of Las Vegas* (Center for Contemporary Opera). During the 2013-2014 season, he served as Associate Music director for Glass/Ginsberg's *Hydrogen Jukebox* and Music Director for the premiere of Hagen's *I Hear America Singing* at Skylight Musical Theatre and returned in the Spring of 2015 as Music Director/Alberich/Hunding/Mime/Hagen for the premiere of *The Skylight Ring*. This past summer, he conducted the premiere of Gilda Lyons' and Tammy Ryan's opera, *A New Kind of Fallout*, based on the life and work of Rachel Carson, for Opera Theater of Pittsburgh's SummerFest.



Soprano **Desirée Soteres (ROSE HARTZELL)** is equally at home in concert, musical theater and on the operatic stage and has been praised for her superb characterization and powerful vocal ability. Desirée's love for music has taken her across the U.S. and around the world. She comes to Pittsburgh via Memphis, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Portland, New York City, ports around the globe through Cunard Cruise Lines, San José, and Chattanooga. Most recently, Desirée wrapped filming for the Operafilm / *Hear America Singing* with composer Daron Hagen. The live version was produced on May 9, 10 & 11, 2024 at Richard E. Rauh Studio Theatre in Pittsburgh, PA during the filming of the documentary. In 2024 she premiered the role of The Queen of Elfenland in Matthew Gillespie's new chamber opera, *Thomas the Rhymer*.

**Christopher Scott (ROGER TOMCZEK)**, baritone, serves as Associate Professor of Music at Slippery Rock University, where he teaches a voice studio as well as other music classes. He completed his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music where he studied voice with Tom Baresel and taught a voice studio of Music Theater majors. He completed a master's degree at the same institution, singing the roles of Tarquinius in *Lucrezia* and André Thorel in *Thérèse*. Between degree programs, Chris served Augustana College in Rock Island, IL as Artist in Residence, teaching applied voice and various departmental courses. At Augustana he sang an orchestral concert of Mahler songs and performed the roles of Lieutenant Worthing in *Truce of Carols* and Archibald Craven in *The Secret Garden*.

Professionally, Chris sang in Microscopic Opera's productions of Michael Ching's *Speed Dating*, *Tonight!* and Robert Xavier Rodríguez's *Frida*, both in 2014. Chris sang as an apprentice with Des Moines Metro Opera in 2013, debuting as Paris in *Romeo et Juliette*. In 2008, he sang the role of Giuseppe in Cincinnati Opera's production of *La Traviata*. His debut with the same company was as a Foundry Worker in the world premiere of *Rise For Freedom: The John P. Parker Story*. With Opera Quad Cities, Chris sang the roles of Marcello (*La Bohème*) and Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*).





### **WEB-BASED MEDIA RESOURCES**

Promotional Posters  
[Full-size for download](#)

Buy the Vocal Score  
[Vocal Score](#)

The Bardo Trilogy  
[Home](#) (download reels, etc.)

Reviews  
[Print / Web](#)

Websites / Downloads

Trailer #1 Download: [YouTube](#) / [Vimeo](#)  
Trailer #2 Download: [YouTube](#) / [Vimeo](#)

[IMDB Page](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[EPK](#)

[TMDB](#)

[Film Freeway](#)

[Still Photographs](#)

## **THE PRODUCTION TEAM**

Producers	Daron Hagen, Burning Sled Media Kip Soteres, Aria 412 Robert Frankenberry, Entelechron Media
Director, Composer, Editor	Daron Hagen
Cinematographer	Talal Jabari
Assistant Director	Tevi Eber
Lighting Designer	Eve Bandi
Sound Recordist	Nikola Chapelle
Staged Production Manager	Emily Niedbala
Piano Technician	Randy Mangus

### ORIGINALLY PRODUCED FOR THE STAGE BY THE SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATER

Producers	Amy Jensen, Viswa Subbaramann
Still Photographer, Milwaukee	Mark Frohna

### FOR NEW MERCURY COLLECTIVE

Music Director	Robert Frankenberry
Art Director	Christopher Lyons
Still Photographer, Pittsburgh	Doug Estok

### FOR ARIA 412

Graphic Designer	Zoe Soteres
Graphic Photography, Pittsburgh	Julie Goetz
Social Media Campaign Artwork	Spencer Swenson

### FOR BURNING SLED MEDIA

Postproduction Advisor	Rabab Haj Yahya, Capture Media
Music Preparation	Neil Erickson, TOG Music Services, New York

Legal Representation	Corey Field Law Group, P.C.
Mr. Hagen's Representation	Kathy Olsen, Encompass Arts
Music Publishing	Karen Heymann, Todd Vunderink; Peermusic Classical

### FOR THE PRISM PLAYERS

String Tracks Recordist, Pittsburgh	plus minus
Players	Jennifer Sternick, violin; Brian Curtin, violin; Roger Zahab viola; Camden Wentz, violoncello

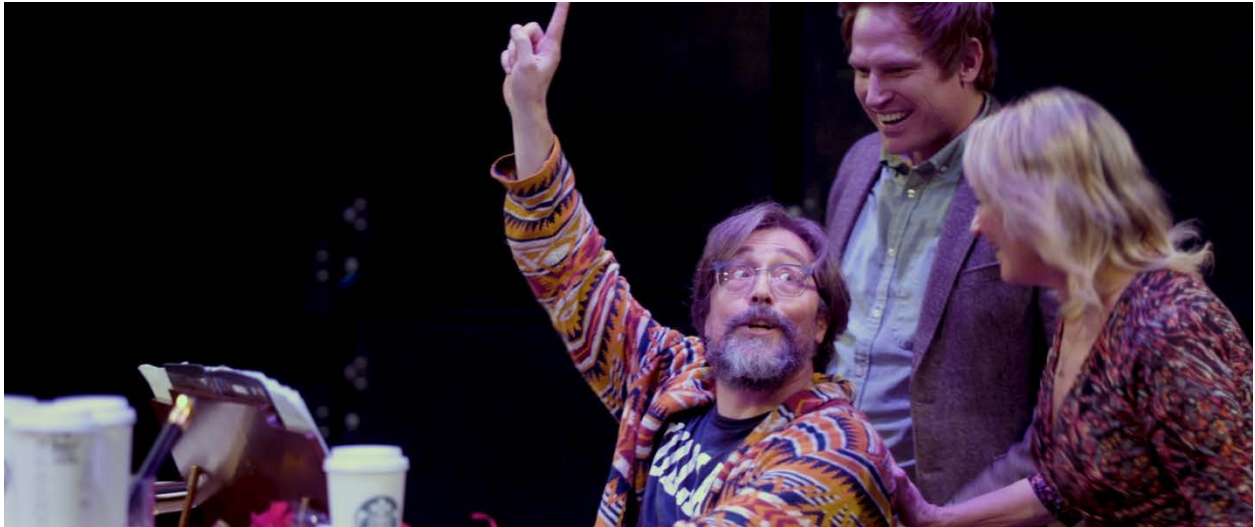
Roger Zahab, violin performed Joe Bowers

Soundtrack Mixing	Burning Sled Media, Rhinebeck, New York
Stereo Mastering	Neil Erickson, TOG Music Services, New York

### Special Thanks

Adrian Carr, Barbara Grecki, Erin Freeman, Hadley Armstrong,  
JoAnn Falletta, Matt Gillespie, Matthew Wright, Shane Emerich,  
Bill Rhoads, Y. Sean Cho

**PRODUCTION STILLS**



ROBERT FRANKENBERRY portrays ROBBIE DOERFLER, a Broadway composer struggling to put together a “backer’s audition” for a revival of *I Hear America Singing*, the show that made him famous.



CHRISTOPHER SCOTT portrays ROGER TOMCHEK, an alcoholic Broadway actor.



DESIREE SOTERES portrays ROSE HARTZELL, a Broadway actress, and ex-wife of Roger.



ROBBIE (Robert Frankenberry) is being interviewed for a documentary about his comeback project by a hostile documentary filmmaker.



"See what we did there?" Robbie asks his friends, as the story ends.



Spent, Robbie, backstage, realizes that he is in the Bardo.

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