

Mark Richards' Hamlet

Equally ambitious is 31-year-old Mark Richards' passion to write an opera based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Richards, who received his Master's degree in music theory from the University of Toronto in 2007, has been writing the music and libretto for this full-length opera since 2004. It was given its first complete public reading at Stratford Summer Music in 2008 where it was acclaimed by enthusiastic audiences.

TrypTych gives the piece its first complete staging on June 24, 26, 27 and 29 at Trinity Presbyterian Church, 2737 Bayview Avenue, with Brett Kingsbury conducting and Edward Franko directing.

Richards says that writing vocal music has always come naturally to him: "When I finished my bachelor's, I decided I needed a large, long-term project to help solidify my musical style and help find my own compositional voice." He chose *Hamlet* because he has always been passionate about the play and found that the emotions it inspired helped him to write the music. Richards' goal was fidelity to Shakespeare's text, although operatic form obviously necessitated abridging the play and reducing the number of characters.

Hamlet is written for seven singers with some doubling of roles, and comprises over 50 recitatives, arias, duets and ensembles. In Stratford it had an eight-member chamber orchestra. In Toronto it will have piano accompaniment – but, unlike Stratford, the singers will be off-book and in character with Paul Williamson as Hamlet, Virginia Gallop-Evov as Gertrude and Nathaniel Wiseman as Claudius. TrypTych has already expressed its desire to bring the opera to a fully-staged and costumed production with orchestra in the near future. For more information about the composer, including excerpts from *Hamlet*, visit www.markrichardscomposer.com. For more about TrypTych visit www.tryptych.org.

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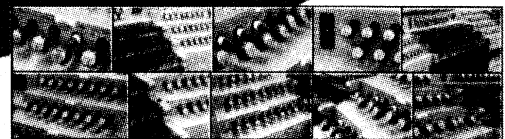
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