

Center for Italian Modern Art & ISSUE Project Room present:
 Alberto Savinio, *Les chants de la mi-mort* & Nick Hallett, *To Music*
 8pm on June 21 at 22 Boerum Place, Brooklyn
Tickets at issueprojectroom.org

The Center for Italian Modern Art, in partnership with ISSUE Project Room, presents a re-staging of Alberto Savinio's 1914 avant-garde operetta "Les chants de la mi-mort" ("Songs of the Half-Dead"), a dissonant production for piano, soprano, baritone, and percussion. Originally staged in the offices of *Les Soirées des Paris* on May 21, 1914, the opera has never been reproduced in the United States. Written in France in French and Italian, the play centers around a family drama during the period of the nineteenth-century Italian Risorgimento. The operetta's characters—among them "a mad king," "the yellow man," and "the bald man"—and descriptions of scenic elements, including a tower, an equestrian statue, and cannon, recall figures from Savinio's metaphysical paintings, as well as the paintings of his brother, Giorgio de Chirico. The dramatic text, as well as the piano score, incorporate mechanic noises and sound and lighting effects—the sound of artillery fire, cannon blasts, the flashing beam of a lighthouse—a hallmark of early Italian Futurist theater. The experimental operetta has very little to do with its subtitle, "Dramatic scenes after episodes from the Risorgimento"; instead, a clue to its subject matter and mood lies in Savinio's conception of "half-death": a state suspended between dream and reality, requiring an expansion of one's faculties of perception and psychic apprehension to understand the world.

While information on the original costumes and sets, as well as the relationship between the music and libretto, have been lost, this modern reconstruction of "Les chants de la mi-mort" relies on the original score, libretto, and primary sources to create a production that is faithful to Savinio's intentions but that also "fills in" the missing aspects of the operetta for modern audiences. The operetta will be presented in two acts: first, a dramatic reading of the libretto, with an original video by Reid Farrington, theater director, new media artist, and former projection designer for the Wooster Group, and a score of "noises" by percussionist Clara Warnaar; and second, a premiere performance of the original score by the brilliant pianist Kathleen Supové, with soprano Lucy Dhegrae, baritone Mario Diaz-Moresco, and additional percussion. The whole production runs 40-50 minutes and has been organized by Lauren Rosati, Assistant Curator in the Leonard A. Lauder Research Center for Modern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and PhD Candidate at the Graduate Center, CUNY.

In line with CIMA's mission to present contemporary artists alongside the work of modern Italian artists, and in the spirit of inter-generational creative dialogue, this evening's presentation will also include the New York City concert premiere of the latest scene in composer-vocalist Nick Hallett's serial opera, *To Music*. Hallett's absurdist and dark comedy looks at the nature of inspiration and originality through the cautionary tale of a fictional composer's behavior on social media. Developed in collaboration with filmmaker Josh Thorson, the piece investigates the creative process and its distractions—a portrait of the artist on Facebook. The narrative is conveyed visually through the language of the internet, freeing the voice from text. Glossolalia, poetry, and profanity weave through Baroque arias, mobile phone ringtones, modernist dissonance, and Top-40 radio. The production will feature vocalists Peter Alex Stewart and Amelia Watkins along with a small musical ensemble. The scene runs 25 minutes.

ABOUT OUR PARTNERS

Founded in 2003, **ISSUE Project Room** is a pioneering nonprofit performance center, presenting projects by interdisciplinary artists that expand the boundaries of artistic practice and stimulate critical dialogue in the broader community. ISSUE serves as a leading cultural incubator, facilitating the commission and premiere of innovative new works.

Nestled in the Catskill Mountains, **Mount Tremper Arts (MTA)** is an artist-founded laboratory space dedicated to supporting artists in the creation and presentation of new works of contemporary art. Founded in 2008 by visual artist Mathew Pokoik and choreographer Aynsley Vandenbroucke, MTA cultivates generative artistic communities while making experimental contemporary art accessible to its diverse local community.

Yamaha CFX concert grand piano provided by **Yamaha Artist Services, New York**.