



**FIFTH ANNIVERSARY:** *Katrina Ballads* by Ted Hearne is a remembrance of Hurricane Katrina. It includes both vocals and music, featuring classical, jazz, gospel and pop influences.

# Composer recalls Katrina's despair

■ Ripped-from-headlines work honors New Orleans

By **TARA DOOLEY**  
ARTS WRITER

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans and its residents suffered as the floods destroyed lives and property.

But for much of the rest of the country, the loss and despair of the city was experienced remotely, on television, in newspapers and on the Internet.

For composer Ted Hearne, the news and reactions came to him from across his computer.

"This has affected me more than any other event

that has happened in my life, and I was a political guy before that," Hearne said in a telephone interview from his home in

New York.



**HEARNE**

The reports and responses of a shocked America became inspiration and fodder for *Katrina*

*Ballads*, a vocal and instrumental composition, which will be performed Saturday at the Hobby Center.

Hearne's ripped-from-the-headlines libretto features some of the more controversial utterances of the weeks following the storm. The text includes

*Please see **BALLADS**, Page E6*

## **KATRINA BALLADS**

The Foundation for Modern Music is marking the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina with two concerts featuring Ted Hearne's *Katrina Ballads*. Proceeds from the concert benefit music-education programs in Houston and New Orleans.

### **ECLECTIC CABARET!**

■ **What:** A concert of music from the many cultures that exist in New Orleans ranging from jazz to classical and Broadway music. Performers come from multiple Houston organizations.

## HGO grabs the Ring

Houston Grand Opera will offer its first staging of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* beginning in 2014.

**STORY ON PAGE E2**



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## BALLADS: Proceeds benefit music programs

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE E1**  
Kanye West announcing that "George Bush doesn't care about black people" on a national telethon and an exchange between television news anchor Anderson Cooper and U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu.

The prologue features a portion of a Houston Chronicle story by reporter Eric Berger.

"It is about Americans experiencing what happened to New Orleans, and it is in honor of New Orleans," Hearne said.

Houston's Foundation for Modern Music is presenting Hearne's work as it marks the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which hit land in southeast Louisiana on Aug. 29, 2005.

Events begin Friday with the *Eclectic Cabaret!*, a concert of New Orleans music styles from jazz to classical. Local performers include musicians from Divas Productions, Greenbriar Consortium and the Foundation for Modern Music.

### KATRINA BALLADS

■ **What:** A song cycle based on the American response to Hurricane Katrina

■ **When:** 8 p.m. Saturday

■ **Where:** Zilkha Hall, 800 Bagby

■ **Tickets:** \$30-\$75; [www.thehobbycenter.org](http://www.thehobbycenter.org) or 713-315-2525

*Katrina Ballads* will be presented Saturday in the Hobby Center's Zilkha Hall. Some of the proceeds from the two events will benefit music programs for children in New Orleans and Houston, said Raul Orlando Edwards, artistic director of Foundation for Modern Music.

"Since Katrina has been out of the media, people have forgotten that there is still a lot of need," Edwards said. "We wanted to bring an awareness."

Hearne, 28, started work on the piece in the months after Katrina. The first performance was in 2007 in South Carolina. In 2009, it won the Netherlands' International Gaudeamus Prize.

Recently, lighting design and a video by avant-garde filmmaker Bill Morrison were added to *Katrina Ballads* production. The updated version premiered Tuesday in New York.

The music is organized into 10 songs and two interludes and is performed by an ensemble of 11 instrumentalists and five singers. It draws from multiple genres found in New Orleans and includes segments inspired by jazz, gospel, blues and rock music.

The mixture pushes the boundaries of what is usually considered classical music, said Hearne, a trained singer and composer who is completing his doctorate at Yale University.

However, increasingly

composers are bending the genre.

"It is a tricky issue in music today," Hearne said. "We have access to all kinds of music, and there is a sense that stylistic boundaries no longer make sense in a lot of cases."

*Katrina Ballads* also defies the traditional classical music standard in which "there is a reverence for really old pieces and (the sense) that the best music is eternal and the music of the gods," Hearne said.

Hearne, for one, is not losing any sleep worrying about whether *Katrina Ballads* will become an eternal part of the classical canon.

"That is not really the point as much, I think, as for someone who is listening and who cares to be a little challenged by music," he said. "This piece may have a completely different meaning in 20 years, and it should."

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