

Delivering on *The Promise*: Martin Luther King's story as opera².

Here's a brief blurb about the lecture:

John Baur, a faculty member at the University of Memphis and former faculty member at Tulane University, will present portions of his new opera, *The Promise*, to the Tulane Annual Educational Conference. In about thirty minutes of music you will hear sections from the Montgomery bus boycott, a scene before the March on Washington, and the "I have a dream" speech. Baur will discuss his reasons for writing the opera, give the background on how it came about, and outline some of the obstacles that came along the way. This work, which explores the inner turmoil and doubts that Dr. King fought through to achieve his dream, shows Dr. King both through his human frailty and his oratorical greatness, from the great preacher and public orator to the person with inward doubts, struggling to go on. It is one of the most powerful stories of the 20th century, presented here for the first time in an operatic setting, with all of the passion and power of a music drama.

Baur brief bio:

John Baur was born in 1947 in St. Louis, and attended the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati, where he completed the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees in composition. His major teachers during that time were Paul Cooper and Jenő Takács. In 1971 he received a Fulbright-Hayes grant to study with Thea Musgrave and Richard Rodney Bennett in London, and also received lessons and seminars with Nadia Boulanger while visiting Paris.

His works span a wide variety of genres, from three string quartets through orchestral and chorus/orchestra as well as large ensembles with ballet. His numerous commissions have been from various performers, such as Bertram Turetsky, the Kronos Quartet, Opera Memphis and the Ceruti Quartet. This has led to three National Endowment for the Arts grants, among others. He has written two operas, *The Vision of John Brown* (1993), which is a one-act opera, and *The Promise* (2004), an opera based on the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.

He taught at Tulane University in New Orleans where he was instrumental in establishing the contemporary music series, *First Monday*. While at the University of Memphis he has directed the New Music Festival since 1984, now titled *Imagine 2005*, as well as participating in and directing numerous contemporary concerts outside of the festival. He is currently the Coordinator of Composition and Theory, and the Associate Director for Graduate Studies of the Scheidt School of Music at the University of Memphis. His radio series, *Music of the 20th Century*, has aired on Memphis NPR station, WKNO, and was produced for national distribution on the PBS system in 1993. His two-volume theory textbook, *Music Theory Through Literature*, is published by C.J. Publishers.