

## **opera program note**

The Ascension of Robert Flau is a serious opera built on themes of death and transcendence in the broadest sense. The opera explores the life of Robert Flau, the central character, and his decline into an evenings drunken reminiscence on his life and unfulfilled dreams. Each scene explores Flau's relation to various important aspects of his life: his work; his wife; his child; his achievements; his status in society. By the end of this dreamlike act, with its haunting images of death and unfulfilled love, Flau confronts some of the demons in his life in the form of apparitions of his wife and the ghost of his dead son, whom Flau symbolically murders in an effort to rid himself of guilt associated with not loving his son more fully.

Throughout the opera Flau's relationship to the various aspects of his life is kept intentionally ambiguous in an effort to weave a web of oblique relationships much as exist in a dream. The notion of whether his son is real or a fantasy of his wife's remains ambiguous until the closing scene of the act where Flau fires a pistol at the ghostly image of his son and the symbolic blood of this act begins to ooze from the walls as Flau's cathartic breakdown ends the act.

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