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Appalachian Chamber Opera Brings Issues of Drug Addiction, Changing Communities to Winthrop

Winthrop University

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Appalachian Chamber Opera Brings Issues of Drug Addiction, Changing Communities to Winthrop

Quick Facts

- "Dust in the Bottomland" will be at 7:30 p.m. on March 23 in Frances May Barnes Recital Hall.
- It is a free cultural event and open to the public.

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – **Composer Nate May** and **bass vocalist Andrew Robert Munn** combine contemporary opera and passions for environmental and economic justice in Appalachia in a live performance of **"Dust in the Bottomland,"** opening March 23 in **Frances May Barnes Recital Hall** at Winthrop University.

The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. and is free and open to the public. Their residency is sponsored by the **Department of Music** and the Global Learning Initiative. It is a cultural event.

"Dust in the Bottomland" grapples with issues of prescription drug addiction, mountaintop removal mining and the changing fabric of rural Appalachian communities in a 45-minute chamber opera written for bass, piano and electronic soundscapes.

May, a native West Virginian, and Munn met while undergraduates at the University of Michigan. May composed the work for Munn in 2013 and the duo toured the work throughout the Appalachian region, including a performance at the 2014 Appalachian Studies Association Conference. May and Munn presented at the 2014 Ecomusics and Ecomusicologies Conference and are co-authors of "Music and Coal Activism: Perspectives from the Field," an essay for the upcoming issue of *Ecomusicology Review*.

May maintains a close connection with Appalachia as he pursues his master's degree at Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. His work-in-progress, "State," for singer Kate Wakefield and Cincinnati's women's choir MUSE, is based on oral histories of Appalachians in Cincinnati and supported by a 2015 Appalachian Sound Fellowship from Berea College. His collaborations include the world-touring work "Spiral" by choreographer/dancer Wanjiru Kamuyu and "Kalahari Waits," the debut album of indigenous poetry and music trio Khoi Khonnexion, produced during a year in South Africa funded by a Reece Miller Scholarship from the Telluride Association.

Munn worked as a community organizer for environmental and economic justice in the coalfields of West Virginia from 2009-14. During this time, he worked with communities to oppose mountaintop removal coal mining and to place local environmental issues in the context of climate change and globalized capitalism. His work on land reform, economic transition in coal-dependent areas and civil disobedience was published and analyzed in *The Journal of Appalachian Studies* and *Applied Anthropology*, books published by Punctum, AK, and Atlantic Monthly Presses, and was featured in documentaries "The Last Mountain" and "Battle for Blair Mountain" on CNN. Andrew maintains an active performing schedule as he pursues his master's degree in the Bard Conservatory Graduate

Vocal Arts Program under the direction of soprano and MacArthur Fellow Dawn Upshaw.

For more information, contact the Winthrop University Department of Music at 803/323-2255.

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