Cinderella’s Bad Magic

A chamber opera for five singers, flute, oboe, accordion, vibraphone, piano, string quartet (strings), and electric bass

Libretto by Jeffrey Sichel

by Kyle Gann
2002/2018
Cinderella's Bad Magic (2002/2018)

Cinderella's Bad Magic is a chamber opera, with libretto by Jeffrey Sichel, originally written in just intonation and using three keyboard synthesizers. The acoustic chamber orchestra version here was revised in the spring of 2018, in conventional tuning (with a few surviving quarter-tones in the strings).

The characters are:

- Rip Van Winkle – soprano
- Cinderella 1 – soprano
- Cinderella 2 – tenor
- Mother – alto
- Father - baritone

Cinderella's Bad Magic is the first part of a projected trilogy of interlinked one-act operas called the The Hudson River Sessions, along with Painting Shadows (unfinished) and The Watermelon Cargo. The journey of the trilogy follows a couple’s relationship through time as they move physically and emotionally up and down the river. Cinderella's Bad Magic has no plot as such; it is a record of Cinderella's emergence from a dream state, a long gradual awakening from adolescence, from angst into a more realistic sense of life. The opening words are "Wake up!" The main character is that famous sleeper Rip Van Winkle, who sings, "One day I went to sleep and woke up and found that I had wasted my life and didn't have much time left." Rip Van Winkle is a projection, an older manifestation of Cinderella. She describes Cinderella (herself): "Cinderella, scared of herself and scared of taking a chance at being herself." And at last, she sings "The world in front of me, Cinderella behind me." Cinderella's danger is that of imagination run amok. "There are powers far greater," warns the father, "than your own personal imagination." Cinderella 1 and 2 are different aspects of the same person - male and female, right brain and left brain - and also manifest the idea that two people can become one in a relationship.

The through-line emerged originally from a deconstruction of Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire, and the father is drawn from Stanley Kowalski, as Cinderella is modeled on Blanche DuBois. The mother is more reminiscent
of Medea in Euripides' play. The collage-like libretto is full of literary references and even quotations. Along with A Streetcar Named Desire and Medea, the following sources will be helpful: "The Ash-Maiden" (the Cinderella story) by the Brothers Grimm; Rip Van Winkle by Washington Irving; the 1952 film Forbidden Games by director René Clemènt; Southern Mail by Antoine Saint-Exupery; "The Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allan Poe; poems of Robert Frost such as "Birches" and "The Road not Taken." The action is imagined as taking place along Amsterdam Avenue in Manhattan in the area around 103rd to 110th Streets, and on the northern promenade in Riverside Park.

Cinderella's Bad Magic was premiered in its original version on Oct. 26, 2002, in Moscow, Russia, and on Nov. 1 in St. Petersburg. The American (concert) premiere was at Bard College on Feb. 4, 2003.

Duration: 44 minutes
Cinderella's Bad Magic

Jeffrey Sichel

Joyous

Scene 1: Cinderella's Departure

Kyle Gann

original version, 2002

acoustic version 2016

Flute

Oboe

Vibraphone

Accordion

Rip Van Winkle

Cinderella 1

Cinderella 2

Mother

Father

Piano

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Bass Guitar

Cin - de - rel - la, stuck up in the air

Wake up!

Wake up!

w.

w.

w.

w.

w.

w.

w.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
awfully happy, smiling down on me
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
shine here in the shadow world... the other world. It doesn't touch our...

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Immersed in I don't understand the expectation of

Cinderella's Bad Magic
why and wherefore and therefore go I for the grace of something

why and wherefore and therefore go I for the grace of something

Cinderella's Bad Magic
that I can't touch no matter how hard I try. Leaves

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

change color slowly, imperceptible one day they're not

green any more. They're something else autumn. Something else color.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Most of the time I delude myself with love.
even come close.

Poetry. And dirt can look clean and that's O.K. But it doesn't always work. I can see through everything and it's so fucking hollow and

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Eve-ry-thing seems un-real
emp-ty and I don't like know-ing plas-tic.

Slow mo-tion se-pa-ra-tion and ob-ser-va-tion...
loo-king out from be-

Cinderella's Bad Magic
hind the window. Rolling moving pictures...

motionally physically moving up on the high-wire especially at night.
\[\text{I want to see the sky...}\]
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Vib.

Accord.

M.

dragging her duffel bag over the cement heading somewhere away from here.

F.

dragging her duffel bag over the cement heading somewhere away from here.

Pno.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Ve.

Bass

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

mf wake out of a dream.
Shush, Rip Van

I wake out of a dream. mp
Shush, Rip Van

As if perhaps there is a destination...

As if perhaps there is a destination...
Scene 2: The "Red Death" Aria

A little slower and more deliberate

\( \frac{q}{L} = 132 \)

Cinderella's Bad Magic
found that I had wasted my life and didn't have much

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Continuities got broken.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

Changes I never

Left to make sense of the empty periods with no record of...

Left to make sense of the empty periods with no record of...

Cinderella's Bad Magic
realized happened.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
fire and motion of the soul which will not dwell in its own narrow being

Cinderella's Bad Magic
It aspires beyond the fitting medium.
The red death had

Rip Van Winkle is talking.

of desire.

Rip Van Winkle is talking.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
long devastated the country.

pes-ti-rence had ever been so fatal or so hideous. Blood

Cinderella's Bad Magic
was its avatar and its zeal. The redness and the horror of blood.

There were sharp pains and

Cinderella's Bad Magic
sudden dizziness and then profuse bleeding.

from the pores with dissolution.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Scene 3: The Zero Gravity Debate

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

circus world. Sad clown you'll never go to the ball.

Sad clown you'll never go to the ball.
is where I float freely, completely.

In verse...

world... place... circus tent. I jump like a
child in a giant clear plastic room.
I jump up and
I jump against the walls.

Is it a game?

Is it a game?
The "Gravity" Aria

Fl.

Accord.

Vla.

Vc.

Bass

Gravity persists. It doesn't go away... it just stays around and won't let

Cinderella's Bad Magic
A obsession. An obsession. Are you trying to keep in touch with re-

Cinderella's Bad Magic
a - li - ty?  Are you de-fin-ing re-a-li-ty by the ap-pledrop?
Do you need a ruler snapping on your wrist? Pay attention!
Ve-ry di-rec-t first i-ma-ge. World which says we are earth-bound... the con-tra

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

dic-tion. Can we be-lieve it. Can you prove your earth-bound-ness in a per-so-nal
Slightly slower
\( \frac{3}{4} \)
\( \frac{1}{4} \)

\( j = 120 \)

Ob.

 Accord.

 In the first case the

 way?

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Bass

Cinderella's Bad Magic
a pri-o-ri image is and always has been of gravity.

The

apple does drop.

Newton discovers the apple and the

Cinderella’s Bad Magic
world becomes clearer.

There are powers far greater than your own personal imagination. Natural law is a pro...
You cannot break the laws of gravity.
Snap! I need pain as an affirmation of my
when you are earth bound.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

con-science. I want gua-ran-tees that I'm not dream-ing. A - live in some

way. I could be wrong. All wrong on this thin egg-shell,

All wrong on this thin egg-shell,
walking, waking, below and above, in and out of in-
walking, waking, below and above, in and out of in-
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
and some-place else.

and some-place else.

Deco-rum dres-ses up the in

Deco-rum dres-ses up the in

Cinderella's Bad Magic
I journey through a place and it re-

Cal-der-style mo-biles.

Cal-der-style mo-biles.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
fl.

When I was young I would see pictures

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla.

Vc.

Bass

Cinderella's Bad Magic
and that was the size of the world.

I let my mind wonder.
I realize I don't feel anything.

What's beautiful is crisp not
The leaves are changing color.
Machines do cold.
The leaves are changing color.
The leaves are changing color.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Fl.

De-voting lives to the true value of
get-ting there.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
I have created a machine that has no
I am a machine.

I am not Frankenstein.

Human function.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
I don't have hands, five moving parts.

The time has changed and it's like this long night for

Cinderella's Bad Magic
I hear your
no par-ti-cu-lar rea-son.
Rip Van Win-kle is talk-ing.
Rip Van Win-kle is talk-ing.
Rip Van Win-kle is talk-ing.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
I'd remember

Life takes place during the

Cinderella's Bad Magic
lost hour when light saving time ends.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
The leaves are non-existent hour the clock turns back-wards.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
-changing color.
I'm scared of being a-
changing color.
changing color.
changing color.
changing color.
changing color.
Are you scared of being alone?

It's a very

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

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Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.

Lost in silence.
I can't survive at this level. I may not feel I

Cinderella's Bad Magic
feel but I feel the same thing here and now.
None for you.

I don't remem

Are you com-ing or go-ing?
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Betty Boop came a bus and the bus went slow.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Locked in a gas chamber
I feel the air
unsettled sleep.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
slip a-way. I don't know what to do.

Wake up.

Wake up.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Fl. 435
Ob.
Vib.
Accord.
R.
C. 1
Pno.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Bass

"come flying over head dropping bombs.

"come flying over head dropping bombs.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
You've been shot.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
And fades out of the dream.

is O-K. And fades out of the dream.

And fades out of the dream. Wake

And fades out of the dream. Wake

Cinderella's Bad Magic
I make choices as to who will live and who will up! up!

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
blue room with window shades pulled.
I smell incense burning.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

I wake up.
The smoke gets heavier.
I lie down as if to sleep.
I wake up.

It isn't true.
It isn't true.

The smoke gets heavier.
I lie down as if to sleep.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
I don't re-mem-ber so well. 
Cin-de-rel-la's cri-sis is more en-
I need a change in my cage.
Scene 5: It Never Really Snows

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Eclipses do affect people. They affect the
wea-ther. They are my-sti-cal e-vents. They af-fect the world.
They are the gods getting angry giving us warning.
Cinderella's Bad Magic


Fl.
Ob.
Vib.
Accord.
R.
M.
F.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Bass
It's not

Are you a person of great importance?
snow\-ing and I en\-joy snow when the world rests un\-der a
Cinderella's Bad Magic

"white blanket sliding on ice... softness of the world... the"
beauty.
The trees bending with frost... poetry

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Slightly faster

An ice cold place. It never really snows... gray not
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
paths that weren't chosen
Ge-ne-ra-tion.
I dis-co-ver my cra-zy horse.
paths that weren't chosen
Ge-ne-ra-tion.
paths that weren't chosen
Ge-ne-ra-tion.
Pizz.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
No, I didn't die. In-dian style in the snow. No-thing is
masked. Stumbling through the process. Stumbling through blank days... street names on
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Terrible thing to avoid. Arranging lives out of fear. Glassed
Terrible thing to avoid. Arranging lives out of fear. Glassed
Terrible thing to avoid. Arranging lives out of fear. Glassed

Cinderella's Bad Magic
I'm a tourist in this place, on disguise.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

Fl.
Ob.
Vib.
Accordion.
R.
C. 1
C. 2
M.
F.
Pno.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Bass

Re- members the back roads.
Rip Van Win- kle keeps talking.
Rip Van Win- kle keeps talking.
Rip Van Win- kle keeps talking.
sites and the sounds... and the smells...
the younger generation's hanging

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

haunts and Cin-de-re-la—wasting a-way-behind bars. She

Fl.
Ob.
Vib.
Accord.
R.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Bass

120
Cinderella's Bad Magic
hard-ly wan-ter to walk out the door. Mixed up time. No-thing e-ver last-ing... e-phe-me-ral,
keep-ing count. I can't not count. It's hard to sit days on end feel-ing
phe-me-ral.
phe-me-ral.
phe-me-ral.
phe-me-ral.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Between Scenes

A little faster

Cinderella's Bad Magic
A little slower
\( \frac{3}{8} \) = 80

Slower
\( \frac{3}{8} \) = 66

Fl.
Ob.
Vib.
Accord.
C. 1
F.
Pno.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Bass

Looking for a beginning
Always a place to start.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
The world is hotter.

It's hot.

Never the place to end.

The world is hotter. Burning

Cinderella's Bad Magic
It's too late to start again.

up the clouds.
A little slower

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Never letting go. Always wanting more... more

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Scene 6: Brains Split Sometimes

Faster $j = 58$

Fl.

Ob.

Vib.

Accord.

C. 1

time... sentenced to death. Free-dom.

C. 2

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Bass

Cinderella's Bad Magic
No-thing. Not pos-si ble to feel... not held to-ge-ther by an-y-thing.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Fl.
Ob.
Vib.
Accord.
C. 1
C. 2
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Bass

I want to get both feet firmly on the ground.

That's not the

Cinderella's Bad Magic
truth... and if I could tell the truth I would but since I can't I can only do some-thing-a-

but the truth. and this girl loved me and made my dreams come

true. She took care of the hard part. She believed in me.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
She couldn't believe in herself but she could believe in me.

Something on the outside fatal to mediocrity. Mediocre.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Brains split sometimes and come back to

Cinderella's Bad Magic
On a slow road... and I'm getting the feeling that mine will.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Fl.

Accord.

R.

to a not so nice place.

C. 1

C. 2

De-laying it with crazy horses. Screaming.

De-laying it with crazy horses. Screaming.

M.

Can you

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Bass

Cinderella's Bad Magic
No, I just feel like running, running naked.

No, I just feel like running, running naked.

talk about it?

You're not

You're not

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

Eve-ry-thing just seems like so much ar-ti-fice and ar-ti-fi-cial big words

Eve-ry-thing just seems like so much ar-ti-fice and ar-ti-fi-cial big words

Ro-bin-son Cru-soe

Ro-bin-son Cru-soe

Cinderella's Bad Magic
that don't capture any sense of what it is to be alive.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Rush slightly

\[ \text{j} = 70 \]

They took me

graphic lies

Cinderella's Bad Magic
out of the zoo. They said, I didn't belong. They said my hair had grown too long. They
said that my anger was disturbing the other animals. They said that I had no place...
Cinderella's Bad Magic

in their world.

I left.
I created my
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Be-lieve me my brain is split.
I can't de-cide left or right.

No it's not._

No it's not._

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Most of the time I'm coming home or going happy.

Sit-ting down too long.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
I pretend. I slow down and pretend that a lot of things are worth no-thing and that
some things are worth quite a lot but quite a lot of things seem stupid.

so-la-ted no sto-ry to tell. Can't re mem-ber a-ny-way,

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Fl.

Accord.

C. 1

M.

Vc.

Bass

I- so- la- ted.  Feeling lost.  I don't have time
de- pres- sing.

arco

Cinderella's Bad Magic

to live.  Bulbs always burn out.  Dim yellow light.  The wind like
Scene 7: Dead Dog Diary Girl

Fly away little

no-where else in the world.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
For-bid-den games. She sur-vived during the war. A young girl... her pa-rents shot
runs down the road with her dead dog. Can't admit or understand death.

She held on to this dead dog, carried it like a baby. Surreal maybe.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Re-a-li-ty seems daun-ting
Home... look-ing...

damnthing and that's the end._

damnthing and that's the end._

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Be-lief can chal-lenge old and cur-rent times.

den-ti-ty... cause... life... mis-sion.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
I want experiences other than anger at an idea for even thin-king that I

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
and realities slip by the window. Dreams move in opposite directions.

Always window.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
We went down to the river to commune with the fisher folks. We stared out over the
water and took turns resting in the ordinary, wonderful smallest places and biggest in

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

Memories of places.

Down by the river we sat watching the life.
Cinderella's Bad Magic

fi-sher folk
laugh-ing and
sing-ing.
They att-ached
bells
to
the
rods.
We heard the sound rolling with the waves... subtly
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Scene 8: Something about a Rose

Fl. $\text{ff}$

Ob. $\text{ff}$

Vib. $\text{ff}$

Accord. $\text{ff}$

F. $\text{ff}$

Pno. $\text{ff}$

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Bass

Li - be-ra-ted, thesen-seswan-der. Up in space...

Cinderella's Bad Magic
feelings of being in touch in love, looking up at the sky filled with every thing moving and changing.

Re-recognizable and unre-recognizable configurations.

Walking through some seasons nights staring at the sky... world order and

Cinderella's Bad Magic
beauty. To see and to love carefully Love the earth and worship the earth and
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Some-thing a-bout a rose that sat for a week...
and did-n’t die and thrived and kept chan - ging and grow-ing more

Cinderella’s Bad Magic
Once to understand a rose.

No thing. Listen.

beautiful as it opened properly.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
I'm not a bird. I can't fly.

Time held in place.

Sky blue, stuck

Cinderella's Bad Magic
up in the sky.

Day-light lightens spirits not plunged into
Nothing ever gets done in space.

Hunting down every

Cinderella's Bad Magic
The moment a new year seems like so long ago.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
man in the moon has lived a lot longer than any of us care to imagine.
I can't stop the clocks from ticking.

I encourage them.

I de-
I pine for connection once in a while

stroy my chances.

The fisher-guy gives

Cinderella's Bad Magic
up for the day's opium addiction and visions of a god really wanting to feel Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Every day the shadow appears.

Moments are only

Things aren't always what they seem.

Moments are only

All I really wanted was to feel. That was the thing with moments.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

That was what she talked about.

Boxed out of my mind.

Boxed out of my mind.

Whole lives as masses of papers. Not enough time to go
back... look... piece to-ge-ther a life.

I won't be hap-py chants Cinderella. I won't be hap-py chants Cinderella.
Cinderella's Bad Magic

eye - ry - one at the ball.

I do new things. Los -

Cry - ing more. I do new things. Los -
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

Cinderella breaking down for the umpteenth time. So much...

Cinderella ventures out into the real world.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

Only

Walking away incompressible. Alienated.

Walking away incompressible. Alienated.
God who feels much deeper than everyone.

*Cinderella's Bad Magic*
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
void destiny.

void destiny.

void destiny. Comfor-table with half-assed commitments.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Whole hog head first without a safety net or a guide
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
river time and again moving along the rails and watching the wires
Fl.
Vib.
Accord.
R.
C. 1
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Bass

A - lone on this par -
wave up and down past the win - dows.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
had to get away. No destination. Good-bye to the night.
For-got-ten me-mo ries. Some in-com-plete part of my

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
I can imagine. I was born here.
Much too high... vanishing into the air.
The world in front of me

A vast inter-section.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
with the snow falling down.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Cinderella's Bad Magic

On-ly Cin-da-rel-la in my bub-ble. Smel-ling the back I knew I was one of them.

way for a-while.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
Some where out the door.

Western Union in desperate circumstance.

Some where out the door.

Some where out the door.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
Fl.  
Ob.  
Vib.  
Accord.  
R.  
C. 1  
C. 2  
M.  
F.  
Vln. 1  
Vln. 2  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Bass  

Until the end of the world, tantalizing.

Raindrops turn away.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
I woke up from a dream
dis-
pic-
tures of a vir-
tual picture.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
orien-ted and not know-ing where I was or who I was and I'm not me in my dreams.
Cinderella's Bad Magic
It's all about going to sleep. And waking up in another place and

Cinderella's Bad Magic
time as a-no-ther person sleeping a life a-way.

no-ther place and time. as a-no-ther person sleeping a life a-way.

Cinderella's Bad Magic
A little slower

Fl.

Ob.

Vib.

Accord.

R.

C. 1

Pno.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Bass

\( \textit{Cinderella's Bad Magic} \)
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Feb. 6 - September 19, 2002
Red Hook, NY / Lewisburg, PA
San Francisco, CA / Brisbane, Australia
Acoustic version March-May, 2018
Germantown, NY