

**Margi Griebing-Haigh's *The White Trout*:
a chamber opera in one act on YouTube**

by Daniel Hathaway



Commissioned by Peter Gallagher in 2012, premiered in 2013 at the convention of the International Society of Bassists, and revised in 2019, Margi Griebing-Haigh's 25-minute chamber opera, *The White Trout*, was released in mid-November on YouTube.

The piece embellishes an Irish folk tale from County Mayo as told by Samuel Lover and collected by William Butler Yeats. Predictably fantastical, the story centers around a beautiful woman whose fiancé, a king's son, is murdered and thrown into a lake. The grieving bride eventually disappears (the work of fairies?) about the time villagers notice a strange white trout in the water.



A hungry soldier catches the fish and tries to cook it, but the trout cries out and remains untouched by the heat of the frying pan. He tests it with a knife, and it leaps onto the floor, to be replaced by a beautiful woman with a bleeding arm.

In the denouement, the woman begs to be returned to the lake, whereupon she turns back into a trout and the soldier swears to live a virtuous life.



The video is very much an extended family production, featuring the brilliant soprano Gabrielle Haigh as the lady, and Scott Haigh as the bassist. Frequent collaborators Ty Alan Emerson (as the very Irish narrator) and pianist Randall Fusco join the ubiquitous and splendid baritone Brian Keith Johnson (as the soldier), and instrumentalists Jessica Sindell (piccolo) and Parker Ramsay (harp) to fill out the ensemble.

Griebeling-Haigh's music, a combination of attractive vocal episodes and brief interludes between narration, is winsome and atmospheric, adding just enough Celtic references to the mix to set the scene, but remaining elusive and magical. The singing and playing are first-rate.



The tale unfolds on the stage of The Music Settlement's Bop Stop, with masterful videography and editing by Ken Wendt and production and lighting by Martins Daukss.

The White Trout succeeds on two levels: it's perfectly accessible and enjoyable for children, yet musically sophisticated enough to appeal to adults who can set aside the

real world for half an hour and immerse themselves in a charming fantasy. A good thing to be able to do these days.

Access The White Trout on YouTube [here](#).

Published on ClevelandClassical.com December 1, 2020

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