

BIOGRAPHY ~ JUSTIN RALLS

Justin Ralls, composer, conductor, and writer, hails from the Pacific Northwest and is inspired by the beauty of the natural world and ‘elemental imagination.’ Ralls has conducted his works at the **Hydansaal** in Eisenstadt, Austria, the Lucca International Youth Orchestra Festival in Albano Terme, Italy, **Oregon Bach Festival**, Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival, Britt Festival at Crater Lake National Park, the **Newman Scoring Stage** in Los Angeles, **Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall** in Portland, as well as venues in Salzburg, Rome, Portland, Fairbanks, Boston, San Francisco and beyond. Ralls’ work has been described as “a beautifully textured, lush evocation of John Muir’s Yosemite that was full of color and light” (Daily Gazette, NY), “a gifted melodist...a beautiful blend of natural and human-made music” (Artslandia), and “a whirlwind of thick orchestral textures...definitely establishing his own voice...” (SF Examiner). Ralls’ *Tree Ride* won the 2013 Highsmith Award for orchestra and received Special Distinction in the 2014 ASCAP Rudolf Nissim Prize as well as winning third place in the 2017-18 **American Prize**. *Tree Ride* was featured on the 2014 Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival in Fairbanks, Alaska conducted by Robert Franz. *Tree Ride* was also featured on **Albany Symphony’s** 2015 Composer-to-Center-Stage as well as their 2017 American Music Festival, conducted by **David Alan Miller**. **John Adams** spoke of *Tree Ride* as “impressive...showing a mastery of orchestral technique,” also stating “your analogy to natural forces was done very well, your thunderstorm basically better than the *Pastoral*.”

Ralls’ works have been performed by a variety of soloists and ensembles including **Albany Symphony** (NY), **Third Angle Ensemble**, **Roomful of Teeth**, **Fear No Music**, **Jarring Sounds**, **International Orange Chorale**, **Opera Theater Oregon**, **San Francisco Conservatory Orchestra**, **Esteli Gomez**, **Molly Barth**, **Robert Ainsley**, **William Goforth** and more. As a composer he explores an aesthetic plurality and eclecticism encompassing many styles including natural soundscapes, improvisation, electronics, vocal, chamber, film music, jazz, folk and orchestral forces.

As a conductor he has conducted many premieres and contemporary works such as Academy Award winning composer Rachel Portman and Grammy winning composer Michael Daugherty, as well as community and professional ensembles as Riverside Chamber Orchestra, Third Angle New Music Ensemble, Metropolitan Youth Symphony, and professional musicians at the Newman Fox Scoring Stage at 20th Century Fox.

Ralls was the regional winner of Third Angle Ensemble’s inaugural **2012 New Ideas in Music Competition**, conducting his winning work, *Anthrophony*, on two of the groups New Ideas in Music Concerts. In July, 2012 he participated in the inaugural **Composing in the Wilderness** workshop in Denali National Park, composing a piece while in the Denali wilderness for the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival.

Tree Ride, an orchestra piece inspired by conservationist John Muir, won the 2013 James Highsmith Composition Award. *Tree Ride* received Special Distinction in the 2014 ASCAP Rudolf Nissim Prize and was featured on the 2014 Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival in Fairbanks, Alaska conducted by Robert Franz. *Tree Ride* was also featured on Albany Symphony's 2015 Composer-to-Center-Stage as well as their 2017 American Music Festival. He steadfastly believes in the transformative and communal power of music to bring ideas and communities together, whether human communities or between humans and the natural world. In 2017 Opera Theater Oregon produced the world premiere of Ralls' chamber opera, *Two Yosemite: An Environmental Opera*, setting the 1903 meeting of John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt, featuring tenor Aaron Short and baritone Nicholas Meyer – “Ralls took this thematic coloring to the next level, in the finest operatic tradition,” (Oregon Arts Watch).

Recent projects include a 2018 commission from pianist **Hunter Noack's** *In a Landscape* series of outdoor solo piano concerts in wild spaces and public lands throughout Oregon. In 2017, Ralls assumed leadership of Opera Theater Oregon as Artistic Director and has since led NW premieres of Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*, Michael Lanci's *Songs for Joe Hill* and Michael Daugherty's *This Land Sings: Songs of Wandering, Love, and Protest Inspired by the Life and Times of Woody Guthrie*. Upcoming projects include a new opera for OTO, *Song of the Most Beautiful Bird of the Forest* (2019/20) and a song cycle for tenor, **William Goforth** as well as arrangements of WW1 popular songs for OTO's production *WWI: A Song-Opera of Remembrance*.

Ralls' education includes degrees from The Boston and San Francisco Conservatory where he studied with Dalit Warshaw, Andy Vores, Jan Swafford, Dan Becker and David Conte. In March, 2020 he successfully defended his Ph.D. in Music Composition at the University of Oregon in Music Composition where he has taught composition as well as studying with Robert Kyr and David Crumb, with additional research in Nature, New Media, and Indigenous Thought. Spring 2020 he joined faculty at Linfield College as an Adjunct Professor of Music. Ralls enjoys the outdoors, hiking, backpacking, birdwatching and reading the works of John Muir and Joseph Campbell.