

the FROG Bride

1. Why did Gonzalez choose Kandinsky and those five paintings?

When I was twenty-one I went to live in Spain for a year of music and adventure. On my way I traveled first to London, then to Paris where, of course, I went to see the then newly opened Georges Pompidou Centre. I had seen some of Kandinsky's paintings at a friend's house, and I was generally familiar with his interest in music and improvisation. There was a retrospective exhibit of his work that day. It was presented in one enormous gallery and was structured in chronological order with his first formal works along the left-hand side of the gallery, gradually moving through all periods of his life until his final works.

In that afternoon, and through Kandinsky's courageous dedication to discovery, I learned, I absorbed abstract expressionism, in fact, I absorbed "abstraction". I was so moved that day, and ever since I've felt a kindred connection to Kandinsky. When I was looking for a visual context for *The Frog Bride* I knew that I wanted to blend modern and ancient (I like to mix like that), and so Kandinsky was the obvious choice -- he is a master, he is Russian, he is Modern (in an old-fashioned sort of way). The Guggenheim Museum's Archive department was extremely generous (and efficient) in granting me permission to use digital copies of their extensive collection of Kandinsky's paintings. I had already chosen the Prokofiev and knew that I needed five paintings to go along with the movements.

1a. How was the art chosen to go along with the story?

I mapped out the emotional journey of the story and then trusted my intuitive sense about which painting to choose. There were many options to choose from. In rehearsal we shuffled them around a bit, but ended up using the sequence that I had originally come up with. Some of the criteria were: mood, intensity, form, lyricism, etc. Matyas Keleman created the "video love poems" to the original paintings. I made the first one with him to give him a sense of the tempo and mystery that I was going for - then he took over and did his magic.

2. Why did Gonzalez choose Prokofiev and why that particular piece?

One of my central missions (and joys) is to marry great music and great myths. I've done this with Orpheus and Eurydice, Latino creation myths, Aesop's fables, and an Underground Railroad story called *Finding North*. For this Russian story I knew I wanted to use classical music so I began to ask my Russian friends for suggestions. Finally I spoke with one of the principal violinists at the New York Philharmonic who immediately suggested Prokofiev, and *Five Melodies for Violin and Piano*, as well as other of his works. As soon as I heard the depth, clarity, maturity, and passion in the piece I knew it was the music I had been seeking -- plus, as a piano/violin duet it had satisfied my needs as a producer. I love Prokofiev's lyricism, his profound harmonic language, the neo-Romantic quality and especially how he always seems to be looking forward, toward risk.

3. How did Gonzalez choose what aspects to modernize in his storytelling?

This happened over the many years of script development. I told the story over and over again, trying out different things. It is hard to say exactly when or why. The sisters-in-law are modelled after a couple of girls I knew in High School in the Bronx - they were both named "Chickie", they were inseparable best friends, with big hair, Revlon nails, and massive gum chewing skills. The characters have a certain newyorkien bimbo quality that is, well, modern-ish.

I wanted the music to have a wide palette too. A lot of what feels modern begins in the music. When Daniel and Chris move from the acoustic instruments to the electric instruments we have traveled great distances in time, space, culture and mood. I like to make conscious choices to bring a certain amount of "creative chaos" into my productions, especially *The Frog Bride*, to allow for a bit of confusion so that the conscious mind is distracted and so that the unconscious mind can come out to play.