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## Contemporary artists flock to the opera

The Metropolitan Opera has commissioned TJ Wilcox, George Condo and others to create trailers for its productions

By Julia Halperin. Web only

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TJ Wilcox, still from *Tales of Hoffmann*, 2014. Photo: courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Why should blockbuster films get to have all the creative trailers? The Metropolitan Opera in New York has commissioned contemporary artists including T.J. Wilcox, Paul Chan and George Condo to create two-minute previews for its operas this season, which will be beamed into 2,000 movie theatres worldwide as part of the Met's Live in HD programme.

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Wilcox is due to create the trailer for "Tales of Hoffmann", an 1877 opera by Jacques Offenbach about an unlucky-in-love German poet, which debuts on 31 January. The commission is a natural fit for the artist, who is an avid opera fan and had a small role in a production of Leonard Bernstein's "Mass" as a child.

For "Tales of Hoffmann", Wilcox created a riotous animated video featuring bite-size bits of the opera, including a segment in which glasses and wine bottles sing about the joy of getting people drunk. (A sample line: "We are the friends of man/ When we hold sway/ Sorrow flies away.") The video is Wilcox's first entirely animated film.

"Throughout the opera, Hoffmann, a poet, struggles to find the proper way and form through which to pay tribute and make material the inspiration and desire that fills him," Wilcox says. "As pathetic as his struggle often is, I share a sense of empathetic camaraderie with his tales and was happy to make a film homage to his beautiful folly."

Wilcox's trailer, along with the other commissioned videos, will be screened in the lobby of the Metropolitan Opera in New York for the run of each production following its big-screen debut. Condo's trailer for "Carmen" premieres on 1 November and Paul Chan's video for "Bluebeard" launches on 14 February.

Meanwhile, the Met Opera's gallery is also presenting five new paintings by Peter Saul inspired by Mozart's opera "Le Nozze di Figaro" (through 3 January). While the artist's cartoonish, often grotesque images of open mouths and sandwiches surrounded by musical notes are not an obvious fit for the romantic opera, Saul says in a statement: "I hope I've related [the paintings] to the opera as gracefully as I am able."