

## Composer John Aylward's Award-Winning Opera Film *Oblivion* Sees International Workshops and Screenings

October 15 - 31: Festival Internazionale del Cinema di Salerno

November 6: Enigma Chamber Opera Workshops *Oblivion* Live in Boston

November 29 - December 7: Messina Opera Film Festival

Inspired by Dante's *Purgatorio*, Aylward Crafts a Haunting One-Act Tale  
of Displaced People in a Mysterious Supernatural Realm



**Watch the Trailer and Explore Video Excerpts**  
*Full Pre-Screening Access to Film Available Upon Request*

**"Aylward is an imaginative and resourceful talent." – *Gramophone Magazine***

**"Aylward has crafted a brilliant piece of drama." – *OperaWire***

**[www.johnaylward.com](http://www.johnaylward.com)**

**New York, NY (October 21, 2025)** – Following its win for "Best Musical Film" at the Cannes World Film Festival earlier this year, composer and librettist **John Aylward's** haunting one-act opera film ***Oblivion*** continues to draw international attention, with new performances and screenings this fall in the United States and Italy.

On **November 6, 2025**, **Enigma Chamber Opera** presents a live workshop performance of *Oblivion* at the **Goethe-Institut Boston**. This RSVP-only event will feature live vocal performances alongside projected film excerpts, offering audiences a unique behind-the-scenes glimpse into Aylward's creative process and the evolving intersection between opera and film. RSVP and details are available at <https://enigmaoblivion.eventbrite.com>.

*Oblivion* will also appear on the European festival circuit this fall. *Oblivion* is participating in the **Festival Internazionale del Cinema di Salerno**, where it will be streamed globally through the Festival's [new online platform](#) from October 15-31. Films will be available for online viewing and public voting. Viewers from all over the world can watch the films and rate them, contributing to the Audience Award – International Popular Jury.

The film has also been officially selected for inclusion in the Contemporary "Panorama" section of the **Messina Opera Film Festival**, taking place from November 29-December 7, 2025.

A recent interview with Aylward in **Cannes World Film Festival's online magazine** explores the making of *Oblivion*, its philosophical inspiration, and his approach to bridging music and cinematic form. The full conversation is available at [world-film-festival.com](http://world-film-festival.com).

Composer and librettist **John Aylward** wrote the story, libretto, and music for the 70-minute one-act chamber opera film, produced by **Ravenser Odd Productions** and co-produced by independent filmmaker **Graham Swon**. The film was directed by **Laine Rettmer** with **Alice Millar** as Director of Photography and stars **Ty Boque, Nina Guo, Lukas Pappenfuscline**, and **Cailin Marcel Manson**.

Aylward began work on *Oblivion* just before the COVID-19 pandemic and immediately began to imagine a live staging, which seemed impossible at the time. He pitched the idea of creating a film to Swon and Rettmer, who became pivotal collaborators. The team shot the film in 12 days at Clark University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and the Copper Lantern Motel in West Brimfield, Massachusetts. Aylward worked with a post-production team to create the visuals that fused the pre-recorded studio audio and footage from the film shoot.

With a portfolio of work called "mysterious, iridescent and daring" (*Gramophone Magazine*), Aylward takes those elements to spellbinding extremes in this new work exploring the value of self-knowledge, the nature of redemption, and our capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood. Drawing inspiration from Dante's *Purgatorio*, *Oblivion* takes us inside a surreal netherworld where two disoriented Wanderers struggle to make sense of their existence, unsure of whose account to trust – or whether they even want the answers.

The atmosphere is set by Aylward's score for four voices, backed by viola, cello, double bass, electric guitar, and electronics. Notes by **Dan Lippel**, who performs the electric guitar part, call the score "beguiling and mysterious ... virtuosically intertwining spoken and sung texts with angular figures in the instruments... The closing material in the ensemble has an ethereal and disembodied ambiance, as if the musical figures themselves are circles in Purgatory."

The film's cast recording, released on **New Focus Recordings** in **September 2023**, features **Laura Williamson**, viola; **MIZU**, cello; **Greg Chudzik**, contrabass; **Daniel Lippel**, guitar; **John Aylward**, electronics; **Stratis Minakakis**, Musical Director; and **Joel Gordon**, recording engineer.

### **About John Aylward**

*The Boston Globe* has described **John Aylward's** music as being "delicate and deep, all at once," and *Gramophone* has called it "mysterious, iridescent and daring." *Textura* remarked that Aylward's recent monodrama *Angelus* was "gripping music of a high order," and that "the manner by which Aylward conjoins his vocal and instrumental elements in the work sometimes calls to mind Berg's handling of orchestration in *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*."

Aylward grew up in the Sonoran Desert on the border of Arizona and Mexico, a child of an immigrant mother from Germany (herself a World War II refugee) and in circumstances of both tremendous diversity and

economic instability. His music reflects the rich expressions of converging cultural histories and the deeply interwoven communities of that earlier life, all within the otherworldly landscapes of the desert.

Recent awards and fellowships include those from the John S. Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University, the Koussevitzky Commission from the Library of Congress, the Fromm Foundation, MacDowell, Tanglewood, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, First Prize from the International Society for Contemporary Music, and many others.

Aylward is the co-director of Ecce, a contemporary new music and performance art ensemble featuring Jordan Hadrill, violin; Robbie Bui, cello; Lily Xie, flutes; Barret Ham, clarinet; and Geoffrey Burleson, piano. Unconstrained by traditional boundaries in classical music, Ecce creates new and original interactions with music by performing in often unconventional environments. Known for supporting the work of emerging composers, especially through its annual Etchings festival, Ecce has cultivated a worldwide community through in-person performances, educational endeavors, and a wealth of video and multimedia resources.

Learn more at [www.johnaylward.com](http://www.johnaylward.com) and [eccearts.com](http://eccearts.com).

\*Opera stills and Aylward headshot available [here](#).

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