



Don't Blame Anyone

Opera in Two Acts

The elusive encounter between **imagination and creativity**, the **terror** experienced before the **blank page**, the **battle** against the **demons of Reason**, and the unpredictable **visit of the muses** are the forces that ignite this evening-long multimedia "opera" that combines **original music, physical theater, and puppetry**.

Synopsis:

Through a series of choreographed, interconnected scenes, an author/poet/composer faces the specter of the *blank page*. Each symbolic vignette explores the birth, growth, and death of an "idea", often ending catastrophically: the author falls into the abyss of the blank page; attempts to put on an impossibly large sweater while perilously climbing a ladder; is devoured by the monster of creative reason; is born out of the monster as a child castrated by self-doubt and censorship. The author is reduced to dust and dies but, all along, the "idea" he has been seeking reveals itself through the imaginative circle that unfurls onstage. We witness the creative product through a process where *inspiration* is shown as a fundamental human *action*.

The work of several noted Mexican artists, illustrator/cartoonist José Ignacio Solórzano ("JIS") and poets **Raúl Aceves, Jorge Esquinca, and Juan Trigos** provides the visual and narrative basis of the work. Additional texts and inspiration come from Petrarch, Goya, and Julio Cortázar.

Program credits:

General concept: Carlos Sánchez-Gutiérrez, Ricardo Zohn Muldoon, Darren Stevenson, Jis, Antonio Camacho

Music: Carlos Sánchez-Gutiérrez and Ricardo Zohn Muldoon

Ensemble: Eastman BroadBand Ensemble

Music Direction: Tim Weiss

Images: Jis

Texts: Raúl Aceves, Oliverio Gironde, Roberto Juarroz, Jorge Esquinca, Francisco de Goya, Juan Trigos. Additional Text by Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez and Kristel Thornell.

Stage Direction and Choreography: Darren Stevenson (PUSH Physical Theatre)

Puppetry: Antonio Camacho and Olga Gámez (La Coperacha)

Video and Animated Sequences: Xuan

Technical Direction and Lighting: Toni Elderkin

Audio Design and Direction: Paul Coleman

Costumes: PUSH Physical Theatre, La Coperacha, Josefina Calzada

Graphic Design: Jobito Panteras, Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez

•

Soloists:

Tony Arnold, soprano, *The Author*

Paulina Swierczek, soprano, *Mamá Polilla*

Nicholas Huff, tenor, *"Amorphous Idea 1"* and *Niño Polilla*

Isaac Assor, baritone, *"Amorphous Idea 2"* and *Papá Polilla*

Eastman BroadBand Ensemble:

Tim Weiss, Music Director

Deidre Huckabay, flutes

Andrew Brown, clarinets

Chien-Kwan Lin, saxophones

Brant Blackard, percussion

Connor Stevens, percussion

Daniel Pesca, piano

Dieter Hennings, guitar

Hanna Hurwitz, violin

Mariel Roberts, cello

Arjun Baxter, bass

Aristea Mellos, Tour Manager

PUSH Physical Theatre:

Darren Stevenson, Artistic Director

Heather Stevenson, Artistic Co-Director

Avi Pryntz-Nadworny, actor

Katherine Marino, actor

Jonathan Lowery, actor

Toni Elderkin, Technical Direction and Lighting

D.J. Stevenson, Technical Assistant

La Coperacha:

Antonio Camacho, Artistic Director

Olga Gámez, Artistic Co-Director

Elisbeida Suárez, actor

Alejandro Herrera, actor

Nicolás Pallares, actor

•

Composer **Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez** was born in Mexico City in 1964 and now lives in the New York tundra, where he is Professor of Composition at the Eastman School of Music. He studied with Jacob Druckman, Martin Bresnick, Steven Mackey and Henri Dutilleux at Yale, Princeton and Tanglewood, respectively. Carlos has received many of the most coveted awards in the field, among them the 2007 Barlow Prize; Guggenheim, Fulbright, Koussevitzky, Camargo, Bogliasco, and American Academy of Arts and Letters Fellowships. His music is performed and recorded frequently in the U.S, Latin America, Europe and Asia.

Carlos likes machines with hiccups and spiders with missing legs, looks at Paul Klee's Notebooks everyday, and tries to use the same set of ears to listen to Bach, Radiohead, or Ligeti.

www.carlossg.com

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKfwDfcchG2drdsDBZ0KkMw>

+

The music of Mexican-born composer **Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon** is characterized by its detailed sculpting, "kaleidoscopic" counterpoint, and lyricism. Mexican literature has provided the point of departure for many of his compositions, such as yo no / tú sí / yo tú / sí no, on poems by Raúl Aceves, the miniature opera Niño Polilla, on a libretto by Juan Trigos senior, and the scenic cantata Comala, based on the novel Pedro Páramo, by the noted Mexican writer Juan Rulfo. Comala was selected as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2011. Other honors include the 2011 Lillian Fairchild Award and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, Camargo Foundation, and México's Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte, among others. His works have been commissioned by noted institutions in the U.S. and abroad, such as the Fromm Foundation, the Barlow Endowment, Meet the Composer, Festival A•DEvantgarde, and Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes. His works have been performed internationally, and recorded on the Bridge, Verso, CRI, Ravello, Tempus, and Quindecim labels. He received a Ph.D. in composition from the University of Pennsylvania, where his principal teacher was George Crumb. He taught at the School of Music of the University of Guanajuato, Mexico, and the College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati, before joining the Eastman School of Music composition faculty in 2002.

<http://www.zohn-muldoon.com/bio.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/RicardoZohnMuldoon>

+

Conductor **Tim Weiss** has gained critical acclaim for his performances and brave, adventurous programming throughout the United States and abroad.

Since 2005, he has served as music director for the Newark Granville Symphony Orchestra, a professional ensemble in the Columbus, Ohio, area. He has also remained active as a guest conductor with the BBC Scottish Symphony in Glasgow, Scotland; the Britten Sinfonia in London; the Melbourne Symphony in Australia; ICE (International Contemporary Ensemble); and the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings.

Weiss is committed to exploring the connections within and between pieces in his performances and searching for similarities of voice between different composers from seemingly different genres, periods, and backgrounds. Accordingly, his programs often present rare and revealing juxtapositions, offering a broad range of works from the minimalists to the maximalists, from the old to the new, and from the mainstream to the unheard of. His repertoire in contemporary music is vast and fearless, including masterworks, very recent compositions, and an impressive number of premieres and commissions. Recently, he was the recipient of the Adventurous Programming Award from the American Symphony Orchestra League.

Music director of the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble since 1992, Weiss has brought the group to a level of artistry and virtuosity in performance that rivals the finest new music groups. After a concert with the ensemble in Carnegie Hall, Anthony Aibel wrote in a review, “under the direction of Timothy Weiss [the ensemble] presented unbelievably polished, superb performances—impeccable performances—of extremely challenging recent music...Their level of preparation eclipses the highest standard...Each work on the program had something vital to say, something profound, and [Weiss] was able to communicate the music’s message with vitality and insight, despite its extreme difficulty and somewhat foreign language. Weiss conducted with economy of gesture—never over conducting, never distracting from the music...the performance...cohered like one instrument with perfection thanks to the expert preparation by Timothy Weiss.”

As a committed educator, he is professor of conducting and chair of the Division of Conducting and Ensembles at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where he helped create and mentored the ensembles Eighth Blackbird and ICE. He holds degrees from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels, Northwestern University, and the University of Michigan.

<https://new.oberlin.edu/conservatory/faculty/faculty-detail.dot?id=21283>

+

Soprano **Tony Arnold** is a luminary in the world of chamber music and art song. Today’s classical composers are inspired by her inherently beautiful voice,

consummate musicianship, and embracing spirit" (*Huffington Post*). Hailed by the *New York Times* as "a bold, powerful interpreter," she is recognized internationally as a leading proponent of new music in concert and recording, having premiered over 200 works "with a musicality and virtuosity that have made her the Cathy Berberian of her generation" (*Chicago Tribune*). Since becoming the first-prize laureate of both the 2001 Gaudeamus International Competition (NL) and the 2001 Louise D. McMahon Competition (USA), Tony Arnold has collaborated with the most cutting-edge composers and instrumentalists on the world stage, and shares with the audience her "broader gift for conveying the poetry and nuance behind outwardly daunting contemporary scores" (*Boston Globe*). "Simply put, she is a rock-star in this genre" (*Sequenza 21*).

www.screecher.com

Heralded by the Rochester City Newspaper as possessing a "honeyed tone" and "naturally exquisite voice," soprano **Paulina Swierczek** is a dedicated storyteller, combining technical facility with passionate expression. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, she has appeared as the featured soloist with ensembles such as Eastman School Symphony Orchestra, the Ossia New Music Ensemble, the Collegium Musicum, the Eastman Repertory Singers and the Cello Ensemble performing the works of Beethoven (Mass in C), Poulenc (Gloria), Haydn (Lord Nelson Mass), Harvey (Song Offerings), Villa-Lobos (Bachianas Brasileiras no. 5) and J. S. Bach. She has coached with and sung for esteemed musicians such as Libby Larsen, Margo Garrett, Martin Katz, Suzanne Mentzer, Graham Johnson, Dawn Upshaw and Roger Vignoles, and is the winner of the 2016 Jessie Kneisel Lieder Competition. Roles include The New Prioress (Dialogues of the Carmelites), Angelica (Orlando) and Donna Anna (Don Giovanni), and she recently appeared as the Countess Almaviva in the Eastman Opera Theatre's production of *Le nozze di Figaro*, her performance in which was praised as "the best pure singing of the production." Paulina is thrilled and grateful to be participating in this exciting premiere of *Don't Blame Anyone* with Eastman Broadband, PUSH Physical Theater and La Coperacha, and is honored to be acting as Tony Arnold's cover in addition to her role.

Tenor **Isaac Assor** is a recent graduate of the Eastman School of Music, majoring in Vocal Performance and Literature in the studio of Katherine Ciesinski. In his time at Eastman, he performed extensively with the Eastman Opera Theatre, singing the title role in Mozart's **Le nozze di Figaro**, the bass-baritone in Philip Glass and Allen Ginsberg's **Hydrogen Jukebox**, and Sam in Ned Rorem's **Our Town**. He also performed as a soloist in numerous concert works including J.S. Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Bruckner's *Mass in F Minor*, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, Rossini's *Petite messe solenne*, and J.S. Bach's *BWV 70* and *76*. Isaac has been active in various summer opera festivals. This summer, he performed as a Young Artist with the Ohio Light Opera, playing the roles of Hortensio in Cole Porter's **Kiss Me Kate**, Pish-Tush in Gilbert and Sullivan's **The Mikado**, and various other featured roles in the company's season of operetta and musical theatre. Last summer, he performed in the Central City Opera Studio. An avid teacher, Isaac recently completed the Eastman Certificate in College and Community Music Teaching Program. He taught as a private instructor for the Eastman Community Music School's Pathways

program, offering additional lessons for the school's scholarship recipients. He also interned with the ROCMusic program, teaching general music to students grades K through 5. Isaac completed his undergraduate studies at Columbia University, where he graduated *summa cum laude* with a double major in Music and Psychology.

Nicholas Huff is a tenor from the Chicago-Milwaukee area. He has been seen in opera productions at The Eastman School of Music, most recently, in a production of Mozart's charming classic, *Le Nozze di Figaro* as Don Basilio, his portrayal reviewed as having "Strength and Integrity" by the Rochester City Newspaper. At Eastman, Nicholas has also been seen as Bill in Samuel Barber's *A Hand of Bridge* and, outside of Eastman, he is a regular soloist for Handel's *Messiah* in Illinois (Waukegan Symphony Orchestra) and Wisconsin (Fine Arts at First, concert series). Mr. Huff was previously seen in Carthage College Student Opera productions of *L'elisir d'amore* (Nemorino), *Gianni Schicchi* (Rinuccio), The Racine Theater Guild's production of *Les Miserables* (Marius), and as Don Quixote in Carthage Theater Department's *Man of La Mancha*. Nicholas has just finished portraying the demonous Peter Quint in Britten's hair-raising *Turn of the Screw* with the Eastman Opera Theater and is pleased to perform a new role, *Niño Polilla/Amorphous Idea* tonight! Presently, Nicholas studies under Robert Swensen and is a candidate for a Master of Music (MM) Degree in Voice and Literature at the Eastman School of Music. Visit Nicholas online at www.NicholasHuff.pw

+

Darren & Heather Stevenson (*founding artistic directors/PUSHers*) Born and raised in England, Darren met Heather, a New Jersey native, during their mutual studies at The Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Their shared love of theatre and performance planted the seeds for their relationship and eventual collaboration. They toured the US and England and continued studying with Several Dancers Core in Atlanta, Pilobolus collaborator; Bill Wade in Cleveland and The Goldston & Johnson School for Mimes at Kenyon College. They founded the Studio School of the Arts in Atlanta, Georgia and, in 2000, they relocated to Rochester, where PUSH Physical Theatre was born. Under the Stevensons' leadership, the company has toured nationally and internationally with a strong connection to their Rochester home.

The Stevensons received the 2009 Performing Artist of the Year Award from the Arts & Cultural Council of Greater Rochester and the Anton Germano Dance Award. In 2010, they were invited to speak about PUSH's unique artistic process at TEDx Rochester.

A 2012 grant from the Farash Foundation enabled collaboration with the National Institute for the Deaf during which PUSH created "Red Ball" using iPads to study the interplay between real and virtual worlds. *Arc of Ages*, an exploration of Jewish History and culture, was created in 2013 for a two-week run at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Rochester's Cen-ter Stage. The performance featured an unprecedented 23 physical theatre performers trained by PUSH.

<http://pushtheatre.org/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8ja7YvegHo>
+

A self-taught cartoonist, illustrator, and accidental philosopher, **JIS (b. José Ignacio Solórzano)** has published more than thirty books in Mexico and Spain, has had a number of exhibitions in several of Mexico's premiere galleries, published for the national daily Milenio, and co-produces with his long-time collaborator, Trino, the popular radio show "La Chora Interminable". JIS' artistic trajectory has taken him from his work as an independent, philosophical cartoonist in the 1980's to his fruitful collaboration with Trino—specifically on the highly popular *El Santos Contra la Tetona Mendoza* comic strip—and, since the year 2000, as a multifaceted artist involved in just about every facet of contemporary art, from drawing to performance art.

<http://fuckyeahjismonero.tumblr.com/>

+

Eastman BroadBand Ensemble

Formed at the Eastman School of Music by composers Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon and Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, the **Eastman BroadBand** is a flexible group whose aim is to explore the many facets of contemporary music-making. Its repertoire includes modern classics, such as Ligeti, Lutoslawski, Birtwistle, and Carter, as well as recent music by many living composers, including that of Sanchez-Gutierrez and Zohn-Muldoon. The BroadBand's performances offer equal doses of rigor, precision, artistry, uncompromising furor and joy.

The Eastman BroadBand has performed internationally at Festival Internacional Cervantino, Chihuahua International Festival, and Conservatorio Nacional de Musica in Mexico; in Italy at SoundSCAPE (Maccagno), MASKfest (Bologna), and Festival SpazioMusica (Cagliari); in Spain at VIPA (Valencia), and as Resident Ensemble at the 2008 and 2010 Festival Internacional Chihuahua . Recently, the group has also performed in New York City at Symphony Space's Sonidos festival, the Americas Society, NYU's Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò , and Miller Theatre, and gave the premiere of Garth Fagan's *Edge/Joy* , with the Garth Fagan Dance Company at the Joyce Theatre. The group recently toured Western Mexico and the US Northeast with a staged version of Zohn-Muldoon's *Comala* , in collaboration with PUSH Physical Theater and Alia Musica. An extensive blog about another recent tour, authored by flutist Deidre Huckabay, was published at the NewMusicBox, the online magazine of New Music America. BroadBand is Resident Ensemble every summer at SoundSCAPE Festival in Maccagno, Italy. The group released *Cantos* , a compilation of Zohn-Muldoon's vocal works (Bridge, 2011) and *Diaries*, with large ensemble works by Sanchez-Gutierrez (Urtex, 2012).

<http://www.carlossg.com/broadband.html>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHN6Ae_e83M

+

Guadalajara-based **La Coperacha**, one of Mexico's longest-standing puppet companies, has been active for over thirty years. Their work encompass a wide range of activities, invariably linked to their commitment to bringing quality art to the most vulnerable segments of the population. La Coperacha, led by **Antonio Camacho** and **Olga Gámez**, produced the Rockefeller Foundation-sponsored film "Puppets of Fire", which traced the stories behind José Clemente Orozco's astonishing murals in Mexico and the US. In 2006, La Coperacha produced with the theatre company Pajaro de Nube *Obra Negra*, a surreal setting of Francisco de Goya's *Caprichos* with actors and life-size puppetry. La Coperacha's *Comunidades Invisibles*, an ambitious and successful program that promotes art appreciation and participation among children in the poorest neighborhoods of Guadalajara's metropolitan area, has been sponsored by the Mexican House of Representatives for several years, and has become a model for several initiatives in Mexico and abroad.

La Coperacha rescued Casa Reforma, one of Guadalajara's oldest buildings, and through a meticulous restoration process, is bringing it back to life as a museum and performance space dedicated to Guadalajara's children.

The company has produced a number of shows inspired by the work of several of Mexico's most celebrated cartoonists, including Trino, Magú and HelioFlores.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-UdpyUUTJc>

+

The artists and producers of *Don't Blame Anyone* wish to thank the following institutions: Secretaría de Cultura de México, Cultura UdG, Eastman School Music, Instituto de Cultura de Zapopan, and Sewgreen, as well as the following individuals: Ana Teresa Ramírez de Alba, Igor Lozada, Jamal Rossi, Luis Gerardo Ascencio, Alfredo Sánchez and Teresa Medrano.