

The Blue Room
Theatre
and
Tone List
present



an
Experimental
Chamber Opera
by
Sage J. Harlow

Artist ✱ Statement: *by Sage J. Harlow*



O,D,E is a text score chamber opera. Text scores compose music with words rather than traditional western notation. I've been writing text scores for some time. I also write poetry and I'm an improvising vocalist. I was curious about how these different practices might inform each other.

Opera seemed like the perfect genre to explore this.

Opera is a tradition of western theatre in which the dramatic roles are performed by singers. I was interested in what a text score opera would be like. There are composers who have written large scale text score pieces, and some operas that include text score components. I'm not sure if anyone has written an opera that is entirely a text score before.

(Let me know if you know of one!)

Operas have a libretto (the words that are sung) and a score. Because I was composing with text, the line between what is the score and what is the libretto is ambiguous. The whole piece is one text, shared by the singers and the music ensemble. It includes instructions, stage directions and libretto altogether.

The score is quite open. 'Open' scores are ones in which there is a lot of possible variation in how the score might be performed. There are musical themes for the characters in O,D,E that are quite simple. The ensemble improvise their way through the opera within the framework of the themes. There are a lot of choices to be made by the performers. I often think of my scores as invitations to explore a particular world, set of relationships, or way of creating sound.

Thinking about it like this, the performers are kind of co-composers. Composing like this is grounded in trust in the performers. It's almost like you're asking them (or inviting them) to complete your work. I really enjoy working this way. It's a great joy watching a clear intention that I have manifested in a way that is true to my intention, but that I couldn't have imagined on my own.

Often operas are retellings of myths or legends. For my first opera, I chose to go back to the beginnings of the form and retell the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Monteverdi's opera L'Orfeo is the oldest (surviving) opera. Orpheus is to some people the patron saint of opera. I liked the idea of rewriting this tale.

In most versions of this myth, Orpheus is a singer of great accomplishment. So much so, that when his love (Eurydice) dies, he is able to use his voice to bring her back from the dead. His music is magical. It ends tragically though when he looks back to check she's there just before he gets back to the land of the living.

Eurydice falls back to the Underworld.

My reworking of this myth is informed by meditation, ritual magick and queer theory. The characters are renamed O and E and are referred to with gender-neutral pronouns. There are two versions of O, played by two different performers.

There is another character called D. For most of the opera D is in the role of Death. Death is a god or archetype. She isn't evil, but She is powerful. The Death character is an homage to Santa Muerte—the Mexican saint. In O,D,E, Death also represents the death of each moment: the impermanence of all things.

Huge thanks to everyone involved in this production for their enthusiasm and dedication to this work. It is humbling and heartwarming to see such awesome artists take up the invitation offered by the score and manifest something so magickal.

Special thanks to Josten Myburgh, whose support of my practice over many years has made things possible that just wouldn't have happened without them. They have worked towards making this opera happen for over three years.

Thank you.

Synopsis: *(a retelling of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth.)*



The lovers E and O are meditating. O sings about being at peace; they focus on Awakening in their meditation practice. E sings about the powers that their concentration practice brings. E runs off to charm some creatures using these powers.

O reflects on the different focuses of their practices. Death comes. O realises they must die and does so peacefully after expressing their concerns for how E will cope.

E returns and sees O dead. They freak out. They decide to conjure Death to bring O back. Death does come and does bring O back but in another body (O₂). E does not recognise them and decides to pursue another method.

O (O₂) laments their fate—being brought back to life and abandoned by their lover.

E decides to become Death so they might bring O back. The becoming of Death, however, releases D from the role and E realises they are now the god/archetype of Death for eternity (or at least a long time/until someone else takes on the role).
They accept their fate.

D, freed from the role of Death hopes that all beings find freedom from suffering by recognising the impermanence of all things.

Content Warnings

- Very loud music at times (free earplugs available)
- Long silences
- Sudden loud sounds
- Depiction and personification of death
- Singing that may resemble speaking in tongues or screaming
- Spiritual and occult themes
- Dim lighting
- Haze
- Open flames from beeswax candles
- Full lockout (reentrance not permitted)

Thorough accessibility and content information including spoilers is available on The Blue Room Theatre's website.

Producer Statement: *by Josten Myburgh*



Four years is mostly write and send emails, taking someone's vision under one's wing and trying to make it be briefly real. In the process of portfolio- and practice-building to get O,D,E off the ground, we made an album (variations without a theme: drones ongs) and put on a season of an experimental spoken word & music piece (<3 love song; yes, most of Sage's things have confusing pronunciation). In this process I at times almost forgot the end-point—this opera—and just how cool and special it is. Until we auditioned singers, saw the first glimpse of the thing, and arrived at an exceptional cast. We were buzzing.

The beginning of the creative process for O,D,E was exhilarating, seeing the work come together and be a fully-formed piece of music so quickly. I was amazed to find the piece as moving and emotional in its abstract,

avant-garde stage form as it was as a piece of poetry: the form I'd largely experienced it in for years prior. The warmth, skill and humour of Harper, Liam, Jeremy, and all the designers, carefully sculpting from a very strong start, and supporting people to acquire new skills and find confidence in the unfamiliar, has been inspiring to watch. I have loved watching a powerful, moving text turn into this even more powerful piece of weird, uncompromising and beautiful art. Congratulations to everyone involved, and especially to Sage—huge stuff!

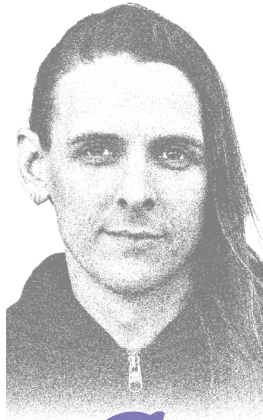
Death is an experience common to all. But the capacity to kill & destroy is not shared evenly. Nor is the power to wield the media to tell stories that some lives are worth less than others. Palestine is in our hearts during this show.

We condemn the killing of Palestinians and the destruction of their spaces for sharing culture, knowledge and spirituality by the state of Israel.

Donations to families on the ground help people get by in these times of escalated genocide, mass starvation & occupation. We endorse Gaza Mutual Aid Collective and encourage you to donate generously. You can send a donation to the PayPal account [@YasmeenTM](#).



The Team:



Sage J. Harlow *Writer, Composer*

Sage J Harlow is an experimental singer, composer & writer. Her works and improvisations have appeared in the programs of LiveWorks, ACCA, Liquid Architecture, NOW now, Supersense Festival of the Ecstatic, Audible Edge Festival and Perth Festival. Her debut recording as a composer was released by Edition Wandelweiser Records in 2022: a stepping stone to the premiere of her first opera, O,D,E. Sage has a PhD from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, researching intersections of vocal improvisation, insight meditation, shamanic chaos magick & gender performance.

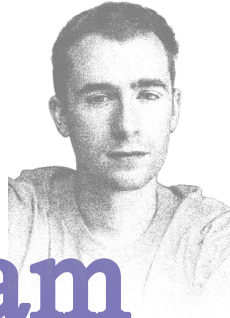
sagepbbbt.com

Directors



Harper Nguyen

Harper Nguyen is a WAAPA-trained performing artist with a background in improv, stand-up, immersive theatre and dramatic acting. She hopes to add to the growing number of trans performers on stage and screen. Her credits include *The Book of Salt* (Fringe 2021), *All The Words I Cannot Find* (Annual Season 2025) and *The Hole* (Summer Nights 2024). Harper is passionate about working with her fellow independent local artists in order to grow the scene. If you see her, a glass of Grenache is always welcome.

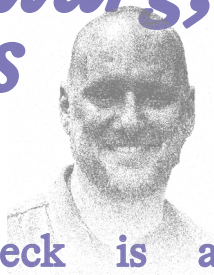


Liam Longley

Liam Longley is an actor and emerging director born and raised in Perth. He has performed as an actor for over a decade and is now collaborating and making original work, which he learned during his time at WAAPA studying the Bachelor of Performance Making. He starred in the original showing of *ALL BOYS* and currently has several short films in production. As a director, Liam has helmed productions such as *Perfect Animals* and *Love and Other Catastrophes* at the Blue Room Theatre.

Dr. Jeremy Neideck

Dramaturg, Process Queen



Jeremy Neideck is a performance maker and academic. The recipient of scholarships from Aphids, Australia-Korea Foundation, Asialink, and Brisbane City Council, Jeremy has undertaken residencies at The National Art Studio of Korea, The National Changgeuk Company of Korea, and The Necessary Stage (Singapore). He has made work for Brisbane Festival, World Theatre Festival, HiSeoul Festival, Seoul International Dance Festival and many others. He is course coordinator of the Bachelor of Performing Arts course at WAAPA. jeremyneideck.com



Josten Myburgh

Producer

Josten Myburgh is co-director and co-founder of Tone List, an Art Music Award winning platform for exploratory music, formed in 2016. A composer and saxophonist, they have made music with leading voices in global experimental sound practice, including Emilio Gordoa, Michael Pisaro-Liu, Burkhard Beins and Aviva Endean, and played at festivals in Prague, Mexico, Norway, France, Kuala Lumpur, and across this continent. jostenmyburgh.com
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The Cast:



Charis Postmus is *E*

Charis Postmus is a soprano and cross-genre vocalist with a First-Class Honours Degree in Classical Voice from WAAPA. Charis works with Freeze Frame Opera Company and is a frequent performer with Bloomhouse, WA Opera, Opus WA, the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, and the FRINGE Festival.

In 2024, Charis received the Barbara MacLeod Scholarship and undertook jazz studies at The New York Jazz Academy. This year, she was awarded the Bloomhouse Projects Emerging Artist position and was inducted as Artist in Residence with the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra.



Tiffany Ha is *O*

TiffanyHa(she/her)isa pianist, vocalist, composer, and therapist based in Boorloo. Born to Chinese-Vietnamese refugee parents, she explores cultural hybridity and the intersections of creativity and healing. Her practice spans experimental vocal performance, solo piano improvisation, ensemble singing, and collaborative composition. Tiffany values co-creation and working with artists who challenge conventions. She runs Inner Voice Piano in Bayswater and works as a psychotherapist at Mt Lawley Counselling Centre.



Michael Banting is *D*

Michael Banting has been a vocalist in Boorloo extreme metal and hardcore bands for 18 years. Self-taught through trial and error (and sheer will), with a natural ability as an intense performer, they have garnered a reputation for harsh multi-tonal vocal delivery and raw emotional output. Their bands include Population Control, DIN, Flesh Prison and Halo of Teeth. Politically-minded and gender non-conforming, they lay their soul to bare for all who witness their live performances.



Lara Dorling is O2

Lara is cultivating a writing and dancing practice that extends into digital – live digital performance, mixed reality – and sound spaces. They've performed improvisations both solo and collaboratively at WWIM, 600 Seconds, Melville Midwinter and Audible Edge—and are passionate about supporting the local dance community through their Make-Shift Evenings performance platform. Lara's work weaves together family, migration, language, movement, and friendship, with a desire to foster collective care and trust by learning to listen more deeply.

The Ensemble:

Eduardo Cossio
*Zither,
Electronics*



Eduardo Cossio is a Peruvian-Australian musician and visual artist. His work on prepared instruments and electronics foregrounds spontaneity, collaboration, and the development of a musical language whereby instruments are treated as malleable objects open to new configurations. Eduardo runs Outcome Unknown, an experimental music series and presents on Difficult Listening on RTRFM 92.1. Eduardo has received the West Australian Music Industry Award for experimental music on several occasions, and was nominated Industry Representative of the Year in 2018. eduardocossio.com

Craig Pedersen
*Trumpet,
Bass*

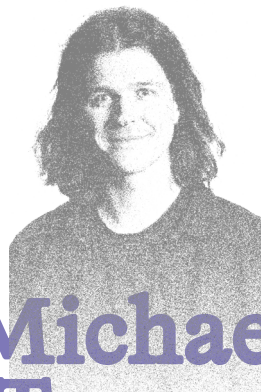


Craig Pedersen is a trumpet player, composer and improviser recently moved to Boorloo/Perth from Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. He is constantly searching for expressive potentials, seeking a music that defies understanding and moves in unexplainable and unexpected ways. In addition to his own groups The Craig Pedersen Quartet / Quintet and Sound of the Mountain, he has played with Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Toshimaru Nakamura, Pauline Oliveros, Keiji Haino and Tetuzi Akiyama, as well as many others. craigpedersen.com



Jane Stark *Percussion*

Jane Stark is a percussionist and improvising musician, and more, based in Boorloo, Wadjuk Noongar land. She recently played a sunrise set at WA Museum Boola Bardip with Josiah Padmanabham (Grievous Bodily Calm, GAZEY, Lyndon Blue), using feedback loops. She has also played ambient music to a sold-out crowd at The Rechabite; and documentary glitch/live stochastic remixing at The Rhein-Donau Club. She plays drums for post-rock band Parco, and organises concerts with WWIM (Walyalup Weekend of Improvised Music).

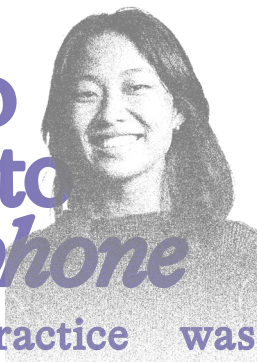


Michael Terren *Laptop*

Michael Terren plays keyboard instruments, produces audio, performs with a laptop, researches music tech, and teaches music composition at local universities. He recently released the albums “It ends in a crypt,” made with five ruined pianos; and “Delete the room,” an experimental work exploring videogame audio aesthetics.

[buttondown.com / michaelterren](http://buttondown.com/michaelterren)

Naoko Uemoto *Saxophone*



Naoko's practice was nurtured on unceded Whadjuk land, primarily by the local improvisatory scene. She finds meaning in the accumulation of sustainable care and curiosity created by exploratory art practices, and seeks to offer a gentle invitation for collective listening, feeling, and imagining in her works. Her interests in liveness, performance, and queer dancefloors often manifest across multiple mediums including saxophone performance, sound design, devised theatre, and installation. Naoko has also contributed to the programming of WWIM and Propel Youth Arts' KickstART Festival.

Saskia Willinge *Flute*



Saskia is a flautist who is most interested in improvised and exploratory music. Notable projects include 1948: Palestine in Pictures (Cool Change Contemporary) with Zaid Snobar, a commission for Audible Edge Festival with German flautist Sabine Vogel, a performance at TuneNoiseTune with New Directions for Chordless Quartet (Perth Jazz Society & Tone List) and participating in the recording of Sage J Harlow's variations without a theme (drones ongs) (Edition Wandelweiser). She is part of indie bands Heathcote Blue and Cryptids, and is a founding co-director of WWIM.

Behind-the-Scenes:

Kelsey D *Set Designer*

Kelsey is an arts worker, sound maker, cook, ceramicist & candlemaker. She loves messy improvisation with bits of dusty old treasure, a violin, candles, bells, water & tape recorders. Most recently performed in Outcome Unknown, ran Sound Exploration Fremantle in September, had a show with Cool Change Contemporary in December and presented an experimental dinner party in the Audible Edge Festival of Exploratory Music.

Tia Tokić *Costume Designer*

Tia Tokić is a fashion designer based in Boorloo. Formerly known as “VOLIM” (2014–2024), where she collaborated with Lauren Jane Salt, Tokić focuses on creating sustainable garments, favouring natural fibres such as linen and hemp. She has developed a made-to-order system that accommodates all sizes and bodytypes in a range of simple, loose fitting designs. To capture all textile waste in the production process; the offcuts are reworked into unique “scrap” garments.

Jolene Whibley

Lighting Designer

Jolene Whibley is a Lighting Designer who loves bringing light into people's lives and onto Boorloo's beautiful stages. When not in the theatre, she's telling her rescue Greyhound, Rosie, how beautiful she is and catching up on missed episodes of RuPaul's Drag Race after tech week. Jolene has lit works for Black Swan Theatre Company, Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, West Australian Ballet, and Perth Festival. In 2024, she received The Blue Room Theatre's Outstanding Design award for her work on All Boys (every other theatre company) and received a Performing Arts WA Awards nomination for her work on Songbird (Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company).

Catherine O'Donoghue

Stage Manager

Catherine O'Donoghue graduated in 2019 with her Bachelor of Performing Arts (Production & Design) from WAAPA. Theatre credits as stage manager include Whoosh! (Sensorium Theatre Company), See You Next Tuesday (Static Drive Co.), ARCO (WA Youth Theatre Company), FIRE (Kalyakoorl Collective), MoveMoveMove (The Blue Room Theatre; Perth Festival), Paper Doll (New Ghosts Theatre Company), and The Dirty Mother (Michelle Hall). She has also worked as a Technical Designer for the Australian student exhibition at the 2019 Prague Quadrennial, and is a sessional lecturer at p20 WAAPA.

Also, and with gratitude:

Oliva Joi
Rawlings
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and Layout*

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and
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The Blue Room Theatre
staff, the Boorloo
exploratory music scene,
Chris Cobilis, Briannah
Davis, E Millar, Local
Weirdos, Renee Newman,
Mary Rapp, Pound Coffee,
Paul Wachla, Santa
Muerte & all those in our
lives on the path(s).

About Tone List:

Tone List is an artist-run, Boorloo-based label for exploratory music. It is dedicated to the nurturing of approaches to music-making which receive little or no attention in existing structures on the west coast of this continent, especially where those approaches are radical or novel.

We publish recordings predominantly by Western Australian artists, and organise concerts and workshops with an intention towards strengthening the sense of community amongst experimental musicians and offering outlets for their music to be heard by a wide, engaged public.

Our aim is to ensure

that emergent young musicians interested in new ways of working with sound have an internationally connected scene to grow into, a network of inspiring local practitioners interested in hearing and supporting their music, and resources to support their artistic development. We strive to cultivate a sound culture that foregrounds generosity, altruism, courage, rigour, and connection to place.

Tone List presents the acclaimed annual Audible Edge Festival of Exploratory Music. In 2023, we were the recipient of a State Luminary Award at the Art Music Awards presented by

APRA AMCOS and the Australian Music Centre, acknowledging five years of sustained contribution to Boorloo art music culture.

Tone List is a not-for-profit incorporated association, and a registered charity. Its core operations are volunteer-run.

Tone List stands for a Free Palestine: for peace, for freedom from occupation and apartheid, for self-determination, the right to return for Palestinians in their homelands, and for safe, liberated expression in cultural spaces.

**The
Blue Room
Theatre**



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries



**tone
fest**

tonelist.com.au