

The Next Storm

IT IS 2030 AND PORTIONS OF ITHACA ARE UNDERWATER: WHO SURVIVES? WHO DECIDES?

ABOUT *THE NEXT STORM*

By Civic Ensemble: Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr., Julia Taylor, Sage Alia Clemenco, and Sarah K. Chalmers

Civic Ensemble artists have been working with Cornell PMA for the past two years exploring climate change through theatre. *The Next Storm* is the second play to come out of this collaboration. The first, *Climates of Change*, was created during a PMA class in the fall of 2017. During that first process, we conducted 14 stories circles in various locations around Tompkins County and conducted interviews with scientists and individuals whose work is focused on climate change or sustainability. While *The Next Storm* is a very different play, it is informed by everything we learned the first time around.



The Next Storm was built in weekly sessions with community members and students throughout the first half of 2019, during which we explored individuals' personal relationship with climate change, our community positioning, and imagined what a future Tompkins County could look like given our climate crisis. Students attended weekly sessions with community members downtown, and community members attended class sessions with students on the hill. Together, we gave voice to animals, trees, bugs, land, and water. We explored the intimate conversations between family members struggling to face the crisis, and the ways policy-makers take on the issues.

Civic Ensemble uses theater to engage communities in critical conversations about our most pressing concerns, hopes, and fears. While building stronger communities through our theatrical work, we creatively problem-solve on the issues we face. Given the current state of the climate crisis, and how our region will likely fare in the coming decades, we are steeping ourselves in this crisis to generate new dialogue, strengthen relationships, and join with our partners throughout the community striving for connection, understanding, and inspiration for action.

There is so much that divides us. What we learn through our work every day is that connection and understanding are possible. This project teaches us that action is a necessity, and we must come together across the divide to both make change and demand change from those who have the power to set and keep a sustainable course. *The Next Storm* is another step on the

journey of this collaboration. We look forward to the dialogue and action that comes out of this iteration, and we hope you'll join in connecting, learning, and taking action.



WHY CLIMATE CHANGE?

By Producer Sara Warner

Global climate change is the most pressing issue of our time. It is a particularly charged topic in the Fingers Lakes, where in recent years hydrofracking, factory farming, toxic waste storage, renewable energy initiatives, and development projects on and near Native American sovereign territories have created deep divisions among residents. Despite overwhelming evidence that human activity is adversely impacting our climate system, roughly half of Americans remain unconvinced of our responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions. Deliberate, organized, and well-funded efforts to distort the public's understanding fuel climate denial, thwarting efforts to identify and implement solutions. Our play is about climate justice and the disproportionate effects a warming planet has on the world's most vulnerable and marginalized populations. When the next storm comes, who survives? Who decides? What sacrifices to our personal comfort are we willing to make to ensure a sustainable future? And, how do we mobilize and maintain hope in the face of an extinction-level event?

Climate change is at once an ecological and environmental issue and a matter of economic and political domination. Climate resilience requires broad, visionary alliances and community-led solutions. As a land grant institution, Cornell was built on the concept that what is happening in the world matters to and affects what happens in our classrooms. We strive to make sure that what we do at the university responds to and influences life for the better. In PMA, theater is a laboratory of the social imagination. Student actors, directors, and designers create worlds, experimenting with human behavior as it is, and as it could be. *The Next Storm* is a multi-year project that grew out of Professor Sara Warner's Theater and Social Change course and her desire to collaborate with Civic Ensemble on a community-based play. Our cast is comprised of social actors, of students and residents of Tompkins County, some of whom are performing for the very first time. We all collaborated with playwright Thom Dunn on the script. Set in the near future, our Living Newspaper play encourages audiences to see the imminent threats associated with climate change as well as the many possibilities for agency and activism.

WHAT IS A LIVING NEWSPAPER?

Originating in Russia and Germany at the turn of the 20th century, Living Newspapers are fact-based dramatizations of current events that gained prominence in the United States in the 1930s with the federally-funded Works Progress Administration (WPA), a cornerstone of President Roosevelt's



New Deal. The WPA employed millions of job seekers during the Great Depression, on infrastructure projects such as Ithaca's Southside Community Center and Cascadilla Creek, and on arts and cultural initiatives. The Living Newspaper Unit of the Federal Theater Project (FTP) employed out-of-work artists and journalists to create and stage plays on controversial issues of the day, ranging from corporate monopolies and sex education to race relations and the urban housing crisis. In an effort to educate the public and counter disinformation campaigns, Living Newspapers eschewed conventions of commercial theater in favor of experimental agit-prop techniques designed to promote critical thinking and prompt political action. Enormously popular with audiences across the country, the FTP became a target of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) for its alleged anti-government stance and Communist sympathies. Despite Director Hallie Flanagan's insistence that Living Newspapers presented "propaganda for democracy," not against it, Congress disbanded the FTP in 1939. As *The Next Storm* considers the viability of a Green New Deal, we thought it fitting to revive this politically-charged mode of performance.

THE NEXT STORM

PRESENTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMING AND MEDIA ARTS AND CIVIC ENSEMBLE

By Thom Dunn in collaboration with Civic Ensemble, students in PMA 4825/6825 (Theatre & Social Change), and members of the Ithaca community.

Director: Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr.

Associate Director: Sage Alia Clemenco

Assistant Director: Allen Porterie

Producer: Sara Warner

Scenic Design: Sarah Lambert

Costume Design: Sarah E. Bernstein

Lighting Design: Joey Moro

Projection/Video Design: Nick Hussong

Sound Design: Warren Cross

Stage Manager: Howard Klein

SPECIAL THANKS

Nick Salvato, Judy Virgilio, Christos Vlahos, Aoise Stratford, Youngsun Palmer, Cathi Sullivan, Idris Ackamoor, Cynthia Kjellander-Cantu, Anna Sims Bartels, Amanda Wittman, Elizabeth Goldberg, Bryan Hagelin, Julian Robison, Abbey Crowley, Hans Bethe House, Keeton House, members of the Theater and Social Change Class (Zhen Cheng, Emem-Esther Udofa Ikpot, Lyra Liu, Lissette Lorenz, Carley Robinson, and Levi Wilson) and participants from the Civic Ensemble Community Workshops (including Cathleen Banford, Sherron Brown, Jerry Carmell, Ella Carr, Anthony Cleveland, Heather Duke, Ed Dvorak, Nick Goldsmith, Rachel Gould, Jeremy Jimenez, Denise Katzman, Kathy Kraft, Ralfy Lawrence, Sareanda Lourdes, Michael Margolin, Casandra Ponton, Elizabeth Seldin, Noa Shapiro-Tamir, and Michael Smith).

PRODUCTION CREW

Community Outreach Coordinator: Sarah K. Chalmers

Community Devising Facilitator: Julia Taylor

Science Advisor: Toby Ault

Documentarian: Jeff Hodges

Campus Outreach & Engagement: Lisa McCullough

Assistant Stage Manager: Nicole Guillen

Assistant Lighting Designer: Edy Kennedy

Stage Crew: Anika Anvekar, Juyoung Lee

Scenery Construction/Electrics Crew: Mira Kudva Driskell, Madeline Dubelier, Phoebe Hart, Angel Hsu, Yue Ji, Regina Lassiter, Sophia Lee, Leo Makebish, Jason Sall, Reabetsoe Sello, Conner Tart, Vivienne Tenev, James Whitaker

Scene Shop Work-Study: Wil Aubrecht, Thea Goldman, Wilbert Ren, Christine Yuan

Electrics Work-Study: Emlen Brown, Malcolm de Long, Anastasia Kreisel, Matthew Secondine, Ariel Shaked, Julia Smith

Dressers: Tiffany Gibson, Bryan Hagelin

Costume Stitchers: Leo Almada-Makebish, Chiara Corey, Marin Langlieb, Regina Lassiter, Madeleine Lee, Nicole Oliviera, Reabetsoe Sello, Conner Tart, Vivienne Tenev

Costume First Hands: Natalie Brunco, Madeleine Gray, Emma Kindig, Zach Menchaca, Sarah Skrutskie, Simone White

Light Board Programmer: Jing Rong Lim

Video Operator: Alain Morrisette

Sound Board Operator: Ella Ekstrom

House Managers/Box Office Staff: Emily Augustyniak, Olivia Bueschel, Kimberly Friedman, Madeleine Gray, Cassidy Higgins, Daniela Moreno, Calvin O'Brien, Carley Robinson, Victoria Varlack, Levi Wilson, Michelle Wu, Sarah Zaragoza-Smith.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director of Productions and Events: Pamela Lillard

Co-Technical Director: Fritz Bernstein

Co-Technical Director/Props Coordinator: Tim Ostrander

Costume Shop Manager: Lisa Boquist

Master Electrician: Steven Blasberg

Computer Support: Chris Christensen

Communications Manager: Lindsey White

Performance & Events Coordinator: Cindy Greco

Box Office Manager: Julie Tibbits

Let us quiet the storm that is brewing. Let us take a moment to step back from each other and step into ourselves to own what is ours. To know that we are powerful sources of energy that can make immediate change. We are the earth. We are the land. We are the air. We are the elements. We are what we fear and what we love. Let us quiet the storm by listening to the whispers of the earth and each other. We can quiet the storm.

—Sherron Brown, community play participant

Cosponsored by Engaged Cornell, Civic Ensemble, Department of Performing and Media Arts, CALS, the Community Foundation of Tompkins County, and WRFI Community Radio. We are grateful to Cornell Cinema, The Kitchen Theatre, and Cinemapolis for their support of our 2019–20 performances and events.

We dedicate this show in loving memory of Dick Archer and Ed Intemann.

COMPANY PROFILES

A transplant from New Jersey, **Donna Acquavella** (Avery) has lived in the Finger Lakes on and off since 2002. In 2012, Hurricane Sandy swept through her hometown of Belmar and ravaged the homes and lives of her friends and family. Civic Ensemble has been an integral part of her life for the past five years.

Toby Ault is associate professor in Earth and Atmospheric Science. His research focuses on climate impacts on prolonged drought risk and changes in seasonality. Ault received his PhD from the University of Arizona in 2011, then completed an ASP postdoctoral fellowship at the National Center for Atmospheric Research from 2011–2013 before joining Cornell.

Sarah Eckert Bernstein (Costume Designer) is the Resident Costume Designer at the Schwartz Center and Senior Lecturer in costume design, costume history, and character design. Some of her recent projects include: *The Wolves*; *Spill*; LGD 2019; *The Awakening of Spring*; *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play*; LGD 2018; *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*; *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; *Baltimore*; *Eurydice*; *Desert of Light*; *All God's Chillun Got Wings*; LGDF 2016: Loss, Denial and Desire—The Melodrama of the Krewe of Doberge Ball; *On the Verge*; *Blood Wedding*; *The Glass Menagerie*; and *The Mineola Twins*. Sarah has designed costumes and scenery or been an assistant designer for a variety of academic, regional, Broadway, off-Broadway and summer theatres. Sarah is a graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul University and the Yale School of Drama.

Ivan Bourov (Protestor Chorus) is a freshman majoring in Chemistry, and has been doing theater since the 7th grade. Seeing how performing leads to social change inspired him to join *The Next Storm*, and working this last month has opened his eyes to the importance of the individual stopping man-made climate change.

Sarah K. Chalmers is an applied theatre practitioner, teacher, director, and actor based in Ithaca, NY. She is a founding member and artistic director for Civic Ensemble. Sarah's work is focused on engaging communities in thinking critically about our world through theatre practice and storytelling with the goal of creating the community we may have only seen in our dreams.

Sage Alia Clemenco is a proud Ithaca local and Company Member at Civic

Ensemble. Sage spent the last 10 years at Cornerstone Theater, working at the place where theater and community storytelling intersect. This project has been a first, and important, step in her work to understand and prepare for the future effects of our climate crisis.

Warren Cross (Sound Designer) is the Resident Sound Designer for the Department of Performing and Media Arts at Cornell University. In addition to designing sound for department productions, Warren teaches courses in sound design, post production, and interactive performance technology. He attended Five Towns College for Music Technology, Manhattan School of Music for Composition, and SUNY Stony Brook for Technical Theatre.

Thom Dunn (Playwright) had the privilege of attending the 2015 Paris Climate Accord on behalf of Upworthy and UNESCO. He's also collaborated on climate-related content for the Weather Channel, Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, and others. This is his second writing project with Civic Ensemble, following *Streets Like This* in 2018.

Rachel Gould (Helen) is a longtime Ithacan who loves hiking our beautiful trails and gorges. As a mom, she struggles with fear about our children's future on this planet. Participating in *The Next Storm* has provided much-needed hope about how community and connection will help us face whatever is to come with resiliency.

Nicole Guillen (Assistant Stage Manager) is involved with this project because she cares immensely for our environment and fears that climate change will destroy all the beauty in the world. She hopes people can relate to at least one character's perspective and will be inspired to make a change (big or small) in their life.

Jeff Hodges is a professional videographer and editor who has lived and worked in the Ithaca area for years. By capturing this performance on video, he hopes to preserve the talented work that the community has put into the show, and that it may help promote the ideals of the show for years to come.

Professor Jeremy Jimenez (Carson) teaches and researches issues concerning environmental justice, whilst musing how art and community will be essential to surviving—and thriving—in a post-carbon future. He dedicates this performance to his own Percy, as well as all other Percys around the world, both known and unknown.

Rhodesa Jones (Eve) has dedicated her life to theater and social change. The Co-Artistic Director of San Francisco's Cultural Odyssey and the Director of *The Medea Project: Theatre for Incarcerated Women*, she believes in creative survival, in the transformational power of art. Rhodesa is the Rhodes Class of '56 Visiting Professor in PMA.

Howard Klein (Stage Manager) has worked for many years as a professional AEA production stage manager off-Broadway and regionally. He is the production manager and lighting designer of the Binghamton-based dance troupe Galumph. He also worked at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts as producing coordinator in the Theatrical Production department. Howard currently teaches stage management at SUNY Binghamton, where he received his degree in technical theatre.

Sarah Lambert (Set Designer) Sarah grew up in Ithaca, back when "winter" meant five months of snow-covered ground and a Groundhog's Day shadow meant only six more weeks of winter. At 21, with a BA from Cornell, she left Ithaca for larger cities (London, Washington, New York) and a professional career. Much has changed...

Zachariah Menchaca (Elpis) is delighted to be involved in *The Next Storm*. Zachariah is a senior majoring in Sociology and minoring in Theatre, Business, and Inequality Studies. This project has allowed him to learn more about climate activism. Zachariah looks forward to your viewing of the show and hopes you're inspired to make change in your local community!

Sumay Mishra (Protestor Chorus) is a chemistry major at Cornell University. Being an international student, Sumay realizes that climate change is a global problem and not just confined to one country. Through the project, Sumay plans to explore ideas about climate change, learn, and try and help to do anything he can to reduce the effects of climate change.

Joey Moro (Lighting Designer) is a New York-based designer who designs lighting, projection, and scenery. Recent lighting: *The Wolves* (PMA), *The Rape of Lucretia* (Boston Lyric Opera), *Awful Event* (Baryshnikov Arts Center), *Die Fladermaus* (SUNY Stony Brook), *The Baltimore Waltz*, (Syracuse University, Light and Set), *Streetcar* (Le Petit Theatre), *Hair* (Hofstra University), *Eurydice Project* (Dublin), *Detroit* (Theatre Squared). Recent projection

work: *St. Joan*, (Delaware Theatre Co.), *A Bright Room Called Day* (Juilliard), *Skeleton Crew* (Dorset Theatre Fest), *Vietgone* (Theatre Squared), *The Last Five Years* (Mexico City), *Only You Can Prevent Wildfires* (Teatro Circulo), *Once On This Island* (Le Petit Theatre), *Death of the War Poets* (Sheen Center), *Orange Julius* (Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre), *Orlando* (Set and Projection). BA, Cornell University; MFA, Yale School of Drama.

Carley Robinson (Bobbi) is so grateful to be a part of this meaningful production. She has fallen in love with Ithaca's community and landscape. This piece of theatre pays homage to its environment and forces us to think about what we are doing today to protect it.

Isaiah Rosenstein (Terry) is a senior in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences which, having grown up in Brooklyn, is about the closest he's ever been to agriculture. But even as a city dweller, Isaiah fully supports the option of having a habitable planet available in the future.

Karina Savillo (Alex) has been a member of the Ithaca community for three years. Her participation in this project has deeply strengthened her connection to and care for the residents of

Ithaca. She has since started to explore the surrounding landscape and appreciate all the hidden treasures Ithaca has to offer.

Jasmine Scott (Protestor Chrous) is a junior pursuing a Sociology major and a Spanish minor. She thinks a lot about how low-income people of color are bearing the brunt of the climate crisis. She feels so lucky to live in this spellbinding city and exist in the same universe as this cast.

Reabetsoe Sello (Dee) has had a few existentialist crises in her quarter century of life, none so devastating as that about the future of the planet and of her unborn children. This play is a cry for help and a call to action, which we all so desperately need in the calamity that is global warming.

Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr. (Director) was born in the 60's, therefore has never been particularly knowledgeable or interested in issues of climate change until working on this play. He HAS been at the forefront of sustainable producing models—producing theatre using the least amount of resources, or recycling resources/productions at both Epic Theatre Ensemble and Civic Ensemble. He is grieving the idea of leaving Cornell.

Kriti Sinha (Yaz) has been passionate about climate action since high school, where she started a recycling program. She has also investigated climate change through visual arts, scientific research, and political lobbying. Developing this play has shown her the difficult trade-offs that accompany climate solutions and the urgency of our situation.

Mitchell Smith (Contractor) is excited to be involved in *The Next Storm*. He has been involved with past Civic productions, such as *Dreams and Nightmares* and *The Class Divide*. He would like to give a special thanks to his loving mother, Heather Duke. And to his beloved, Deistani Friend.

Reared in Louisiana, **Sara Warner** (Producer) and her family have weathered many storms, including Hurricane Katrina. She has lived in Ithaca since 2004, when she joined the Cornell faculty as a theater historian who specializes in political performance. This is her second collaboration with Civic Ensemble.

Levi Wilson (Phagos) is always striving to be greener for the planet and a little less green in theatrical know-how. This play offered the opportunity to tackle both teloi, while illuminating Ithaca as it truly is—far more than a college town.

WHAT COMES AFTER THE NEXT STORM?

It's the age of the Anthropocene, the age of the Apocalypse, and as artists we must ask: (where) does nature remain? (how) does nature perform?

This spring, the Department of Performing and Media Arts hosts...



The eTRASH Laboratory

A laboratory: exploring theatrical research and sustainable humanity

In this seven-week laboratory, participants are invited to create theatrical and performative experiments, questioning the boundaries between humans & culture & technology & nature; hypothesizing—the moves between climate change & climate crisis & climate action & climate justice.

Participation is open on a drop-in basis to all Ithaca and Cornell community members. Regular participants will be invited to devise a public performance of our findings. No previous theatrical experience required.

How have we gotten ourselves into this mess?
How might we take action to create a future otherwise?
How will art help us get there?

Open Laboratory Sessions: February & March 2020
Public performance of our findings: April 16–18, 2020
Black Box Theatre, Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts

Contact Kelly Richmond (kbr42@cornell.edu) for more information

www.etrashlab.com
@etrashlab

Cosponsored by the Department of Performing and Media Arts and the Cornell Council for the Arts.

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather today is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee people, and more specifically of the Cayuga people who are the traditional stewards of this land. We recognize our role as visitors to this land and honor the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. We have a collective responsibility to acknowledge our colonial history in order to understand how we contribute to environmental crises and how we can work toward climate justice.