

switch

SWITCH Opera | Theater

In One Act

Book and Music by John Aylward
Stage Direction, Laine Rettmer
Conductor, Jean-Philippe Wurtz

Premiere:

Le Laboratoire, Cambridge
650 E Kendall St. Cambridge, MA
February 12th, 13th, 14th, 19th, & 20th at 7PM

Misha Smigelski, Henry
Amanda DeBoer Bartlett, Anne & Molly

Ecce Ensemble
Jean-Philippe Wurtz, conductor

Keiko Murakami, flutes
Vasko Dukovski, clarinets
Serafim Smigelskiy, cello
Mike Truesdell, percussion

John Aylward and Laine Rettmer, Artistic Directors
Andrea Merx and Laine Rettmer, Stage Design
Jillian Goldstien, Assistant Director and Stage Manager
Rachel Dainer-Best, Costumes
Sebastien Lamouret, Lighting
Amy Damon, Gallery Manager

Running time is approximately 90 minutes with no intermission. All text and music by the composer except where indicated.

I. Creation Requires Privacy

II. Flights of Inspiration

Featuring Guillaume de Machaut's, Messa de Nostre Dame

III. Security in Anonymity

IV. Critical Flaw

V. Remedies in Ourselves

Featuring Guillaume de Machaut's, Messa de Nostre Dame

VI. The Diary

VII. The Laugh Scene

VIII. Optimism Among Intelligent People is Rare

IX. Love, Death, Honor and Truth

Additional text by Joseph Campbell, from Creative Mythology (adapt. Aylward) †

X. The Mirror Seems Essential

Featuring Tu se' morta, mia vita, ed io respire, by Claudio Monteverdi, from Orfeo

XI. Cloistered Virtue

XII. The Anima

Additional text by Thomas Mann, from Freud and the Future (adapt. Aylward) and Joseph Campbell, from Creative Mythology (adapt. Aylward) †

XIII. Interior World

XIV. The Magnets of Euripides

Text by Plato, from Ion (adapt. Aylward)

XV. Supreme Triumph

Text by D.H. Lawrence, from Apocalypse (adapt. Aylward)

XVI. If That's What's Happening

XVII. Interlude

XVIII. Single Minded Devotion

Featuring Ach, ich fühl's, es ist verschwunden by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, from Die Zauberflöte

XIX. Wrapped Up

XX. The Ring

*Additional text by Jules Barbey d'Aureville, from Complete Fiction (adapt. Aylward)**

XXI. Finale

† From Joseph Campbell's *Creative Mythology* Copyright © Joseph Campbell Foundation (jcf.org) 1968. Used with permission.

* This account of Barbey's *Charlemagne and the Magic Ring* is translated from the original French in *Six Memos for the Next Millenium* by Italo Calvino. Copyright © 1988 by the Estate of Italo Calvino, used by permission of The Wylie Agency LLC.

All other texts in public domain.

SYNOPSIS

SCENE I [No.'s 1-5] Alone at his desk, Henry is working on a new play. Molly has given him an audio diary—a kind of dictaphone—to help with his writer's block. Molly enters and says her auditions have been coming up dry. She wants to bring friends over to help prepare for an upcoming audition.

SCENE II [No. 6] Henry is having more writer's block and his audio diary is acting erratically. Molly enters and bemoans the fact that she failed another audition. Henry is encouraging but fixated on work. Molly debates canceling her meeting with friends and her upcoming audition. She pleads with Henry to take some time away for dinner with her and her father. Henry agrees to join after he gets more work done.

SCENE III [No. 7-9] After pontificating about work, Henry veers into a confessional about his difficulties with Molly. While confiding in his diary, Anne enters, asking about Molly's gathering of friends. Neither can remember if it's been cancelled and they begin to talk. Soon Anne reads Henry's drafts, offering surprising critiques and illuminations on drama.

SCENE IV [No.10] With Henry at work, Molly enters asking why he missed dinner. Henry says that Anne's visit kept him. Molly is confused, swearing she had cancelled her meeting and doesn't even know anyone named Anne. Henry says he made a breakthrough with Anne, but when Henry shares his new drafts, it's clear that his work is in shambles. They agree to take a weekend away on vacation and that Molly will return in the morning when they'll leave.

SCENE V [No.'s 11-16] Once Molly is away and Henry back to work, Anne visits. Henry first confronts her, saying that Molly has never heard of her but Anne changes the subject back to Henry's work and soon reveals that she is not exactly who she says she is. Henry admits that she is so stimulating, he feels he's falling in love with her. Anne insists that Henry must turn his attention to Molly despite his newfound feelings and that she's not there to confuse Henry, but rather to help him become a great artist.

SCENE VI [No.17-18] Molly returns to see that Henry, asleep, has forgotten about their weekend trip. Roused, Henry insists that he had another breakthrough with Anne. Now suspicious of Anne, Molly says that she just wants to live a normal life away from Henry's professional pressures. Henry insists on the importance of the life of the artist, wanting to share his latest draft and also a special present (a ring). Henry searches the apartment but can't find the ring for Molly. Molly, not in the mood to indulge Henry, leaves, upset that the weekend plans have been ruined.

SCENE VII [No.19-20] With Molly away, Henry is back at his desk, confiding in his audio diary that he's still confused about his personal life. Anne appears and Henry shares a coherent recent draft of his story. Happily, Anne insists that with the play well on its way, Henry turn to his personal life, pleading for him to recognize Molly. To show him that everything he loves about her can be found in Molly, Anne transforms herself into an image of Molly. With his projections of Anne now in the image of Molly, Henry proposes.

SCENE VIII [No.21] Henry and Anne wake in bed. Henry thanks Anne for clarifying that he's been in love with Molly all along and that Anne has always been a kind of figment of his imagination. Anne disappears and Henry calls out her name. Molly, knocking at the door, hears Henry's calls and is again upset. Molly declares she is finished with Henry and her constant suspicion over Anne. Henry insists that Anne is only his muse but when he describes her visitations he only seems crazy. Henry picks up the audio diary and declares that Anne visits him through the device, but as he turns it on, it erratically plays back excerpts of his private thoughts regarding Anne. Molly is further distraught and leaves. Henry is left in ruin.

COMPOSER'S NOTES

My first idea for Switch came when reading Ernest Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden*. The disillusionment of Hemingway's protagonist, set against the alcohol-induced dreamscape of the French Riviera, creates a narrative that captivated me in the way it plays with how we perceive the frustrations and inspirations of the artist. Switch considers a similar theme and adds another aspect that is, for me, fascinatedly interconnected — the life of the muse.

"Precisely as in a dream it is our own will that unconsciously appears as inexorable objective destiny, everything in it proceeding out of ourselves and each of us being the secret theater director of our own dreams, so also in reality the great dream that a single essence, the will itself, dreams with us all, our fate, may be the product of our inmost selves, of our wills, and we are actually ourselves bringing about what seems to be happening to us."

— Thomas Mann, *Freud and the Future*

"Unfathomable mind, now beacon, now sea."

— Samuel Beckett, *Malloy*

With great thanks to David Edwards, Carrie Fitzsimmons, Ankica Koldzic and the staff at Le Laboratoire, and to Paul and Cindy for their friendship, mentorship and support. Thanks also to my brother Eric for this help with the libretto and to Robert Tobin for his help with the translation of some text. And deep thanks to my dear family and close friends who have helped in this work's creation and are just wonderful to me in general. — J.A.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"I will start out this evening with an assertion: fantasy is a place where it rains."

— Italo Calvino, *Six Memos For The Next Millennium*

"He was completely detached from every thing except the story he was writing and he was living in it as he built it. The difficult parts he had dreaded he now faced one after another and as he did the people, the country, the days and the nights, and the weather were all there as he wrote. He went on working and he felt as tired as if he had spent the night crossing the broken volcanic desert and the sun had caught him and the others with the dry gray lakes still ahead."

— Ernest Hemingway, *The Garden of Eden*

"Thoughts and feelings collapse together in memory, desire itself is dislocated from the real, the experiences of the body and mind fall into an undifferentiated insanity."

— Andrea Merx, *In the Act*

"I believe that truth has only one face: that of a violent contradiction."

— Georges Bataille, *Violent Silence*

John Aylward (Composer, Librettist)

Aylward's music comprises solo works, chamber music, orchestral work and music for film. Born and raised in the Southwest US, his artistic concerns remain partly related to that landscape and culture: dislocation, organicism, native mythologies and the environment. Currently, he lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and teaches music composition at Clark University. Awards include a Goddard Lieberon Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Radcliffe Institute Fellowship from Harvard University, a Koussevitzky Commission from the Library of Congress, a Fulbright Grant to Germany, a DAAD fellowship and First Prize from the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) among other honors. Other fellowships and residencies include those from the MacDowell Colony, Tanglewood, the Aspen Music School, the Atlantic Center for the Arts and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

Laine Rettmer (Director, Co-Scenic Designer)

Laine Rettmer is an opera director and visual artist. She is the resident stage director for LoftOpera a New York based company that creates full-scale classical operas with immersive and contemporary stagings, a position she has held for the past three seasons. Past productions include *La Boheme*, Joyce Di Donato's CD release concert in a Brooklyn metal shop replete with live welding, the premier of the new opera *Pedr Solis*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *il Barbiere di Siviglia*, which made the New York Times top-ten funniest, classical music productions of 2014, and most recently, *The Rape of Lucretia*. Rettmer's work has also been recently included in a group exhibition at the Yuan Museum in Beijing. Previous associate and assistant director credits in opera include *Powder Her Face* which opened New York City Opera's last season at BAM and Evan Ziporyn's opera *A House in Bali* which premiered at Berkley Rep, touring to Boston and BAM. Rettmer is a graduate of NYU TISCH School of the Arts, and is currently pursuing her MFA at School of the Museum of Fine Arts, in video art and installation.

Jean-Philippe Wurtz (Conductor)

Jean-Philippe Wurtz studied at the National Conservatoire of the Region of Strasbourg where he obtained first prizes in piano, chamber music, analysis. He continued his studies at the Karlsruhe Musikhochschule and received instructions from Ernest BOUR whom he met in Strasbourg. At the same time, he was admitted as a student to the International Eötvös Institute where he studied with Peter Eötvös. There he conducted the Asko and Contrechamps ensembles. In 1997, he founded the LINEA ensemble devoted to contemporary music. In 1994, he was assistant to Kent NAGANO at the Lyon Opera, then to Friedemann Layer at the Montpellier Languedoc-Roussillon Orchestra, which he regularly conducts. From 1997-99, he works as Director of the musical studies at the Operas of Montpellier.

Jillian A. Goldstein (Assistant Director, Stage Manager)

Jillian A. Goldstein is a theater artist based in New York. Theaters she has worked with include La Mama ETC, MCC Theater, Theater Row, and The Schimmel Center. She is also currently in a production of *Tosca* with LoftOpera.

Andrea Merx (Scenic Designer)

Andrea Merx is a visual artist based in Brooklyn, NY. She received her MFA from Hunter College, City University of New York and has exhibited and performed at venues such as the Or Gallery, BC; Circuit, CH; the Swiss Institute Contemporary Art, NY; and Bureau, NY. With the formalization of "Merx&Gwynne" in 2012 she began working in collaborative frameworks focused on interdisciplinary experimentation in both opera and film.

Rachel Dainer-Best (Costume Designer)

Rachel Dainer-Best is based in New York City. She works in film, print and theatre. She has designed costumes for films such as *Jamie Marks is Dead* and *White Girl*, both of which premiered at Sundance Film Festival. She is also currently working on a production of *Tosca* with LoftOpera in Brooklyn. racheldainerbest.com

Our Muses

Isabelle Beavers, Keeley Boyle, Furen Dai, Rachel Danier-Best, Carrie Ferguson, Jillian Goldstein, Keiko Murakami, Katie Naka, Sara Oliver

PERFORMERS

Mikhail Smigelski (Henry)

Mikhail Smigelski, born in St. Petersburg, Russia, has always combined his opera singing career with choral conducting. After earning his Bachelor's degree in choral conducting from Rimsky-Korsakov Music College in 1998, he started his vocal career by first entering Rimsky Korsakov Conservatory and, subsequently, University of Music and Dance in Cologne, Germany, where in 2012 he completed his Master's degree in opera performance. Upon moving to United States he earned a Master's degree in choral conducting at Sam Houston State University and is currently working toward his Doctoral degree in opera vocal performance at the University of Texas at Austin.

Amanda DeBoer Bartlett (Molly / Anne)

Amanda DeBoer Bartlett is an experimental singer and indie classical music curator originally from Omaha, Nebraska. She is a member of Ensemble Dal Niente, and is a co-founder of Quince Contemporary Vocal Ensemble. As a contemporary classical music specialist, Ms. DeBoer has premiered over 150 new works by inspiring musical innovators including Marcos Balter, Aaron Einbond, Robert Honstein, Morgan Krauss, Ravi Kittappa, Fredrick Gifford, Chris Fisher-Lochhead, Ryan Carter, Jonn Sokol, and many others. She has a wide variety of musical interests, and opportunities to incorporate storytelling, movement, multi-media and improvisation have been especially rewarding.

Keiko Murakami (Flutes)

After musical studies at the Shimane University in Japan, Keiko Murakami entered the music academy in Strasbourg : Mario Caroli and Claire Gentilhomme were her teachers for flute, and she follows Armand Angster lessons in chamber music. She obtained her degrees and several prizes in 2005. In 2008, she got a degree in musical theater at Hochschule der Kunst in Bern, directed by Georges Aperghis and Françoise Rivalland. She joined as a flutist the Ensemble Linea in 2003 with whom she performs every year at Champs Libres Festival. She also plays flute in Hic et Nunc Ensemble since 2005. As a soloist or as a chamber music player, she performed in numerous festivals and events like Festival Musica (Strasbourg), Trans'art (Bolzano), Ciclo de Conciertos de Musica Contempranea (Buenos Aires), Musiques Dêmesurées (Clermont-Ferrand), Nouvelles Danse (Strasbourg), Akiyoshidai Contemporary Music Seminar and Festival (Japon), Biennale (Bern). She has worked with numerous conductors including Jean-Philippe Wurtz, Diego Masson, Beat Furrer, and Marco Angius.

Serafim Smigelskiy (Cello)

Serafim Smigelskiy, winner of numerous international competitions and awards including the First Prize of the Russian State Music Competition, the Salzburg Festspiele and many others, actively performs a wide variety of repertoire ranging from contemporary music to early music.

Mr. Smigelskiy has worked directly with composers such as Georg Friedrich Haas, Chaya Czernowin, Mathias Pintscher, Mark Andre, Magnus Lindberg, Steve Reich, and others which have led to performances and recordings of their music at concert venues such as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Peter Jay Sharp Theater at Lincoln Center, and Merkin Hall. www.serafim-smigelskiy.com

Vasko Dukovski (Clarinet)

Vasko Dukovski, a multi-instrumentalist virtuoso and diverse stylistic performer of the highest caliber has established himself as one of New York's most sought after instrumentalist in his generation. A master of the clarinet, Dukovski also plays saxophones, Armenian duduk, Balkan pan pipes, bag pipes, Chinese hu lu si and various Middle-Eastern percussion instruments. An avid performer and advocate of contemporary classical music, Dukovski has collaborated with many young rising and established composers. He has premiered several newly composed chamber works and ensemble pieces with his various new music and chamber ensembles. Dukovski has recorded for Naxos American Classics, Sono Luminus- Dorian, Tzadik, Chicken Madness, In a Circle Records, and Furious Artisans.

Mike Truesdell (Percussion)

Solo and chamber-music opportunities have brought him across the United States, Europe and Japan. As a soloist, he was the 2nd-prize winner of the 2010 TROMP International Percussion Competition in the Netherlands, and continues to maintain an active schedule of solo recitals, chamber music, and orchestral performances. In addition, Mike has performed with numerous ensembles, including the New York City Ballet, New York New Music Ensemble, Lucerne Festival Ensemble conducted by Pierre Boulez, and with members of the New York Philharmonic.

The premiere of Switch is part of the Ecce Ensemble's 2015-16 contemporary music residency at Le Laboratoire.

Taking Le Laboratoire as its primary experimental workspace, Ecce has created a season of events dedicated to the interdisciplinary and the exploratory.

Each program has been tied to Le Laboratoire's existing gallery installations and offerings and motivated by the mission of reimagining how contemporary music can be integrated into our experience of both natural and urban environments.

For more information, visit eccensemble.com.



The premiere of Switch at Le Laboratoire has been made possible by the following supporters:

Cynthia and John Reed
Paul and Katie Buttenwieser
Anne Gund
Joyce Linde

Tom and Jody Gill
Geoff Hargadon
Charles Blythe

SwitchOpera.com

#SWITCHOPERA

LeLaboratoireCambridge.com

@LeLabCambridge