



—THE **UNMUTED** COMPANION—

USHUAIA BLUE

BY CARIDAD SVICH

A WORLD PREMIERE

SPONSORED BY MINA GOODRICH & LAWRENCE DEAN

UNMUTED COMPANION

for *Ushuaia Blue* by Caridad Svich

CREATED BY SHAUN M. MCCRACKEN, DRAMATURG

THE UNMUTED COMPANION is a dramaturgical component designed to enhance your **CATFUNMUTED** experience. We've designed the UC Volumes to act as counterparts to the six BOLD, NEW PLAYS, in this year's digital experience. You can sample, survey, or study these online offerings—with no fear of spoilers!

Each companion will give you—

- A sneak peek into the 2021 Season
- An introduction to the creative teams
- An exploration of the world of the plays
- A deep-dive into the new play process

Come and join us as we **thinktheater** and **talktheater**.

We promise not to “give you all the 2021 goodies” – just enough to make you eager for more.

A LETTER FROM ED HERENDEEN

Can you imagine a world without LIVE theater? The theater is an art form performed by living artists witnessed by a live audience in the very specific HERE and NOW. The artists and the spectators come together in communion and perfect harmony with each other in the same moment. Somewhere during this sacred moment, the spectator's consciousness is awakened and enlightened. Together this community of audience members becomes one with the artists on stage. Live theater is an awesome experience. Live theater is urgent and simply indispensable. The energy created in a live performance can change lives. The power emanating from a live work of art is SPELLBINDING!

So I ask you: Can you imagine a world without live theater?

It is impossible for me to imagine a world without live theater. I miss casting and callbacks. I miss face to face, in-person collaborations with designers. I miss the back and forth, lively discussions of production meetings. I miss finding creative solutions to the budget challenges. Most of all, I miss the rehearsal room and the rehearsal process: that first Company Read Thru, those inspirational "break-thru" and "AHA" moments, sitting next to the living playwright...listening to their every breath as they respond in the moment.

Yes, I miss rehearsal. And I miss the audience—our ultimate collaborator and partner in producing and developing new work.

I cannot imagine a world without live theater.

I would miss the risks, the challenges, the emotions, the thrill and excitement of transporting a living audience to those special places...sacred places that only exist in the imagination.

Live theater, live storytelling provokes philosophical and political ideas. Ever since the Greeks invented drama on stage, the theater has shaped, stimulated, provoked, and entertained humans.

Yes, I miss live theater. BUT - we want to connect with you NOW! We cannot wait. We want to share our creative process with you NOW! **We are CATF UNMUTED!**

This digital - **UNMUTED EXPERIENCE** is an exciting prelude of what is to come in our 2021 Theater Festival. Our next season begins here! An innovative online experience that begins the process of creating the future of LIVE contemporary theater next summer in our beloved SHEPHERDSTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA.

I am honored to introduce you to six contemporary playwrights. Artists that have the extraordinary ability to converse with the voices of the past: Terence Anthony does this in *The House of the Negro Insane*. His historical play confronts oppression, incarceration, and human rights. Jacqueline Goldfinger and Victor Lesniewski imagine the voices of the future in their plays *Babel* and *The Fifth Domain*. Their plays warn us about government control, abuse of power, and cybersecurity. Kevin Artigue, Chisa Hutchinson, and Caridad Svich imagine the pain and the horror of our fragile present in their plays: *Sheepdog*, *Whitelisted*, and *Ushuaia Blue*. Plays truly set in the present...in the here and now... that hold us accountable for racism, gentrification, greed, and climate grief.

Yes, this is a prelude of a new repertory of six new plays that listens to the past, examines the present, and imagines an uncertain future.

Yes, I can imagine sharing our **UNMUTED EXPERIENCE** with you. This digital repertory invites you to escape and engage by surrounding yourself with new works that deserve your attention...new work that is **alive** and **dynamic**...the **heart** and **soul** of what makes the **Contemporary American Theater Festival** compelling and necessary - right now and forever.



Ed Herendeen
Founder & Producing Director

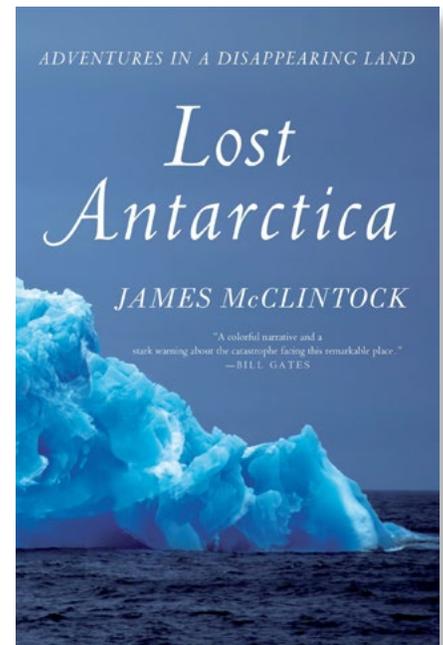
INTRODUCTION TO THE VOLUME

What do you think of when you think about the sounds of nature?

We often think of birds chirping, wind through the trees, and the scurry of small creatures in the undergrowth. Have you ever thought about the sounds of your home? These sounds become so familiar that any change is immediately recognizable. There is something unsettling about a change in sound; a dissonance in your sense of calm. The sounds of Antarctica are the sounds of our planetary home. Massive wedges of ice shifting, breaking - water flowing far below the surface of the ice - frigid winds that seem to howl. But those Antarctic sounds are changing. The unease and tension we feel when we learn about the sounds of Antarctica is climate grief.

While Caridad Svich's play *Ushuaia Blue* was created based on interviews with climate change scientist Dr. James McClintock, this play is not an adaptation of McClintock's popular book *Lost Antarctica*.

Svich was inspired by the remote beauty of Antarctica and the prism where love of people and love of place intersect. She also wanted to explore the wide-reaching ramifications of climate change and climate grief.



DEEP DIVE INTO THE SCENE

The scene you see in **CATFUNMUTED** is from the beginning of the play. Jordan is driving on the road to the hospital at home in the US. He is dreaming aloud of Ushuaia and talking to Sara.

Playwright Caridad Svich describes the time for the play: *There are three time frames here. The real, the one of memory, and the one of being in suspension when someone you love is ill.*

Svich included this interesting note in the text: *[Note, if this were cinema, what we would see is Jordan driving through his hometown, spliced with memories of when he was driving in Ushuaia, intercut with scenes of him sitting at Sara's bedside at hospital. In other words, there are three time frames here... but this is theatre, and as such, allow the time frames to blend. Do not treat this figuratively. i.e. we do not see a car, a road, etc. It just may be Jordan framed in light and maybe video images of Sara, back when they were in Ushuaia and Antarctica, walking on the ice, waving, smiling to the camera, etc.]*

Times and settings overlap and shift, much like the ice of Antarctica.

Jordan is a biologist who does research in Antarctica. Sara specializes in bio-acoustics.

As the scene begins, Jordan is talking to his wife Sara while she is unconscious after an accident. He describes where he is now (at home in the United States), and where he was. Ushuaia, Argentina is the last stop for researchers and scientists before taking the final leg of the journey to Antarctica.

One of the first things you will notice about this scene is the language. Caridad Svich has written a tone poem (a piece of orchestral music, typically in one movement, on a descriptive theme). She describes the "space" she leaves in the text for sounds and music. As you watch, listen to the spaces between the words...and how the music and sounds amplify the words.

It is interesting to note that the characters are described as "figures" in the script. By changing this one word, we start to see the characters as bodies in space, representative of much more than a named character.

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE CREATIVES

In a conversation with Playwright Caridad Svich, we talked about the fact that *Ushuaia Blue* is a love story.

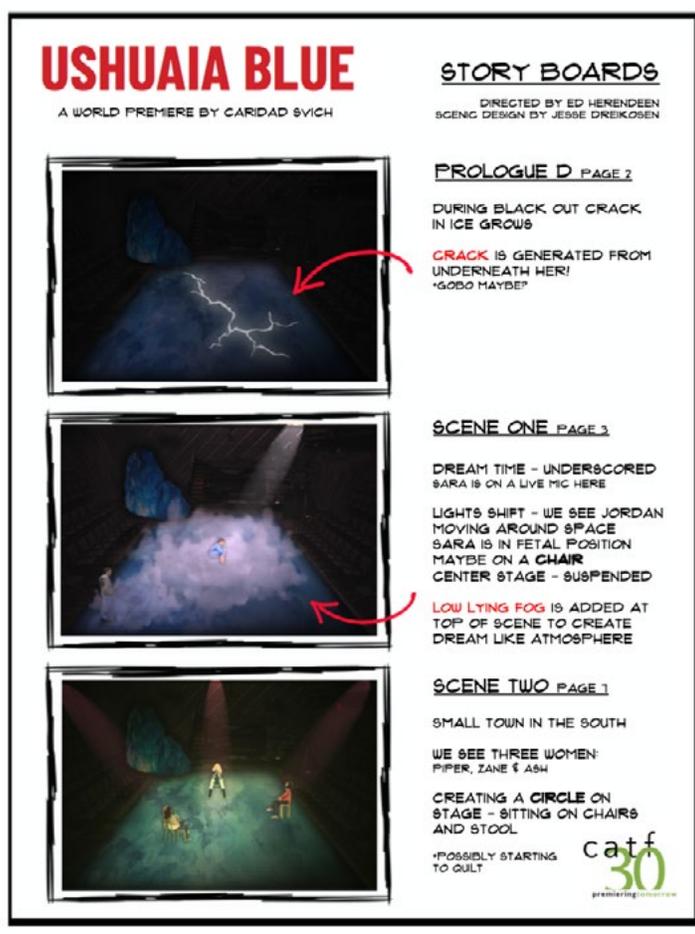
Svich describes this love story as a “prism” - it’s love of a person, love of people as a community, and love of place. All of these things lead to a conversation about climate change (how our love of place responds to a place in crisis) and the resulting climate grief. Svich wants the audience to see that there is a different way of looking at the world and that is the discovery of the play. She believes there is a lack of collective listening and deep listening in our culture. She says that our desire to rush through life fuels the lack of listening.

The desire to truly listen sparked the journey of sound in the play - when we listen to the planet, we understand it and instinctively want to protect it.

Director Ed Herendeen was drawn to the beauty of the language in *Ushuaia Blue* and was intrigued by the ecological message. Herendeen was fascinated by the visual possibilities and was enormously excited by the idea of a complex sound design. “What works (in the play) is having the space to breathe and to allow all of these other things to influence the storytelling.”

Costume Designer Yao Chen was also intrigued by the visual elements. “From my perspective, there is some interesting similarity between working within miles of ice and falling (in a) coma. Both refer to a real figure wrapped by abstract visual elements.”

Scenic Designer Jesse Dreikosen was interested in finding a way to isolate the “figures” in the space.



The Creative Team

DIRECTOR
ED HERENDEEN

ASST. DIRECTOR
SHAUN M. MCCRACKEN

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION
**AARON MEICHT OF
BROKEN CHORD**

SCENIC DESIGN
JESSE DREIKOSEN

LIGHTING DESIGN
TONY GALASKA

SOUND DESIGN
DAVID REMEDIOS

COSTUME DESIGN
YAO CHEN

A GLIMPSE INTO THE DESIGN PROCESS

The role of **sound** is of crucial importance in *Ushuaia Blue*.

In theater, the sound designer works in close collaboration with the scenic, lighting, and costume design teams to ensure there is a holistic approach to the overall look and feel of the show.

Sound Designer David Remedios' job is to obtain all the sound effects (recorded or live) for a production.

Listen to this sound file from the video. What different sounds can you hear?

But perhaps even more importantly, the sound designer creates the auditory "tone" of the play. Sound designers frequently layer different sounds over each other to create a "soundscape." It is the sound designer's job to ensure that the audience is hearing what they need to hear at any given moment in the play. Joining David Remedios is composer Aaron Meicht who is composing brand new music for the play.

While Sound Designer David Remedios and Composer Aaron Meicht are heavily involved in the design process right from the start, they will be joined by a sound engineer and a sound board operator once the play goes into rehearsal. The sound engineer determines the best places to hide equipment on the set and what amplification systems need to be used. The sound board operator assists the designer in creating cue sheets for the sound in the play (every time microphones are turned on and off, every time a sound is played, etc.).

Because the lead character in the play, Sara, is a bio-acoustics specialist, the sounds of the world - particularly the world of the Antarctic - will feature prominently in what you hear as an audience member.

KEEP THE CONVO GOING

- **What do you think is the most notable sign of climate change?**
- **How do you think climate change affects different communities (urban, suburban, etc.)?**
- **How would you describe your relationship to the natural world?**

LEARN MORE!

Here are some great articles compiled by Caridad Svich to help you learn more about the Antarctic and climate change:

- [A Satellite Lets Scientists See Antarctica's Melting Like Never Before](#)
- [Witnessing the Unthinkable](#)
- [The Human Fingerprint is Everywhere: Met Office's Alarming Warning on Climate](#)
- [The Sound of One Shrimp Snapping: How Climate Change is Altering Nature's Sonic Landscape](#)
- [The Antarctic Shelf is Emitting a Very Strange Noise as it Melts, Scientists Find](#)
- [Check out David McClintock's Lost Antarctica!](#) (This is the Amazon link, but get the book from your local bookstore!)

Want to see Antarctica up close and personal?

Check out *Anthony Bourdain's Parts Unknown* (Season 9, Episode 5) where Bourdain joins a group of scientists heading to Antarctica. You'll get a wonderful sense of what life is actually like for these scientists.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Climate change: a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.

Climate grief: a psychological response to loss caused by environmental destruction or climate change. Climate grief is often felt by the young (who are inheriting a planet on the verge of collapse); by scientists (who are on the front lines of climate change and, by their specific knowledge, most aware of how precarious the global situation is); and by indigenous people (whose physical and cultural identity is so closely related to the environment).

Bio-acoustics: a branch of science concerned with the production of sound by and its effects on living organisms.

Sound designer: The sound designer is responsible for everything related to sound for a given production. They provide the designs for all pre-recorded music, sound effects, and the reinforcement of live voices, musical instruments, and sound elements.

Composer: A composer is someone who writes a music piece for theater, TV, radio, film, computer games, and other areas where music is needed.

Sound engineer: Sound engineers set up microphones on performers and in various places in the theater. They are responsible for checking sound levels and equipment functionality, running sound checks, and other tasks using MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) production equipment.

Sound board operator: The sound board operator uses the sound equipment to play back sound effects for a specific production. The sound board operator is responsible for knowing how to use each piece of sound equipment involved in the production. They must be able to create and maintain clear cue sheets.