

Publicist and Media Contact (*Media contact info not for public release):

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World Premiere Theatrical Fusion of Oratorio, Drama, Dance, Medicine and Science:

The Withing Project

Calendar Kill Date: Nov. 22, 2015

(Seattle, WA) August 27, 2015: *The Withing Project* (www.thewithingproject.com) is a world premiere theatrical oratorio to be performed in Seattle on November 19-22, 2015. Developed by an interdisciplinary team of Seattle-based theatre, music, voice, dance, medical and scientific collaborators, and based on controversial findings in modern neuroscience, *The Withing Project* explores shared consciousness and the humanity of “with-ing” or “being with another” in a unique, independently-produced world premiere stage production.

A one-of-a-kind theatrical collage about quantum consciousness and how we connect with each other, the story focuses on a dying cancer patient, her palliative care physician, and a neuroscientist. The large company of 32 performers includes three actors echoed by three singers and three dancers, plus a 20-voice choir accompanied by a quartet of violin, cello, piano and saxophone. Script, lyrics, score and choreography are entirely new and original. The episodic play explores the phenomenon of “with-ing” in life, death, medicine, research and relationships, through an artistic fusion of theatre, choral and instrumental music, dance and medical research.

The Withing Project premieres for a limited run of five performances at the Jones Playhouse in Seattle’s University District, November 19-22, 2015. Collaborators are connected through the University of Washington Schools of Drama (*Professional Actor Training Program/PATP*), Music, and Medicine, the UW Dance Program, and Bastyr University in Kenmore.

Inspired by an actual encounter with a hospice patient diagnosed with end-stage liver cancer, *The Withing Project* is led by [Hope Wechkin, MD](#). Wechkin is a palliative care and hospice physician at EvergreenHealth in Kirkland. She is also a performer and classically trained composer, violinist and singer. Wechkin is the creative force behind the project, and she’ll also simultaneously play violin and sing the physician’s role. Local brain imaging research on human subjects who are physically separated but show evidence of being consciously “in synch” with each other informs the science behind *The Withing Project*.

“In this hybrid of theatre, new music, contemporary dance and science, *The Withing Project* celebrates our growing understanding of how we’re entangled with one another,” said Hope Wechkin, MD. “The longer I practice medicine and make music, the more I find that our experience of connecting with one another is greater than either art or science can express by itself. That’s why *The Withing Project* brings together such diverse perspectives and expertise. We’re exploring an artistic dialogue between researchers, performance artists and medical providers to share a deeper understanding of something that’s both familiar and mysterious.”

Production elements will feature simple but elegant staging and set, dynamic lighting design, and video excerpts of functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) findings from brain research. The neuroscience work of local researcher and physician Leanna Standish, ND, PhD, LAc, provides the scientific grounding for the play. Standish has spent nearly two decades investigating the neurophysiological basis of distant influences on living systems, including phenomena such as distant healing and intentional healing, by using EEG and functional MRI to document these effects. Other UW researchers and scientists across the country are similarly exploring how stimuli experienced by one human subject appear to be echoed in the brain responses of other subjects at a distance, indicating some kind of “with-ing,” or shared quantum consciousness.

The interdisciplinary creative team includes: **Hope Wechkin, MD** (concept, script, lyrics, score, violin, soprano soloist); **Beth Graczyk** (choreographer, dancer); **Cathy Madden** (stage director); **Philip Tschopp** (music director, baritone soloist); and **Leanna Standish, ND, PhD, LAc** (neuroscience research).

Anchoring the cast of 32 performers, the three characters are played by actors Yesenia Iglesias, Sunam Ellis and Jonathan Shue, all recent graduates of the UW Professional Actor Training Program/PATP. The same roles will also be danced by Corrie Befort, Beth Graczyk and Coleman Pester, and will be sung by soloists Madeline Bersamina, Hope Wechkin and Philip Tschopp. They will be joined by a 20-voice choir and instrumentalists Hope Wechkin (violin), siblings Rich and Thomasa "Tommie" Eckert (cello and piano), and Dillyn Kost (saxophone).

Five Performances:

- Thursday, November 19: 8:00 pm (*opening*)
- Friday, November 20: 8:00 pm
- Saturday, November 21: 2:00 pm matinee
- Saturday, November 21: 8:00 pm
- Sunday, November 22: 2:00 pm matinee (*closing*)

Where:

Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse, in Seattle's University District at 4045 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105.

Tickets:

Tickets are available at www.brownpapertickets.com: \$20 general admission, or \$15 students and seniors.
Phone: 1-800-838-3006, ext. 1.

More information:

Visit www.thewithingproject.com. For more information, [Hope Wechkin's](#) previous one-woman show [Charisma](#) was also directed by long-time collaborator Cathy Madden, produced at ACT in Seattle and reviewed by the [Seattle Times](#). Selections from Wechkin's 2013 album for voice and violin *Leaning Toward the Fiddler* are available on [YouTube](#), and the CD and reviews are at [Amazon](#).

Funding for *The Withing Project*:

In addition to a September, 2015 arts crowdfunding support campaign on HatchFund.org, *The Withing Project* has received development funds from a 4Culture King County Arts Commission Individual Artist Grant, and a City of Seattle CityArtist grant. Collaborators anticipate *The Withing Project* will live on through community dialogue, new artistic expressions and other productions; inquiries are welcome.

Creative Team Bios:

[Hope Wechkin, MD](#) (*Concept, script, lyrics, score, violin, soprano soloist, producer*)

As a performer, **Hope Wechkin** is best known for her simultaneously performed virtuosic pairings of voice and violin that combine elements of folk, classical and world music. She is also known as a soprano soloist and interpreter of contemporary music for voice. She performed the one-woman show [Charisma](#) which featured her unique compositions and arrangements to sold-out audiences in an extended run at Seattle's ACT Theatre. She is a founding member of the quartet Sorelle that specialized in 20th- and 21st-century music for piano, cello, flute and voice, and she has appeared as a soloist with numerous Northwest musical ensembles. A graduate of Yale University, she was conductor of the Yale Slavic Chorus. Her 2013 solo debut album [Leaning Toward the Fiddler](#) won two Global Music Awards. Additionally, she is a [physician](#) and the medical director of [EvergreenHealth Hospice and Palliative Care](#) in Kirkland, where she cares for patients and supports families affected by serious and terminal illnesses. She is on the teaching faculty for the UW School of Medicine. In July 2015, Seattle Magazine honored her as one of the first palliative care physicians to receive their [Top Doctor](#) award.

[Beth Graczyk](#) (*Choreographer, dancer*)

Beth Graczyk (New York/Seattle) is a dance artist who works as an improviser, dancer, choreographer, teacher and biochemist. Since 2001, Graczyk has performed throughout the U.S. including New York, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle, and internationally in Japan, Ecuador and France. Graczyk co-directed the performance company [Salt Horse](#) with Corrie Befort and Angelina Baldoz (2006-2015), and with Befort has recently launched Color Field Performance, a new dance company. She also collaborates with Danish director Torben Ulrich and Baldoz on the

performance project *Cacophony for 8 Players*. Through her collaborative work she has received funding from Artist Trust, 4Culture, Seattle Office of Arts and Culture, Washington State Arts Commission, and The National Endowment for the Arts. As a dancer, Graczyk has performed for Mark Haim in Seattle since 2009, and more recently with Sara Shelton Mann in San Francisco and Raja Feather Kelly in New York City. In August 2015, she traveled to Kerala, India to work on *Water in Kerala*, an international performance and community engagement project with director Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren. Graczyk is also a [research specialist](#) at The Rockefeller University (NYC), with seven scientific publications about mitosis (cell division).

[Cathy Madden](#) (*Stage Director*)

Cathy Madden is a principal lecturer in Alexander Technique for the UW School of Drama Professional Actor Training Program/PATP. For nearly 20 years, Madden studied with and assisted the well-known Alexander teacher Marjorie Barstow. She is also director of the Alexander Technique Training and Performance Studio in Seattle, and the associate director for BodyChance (Tokyo, Osaka). Her book [Integrative Alexander Technique Practices for Performing Artists: Onstage Synergy](#) was published in 2014 by Intellect Ltd. She is currently a Creative Collaborator for [Lucia Neare Theatrical Wonders](#). In 2014 she directed Jim Lapan's one-person show *25,000 Posts*, which performed at Seattle's West of Lenin. For the University of Washington, her most recent productions have included *At the Inland Sea*, *Lear's Daughter's*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *The Portrait The Wind The Chair*, *The Mischiefmakers*, *Mother Teresa is Dead*, *Far Away*, *Bold Girls*, and *Two Sisters and a Piano*. In 2012, Madden was the keynote speaker for the Inaugural Alexander Technique and Performing Arts Conference in Melbourne. Her abilities to observe and analyze movement in relationship to artistic performance have made her a popular coach in Seattle and internationally for actors, musicians, dancers, speakers and teachers. Madden previously directed Hope Wechkin's one-woman show *Charisma*, at ACT in Seattle. For more information, see [Cathy Madden's website](#).

Philip Tschopp (*Music Director, baritone soloist*)

Conductor and music director **Philip Tschopp** is a champion of new music, a collaborator with Northwest composers, and conductor of regional instrumental and choral ensembles. His credits include music direction and conducting with City Opera Ballet, Orchestra Bellevue, Bellevue's Cascadian Chorale, the Chelan Bach Festival, the Garrett Fisher Ensemble and others. As the past artistic director of Bellevue's Cascadian Chorale, Tschopp premiered more than 30 new works. He is pursuing his Doctorate of Musical Arts at the University of Washington. During his association with the UW, Tschopp was awarded the prestigious Morrison Fellowship, served as teaching assistant to Maestro Peter Erös and the UW Symphony, and conducted the UW Opera and UW Summer Orchestra. As resident conductor of the Affinity Ensemble, a musician's collective associated with the [Washington Composers Forum](#), he was one of two regional conductors to conduct in Seattle Symphony's 2006 Made in America Festival at Benaroya Hall. Tschopp recently assumed conductorship of the Seattle Estonian Choir, leading their performances in the Lääneranniku Eesti Päevad (2011, 2015) and the famed Laulupidu Festival in Estonia (2014). As a vocalist, he has performed with The Seattle Choral Company, St. James Cathedral Choir, the UW Chamber Singers, the Bellevue First Presbyterian Chancel Choir, and continues to sing as a core member of [Choral Arts](#).

[Leanna Standish, ND, PhD, LAc, FABNO](#) (*Neuroscience research*)

Leanna Standish is director of the [Bastyr Integrative Oncology Research Center](#) in Kenmore, WA. She is a fellow of the American Board of Naturopathic Oncology (FABNO), and a senior physician at Seattle Integrative Medicine. She is a licensed and practicing clinical naturopathic physician (ND), and acupuncture provider (LAc). Standish has been a principal investigator in NIH-funded research grants since 1994, and has served as grant reviewer for various NIH review sections. She is currently a professor at the School of Naturopathic Medicine at Bastyr University. She is also a clinical professor at the University of Washington School of Public Health, and affiliate research professor in the UW School of Medicine Department of Radiology. In clinical practice, she specializes in treating cancer and neurological diseases. She also conducts neurophysiological research on mind/body interactions, functional brain imaging, HIV/AIDS, cancer and hepatitis C. Her brain imaging research on individuals who are physically separated but consciously "in synch" with each other inspires the science explored in *The Withing Project*.

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