

FUTURISTIC FAIRY TALE

Degenerate Art Ensemble gives voice to Predator Songstress via Oregon Performance Lab

A curious girl can raise only so much hell for a totalitarian regime: When Ximena makes too much noise, the state takes away her voice. Literally.

Set in a faceless authoritarian state, Degenerate Arts Ensemble's *Predator Songstress* — produced in conjunction with the new Oregon Performance Lab — sets out to examine repression, surveillance, interrogation and the power of noise. The play runs Friday and Saturday, Aug. 28 and 29, at Lane Community College's Ragozzino Hall.

EW caught up with Joshua Kohl, co-director of the Degenerate Arts Ensemble (DAE), to get a sense of the company's latest work. "It's a futuristic, modern fairy tale," Kohl says. "It's a piece about voice and what it means to have a voice."

According to Kohl, the heroine's journey started out as one story among six that DAE wanted to tell, but then Ximena took over and became the entire play. When Ximena is robbed of her voice, she sets out to reclaim it.

Eventually, according to Kohl, "she uses the tools of oppression and control as a means of personal realization and transformation."

The Degenerate Arts Ensemble takes its name from a 1937 art exhibit staged by Hitler's Nazi regime (*Entartete*

THE FIRES OF OPPRESSION RAGE IN
DEGENERATE ART ENSEMBLE'S
PREDATOR SONGSTRESS



Kunst) intended to highlight what was seen as the sickening nature of modern art. Despite Hitler's attempts to ridicule the art, the exhibit was successful: More than a million people came to behold what has been called the greatest exhibit of modern art in the 20th century.

With that awesome allusion in its back pocket, Kohl says DAE "comes from a punk and protest influence, with a heavy surrealist fairy tale perspective." Their work is multimedia in nature, pulling in elements of cinema, dance, music and theater.

Predator Songstress also marks the inaugural season of the Oregon Performance Lab at LCC (*SPILL* kicked things off for the lab the weekend of Aug. 14-15). The

purpose of the lab is to provide a space for ambitious performance pieces. Directors, choreographers and playwrights can workshop a project here, giving local audiences a chance to check out cutting-edge works before they take off for larger venues across the country.

Predator Songstress opens in San Francisco this fall, then in Seattle, but not before the DAE takes note of Eugene's reaction this weekend. Additionally, coming up is an adaptation of Ursula K. Le Guin's novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, playing Aug. 29. ■

Predator Songstress runs 7 pm Friday and Saturday, Aug. 28-29; *The Left Hand of Darkness* plays 2 pm Saturday, Aug. 29; both at LCC's Ragozzino Performance Hall; \$12-\$16, oregonperformancelab.com.

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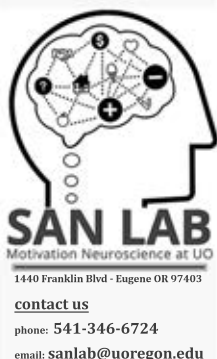
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