

# COPING MECHANISMS

AN IMPROVISED OPERA  
BY BONNIE LANDER

OVERTURE

ACT I : RECKONING

*INTERLUDE*

ACT II : HOME

*INTERLUDE*

ACT III : FAILURE

*POSTLUDE*

*CAST: ELISABETH HALLIDAY, ROBERT MARIL, BONNIE LANDER*  
*ORCHESTRA: JUDITH HAMANN, TOMMY BABIN, KJELL NORDESON*  
*LIGHTING AND SET: LILY BARTENSTEIN*      *DIRECTOR: CYNTHIA STOKES*

Composer Notes:

Thank you for coming!

This opera is a very special work for me. Not only is it my first full length composition, but it is also the first full length composition that I never composed. I have found that even though no one knows what the phrase "improvised opera" means, the concept elicits strange reactions from people as they try to imagine what it could be.

*Coping Mechanisms* is an exploration of modern life interpreted as voluntary loneliness. I've met many people who react to hardship with various levels of retreat, only to find their pain exacerbated by the solitude. This piece attempts to highlight the frustration of this particular coping mechanism, and explores the physical and mental relationships to stress, anxiety, fear, and grief.

The three singers will first experience their grief viscerally in Act I. They will then try to process their grief through distance in Act II, and in Act III will explore the failures of their efforts.

The music for this piece is largely improvised, and is held together with structures relating to an opera (acts, overture, and interludes), each one having a dedicated emotional focus. The singers are advised to keep their gestures (physical and vocal) in the realm of operatic melodrama.

I am very fortunate to have the friends, colleagues, and mentors to make this strange and unusual show happen. Many thanks to the Rhymes With Opera team, Lily Bartenstein, Cynthia Stokes, Jessica Flores, Judith Hamann, Tommy Babin, Kjell Nordeson, Lyndsay Bloom, Anthony Burr, Anthony Davis, Shahrokh Yadegari, John Fonville, Amy Cimini, Alan Burrett, Bob Pierzak, Leslie Leytham, Brendan Nguyen, Jonathan Nussman, Leah and Phil Bowden, Clint McCallum, Mom and Dad, Steven Townsend, and all the others who helped make this piece possible.