



CoCommissioned by Arts at St Ann's,  
Susan Feldman, Artistic Director and  
Brooklyn Academy of Music, Joseph V.  
Melillo, Executive Director

# ***Falling and Waving***

*a digital opera*

adapted and directed by Jay Scheib

Art's at St. Ann's,  
Brooklyn New York, March 1999

Composed by David Lang Libretto  
by Ronald Jones Dramaturgy Rob  
Dyrenforth, Video Design Leah  
Gelpe, 3D Modeling / Animation  
David Sun

Featuring Kristin Linklater, Vito  
Acconci, Jennifer Bainbridge,  
Scott Dixon, Aimee McCormick,  
Ryan Justeson

**Production Notes**

*Falling and Waving* is an extended collage of found text, including autopsy reports (Lee Harvey Oswald, JFK), psychiatric case studies, scientific lectures (Werner Heisenberg), philosophical writings (Francis Bacon), the statements of a paranoid schizophrenic (James Matthew Tilly, Jack Ruby), personal letters and accounts (Jackie Kennedy's testimony to the Warren commission), the poetry of *Paradise Lost*. But it is also an assembled collection of prepared film footage, found footage, digital and analog video, computer animation, three dimensional modeling, and photographically manipulated images torn from the twentieth century and here re-combined, here re-examined. But it is also an assemblage of sampled sounds, digitally manipulated sonic harmonies <READY-MADE SITUATIONS, SOUNDS, OBJECTS> stripped of their common function (music, speech, noise, communication) and re-deployed as sonic content. And finally, of course, *Falling and Waving* is a dozen or more performers in space, gesturing, speaking, singing, and looking out (into the audience? into the truth?).

In this twentieth century the questions of good and evil, truth and authority, stand in relief against a multitude of images and a vast sea of perceived truths—both of which are contained within a seemingly uninterrupted, continuous historical narrative. Paradoxically this historical narrative conceals more than we could admit. But in this twentieth century, the century of Nanking, Birkenau, Hiroshima, we cannot say, as Cicero's Diogenes, that there are no pictures of "those who have been

shipwrecked or drowned at sea." It seems to the contrary that images of the disaster are all that we have. They are what we cling to, and what we depend upon—as a protection against future disasters? lest we forget? And so it is that Cicero's critique has found its reply within this multiple profusion. But perhaps, after the image fades, and the shock of its representation gives way to deep consideration, we may ask once again, what has here come to pass, what has happened, what were the agents of its emergence, why.

*Falling and Waving* is testament, but it is also a sort of diagram, to the many gestures that map the images of those who have been 'drowned at sea.' The expulsion from the garden, the allusions and dissociations of the clinically insane, the disorientation and frankness of a victim, the self-vindications of an assassin. This diagram conspires to generate a poetry which might provide access to a deeper reading of the radical ways by which history is constructed in order to protect individuals from self-doubt, and to discourage, at every turn, the questioning of one's own experience. *Falling and Waving* unfurls along several distinct trajectories. Each of which confront the central question of finding good in radical evil. I have tried where possible to make these trajectories intersect and collide; to make their gestures possible in space: audible, and visible.

Jay Scheib, 1999

