

a canary torsi | Yanira Castro

Last Audience

GENERAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Last Audience is a live laboratory for communal conjuring created by the collaborative, *a canary torsi*. Originally premiered as a Bessie-award-winning performance embodied by its audience, it is now a visually arresting artist book where the machinations of the work are shared with the public. *Last Audience: a performance manual* places performance directly in the hands of the audience – as witnesses, performers, and makers.

Each audience member receives a set of manuals containing 28 performance scores. The scores are an invitation to interpret, (re)create, and enact the performance as you desire. *Last Audience* comes straight to you – it can happen anywhere and anytime you want. You are the assembly, the performer, the prop maker, and the musician in a ritual of mercy, judgment, blessing, communion, and transformation.

Drawing on iconic images in U.S. history, theater's ancient roots in Greek tragedy, and the structure of the requiem mass, these scores are, in artist Yanira Castro's words, "a manual for collective imagination on reckoning." *Last Audience* pushes us to reexamine how we create our world anew, together, in a time of upheaval. The scores specify movement, text, sound, and scenic elements (even a recipe!), but can be arranged in any order. Do some or all of them at home, outdoors, alone, or with family and friends. Exactly how, where, when, and who takes part in your *Last Audience* is for you to imagine.

Last Audience: a performance manual is available to the public through a free, downloadable PDF or through the publisher of the project, Museum Contemporary Art Chicago, as a printed/bound object (\$25). Both the PDF and the link to purchase the manual can be found on the project's website, lastaudience.com/manual-download. The project's website acts as both a repository for digital materials available to the public to enact the scores – music, video and audio-based scores – and as an archive for photographs shared by audiences of the aftermath of their interaction with the scores.

Here is a 14-minute video describing the manual:

<https://vimeo.com/503047745>

Here is a New York Times article about *Last Audience: a performance manual*:

<https://tinyurl.com/yz4sy9w8>

ENGAGEMENTS DESIGNED FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION & AUDIENCE

As the country begins to re-open, artist Yanira Castro has developed a set of modular and adaptable engagements with *Last Audience: a performance manual*. In conversation with hosting organizations, Castro and her creative team design from a suite of offerings an experience for audiences:

1. **Gathering events** (approximately 90 minutes in length in-person or virtual) where participants engage scores and hold discussions on the project themes (community, mercy, judgement, blessing) with organizers, activists, community leaders, educators who are local to the hosting organization. These events ground the project's themes locally and provide concrete examples of how these themes function in our lives, opening a conversation with the audience on how these themes touch their lives. Here is an example of one of the virtual, on-line public events the MCA hosted on the theme of reckoning with a local pastor: <https://vimeo.com/478029569>
2. **COMMUNE** is a synchronous ritual across distance, an invitation for audiences to activate *Last Audience: a performance manual* together in community. The duration of this central component can vary and originally took place virtually. Here is the initial invite: https://www.instagram.com/p/ClyM50GL3_I/ When presented in December 2020/January 2021, it lasted five weeks (one week for each of the five booklets that make up the manual). Participants enacted a score of their choosing from that week's booklet, preparing through the week and then on Sunday at 3pm eastern time, each in their own spaces, they enacted their score. It served as both a private and communal moment, knowing that others elsewhere were simultaneously engaging. People followed COMMUNE on social media. Participants posted their experiences, using the hashtag #lastaudience and tagging @acanarytorsi. They also shared their experiences on the project's archive at lastaudience.com/archive.

Artist Yanira Castro leads and organizes COMMUNE as well as being one of the participants. Here is a video of one of her activations: <https://vimeo.com/535881940> She and the *a canary torsi* team of artists share their preparations and activations of the score with photographs and videos online. Castro communicates personally with people via messaging etc. See a canary torsi's instagram for some of the results from COMMUNE: <https://www.instagram.com/acanarytorsi>.

Here is a 2-minute video about COMMUNE:
<https://vimeo.com/518387722>

3. **Artist live activation.** Castro, members of the artistic team, and/or local artists can activate scores live to be witnessed by the public in spaces organized by the presenting hosting institution.

POTENTIAL ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES as an Imagination Exercise

#1 Opening & Closing Events with COMMUNE engagement

1. An opening event (virtual or in-person) that introduces the project, shares a score and holds a conversation on mercy with a local judge or justice lawyer (as an example).
2. Audience Participation with COMMUNE led by Castro and artist team. Audiences prepare and enact five scores across the manual guided by the artists.
3. A closing event (virtual or in-person) with a meal, where audiences share the blessings they developed from the last score and where people share their experiences and ask their questions with the entire artistic team.

This could span 4 weeks of programming or less dependent on how designed/organized.

#2 Opening & Closing Events with Three Artist Activations

1. An opening event (virtual or in-person) that introduces the project, shares a score and holds a conversation on reckoning with a local activist (as an example).
2. Three live artist activations of three scores to be witnessed by audiences who have the manuals and are also potentially doing these scores on their own. Live artist activations could be performed by Castro, a member of the artistic team and/or a local artist. This would be designed/organized with the hosting organization.
3. A closing event (virtual or in-person) with a meal, where audiences share the blessings they developed from the last manual and where people share their experiences and ask their questions with the entire artistic team. (90 min in length)

This could span one to two weeks of programming.

#3 Opening & Closing Events with partial COMMUNE and One Artist Activation

1. An opening event (virtual or in-person) that introduces the project, shares a score and holds a conversation on communion with a local pastor (as an example).

2. Audience participation with COMMUNE led by Castro and artist team focusing on two manuals. Audiences prepare and enact scores guided by the artists.

2. One live artist activation of one score activated by Castro or an artist from the team or a local artist.

3. A closing event (virtual or in-person) with a meal, where audiences share the blessings they developed from the last manual and where people share their experiences and ask their questions with the entire artistic team.

This could span three weeks of programming or less dependent on how designed/organized.

In conversation with the host organization, *Last Audience* will be adapted specifically for your audience and current and local COVID-19 protocols.

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