

## ***Living Juicy - The Warriors: A Love Story*** **Audio Transcript**

Rhea Goodman: Hi, this is Rhea Goodman, and welcome to *Living Juicy*, now in its 15th year. *Living Juicy* is a cultural enzyme intended to inspire people to greater creativity and outside-the-box solutions. We are restoring the world with the stories of people who have created innovative new pathways to living in the 21st century. *Living Juicy* is culture medicine. ARCOS Dance company has created a new original evening-length multimedia performance. It's called *The Warriors: A Love Story*, and it's inspired by the lives of J. Glenn Gray, a Colorado philosophy professor and World War II veteran, and his wife Ursula, a German survivor of the 1945 Allied bombing of Dresden, Germany. Her passion throughout her life was dance, and J. Glenn's 1959 book on modern warfare, *The Warriors*, remains relevant today. This ARCOS production explores timeless concepts of human potential for acts of profound destruction and creation in times of war. *The Warriors* focuses on a mix of art forms to tell its story, and of course, that's where its uniqueness lies. Its dance, its theater, set, lighting, design, video, and music: each hold an important presence. Quotes: "We're attempting to create a world class production through the many facets of multimedia and stage theater. We not only intend to tell a love story through the lives of three different individuals and their connections as creators, thinkers, and kin, but also hope to evoke an emotional response from the audience through use of vintage media footage, war propaganda, live theatrical action, and more. So, with me here tonight on *Living Juicy* is Eliot Gray Fisher, who is a multimedia artist and a teacher, and he lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And as a multimedia artist, Eliot performs variously as video producer, pianist, composer, sound designer, playwright, and director. He's composed music for film, theater, and dance, and has written 11 original theater productions with music, many of which he also directed. Among those shows are several melodramas at the Santa Fe Playhouse, where he also serves on the board of directors. Throughout his diverse work, thematic threads occur, recur, actually: cross-cultural interaction and communication, the turbulent process of traditions in flux, and the influence of institutions on people. Having taught at the college and secondary level, Eliot considers the process of actively engaging with student artists as an essential element

of his practice. He designed the curriculum for, taught in and served as coordinator of the certificate program in Documentary Studies at the College of Santa Fe. He currently teaches it Santa Fe Prep, where the courses he offers include video journalism, film history, animation, photography, radio, multimedia lab, remixes and mashups, and choral ensemble. As multimedia director of ARCOS Dance, Eliot propels the company's inventive integration of new media and compelling dramatic narrative into performance. Long, long introduction, my apologies, but welcome to you, Eliot Fisher.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Thanks, Rhea. Thanks for having me.

Rhea Goodman: What was your intention, Eliot? What was your purpose in creating *Warriors*?

Eliot Gray Fisher: Well, the idea was born as I came to know my grandparents more as full people than just in the role that I knew them. I actually never knew my grandfather. He died before I was born, in 1977. And my grandmother, I knew, as I said, just as an elderly woman who had a German accent, you know, who I would come and visit up in Colorado Springs and run up and down her stairs. So as I got older in high school, I did an oral history project, and my mom suggested I interview my grandmother. And I asked her about her experience surviving the bombing of Dresden, which was an intense interview and opened my eyes to the decades and decades that this woman had lived before I knew her.

After that, a few years later, I was introduced to my grandfather's book, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*. And that was my first real introduction to Glenn. And it's a dense philosophical, but compelling memoir, with elements from his war journals, trying to make sense of senseless experiences that he participated in and was witness to during the war. So the past several years for me has been a process of learning more and more about my roots about these grandparents and what legacy they might have left me. So the project has was born out of that. The project's inspiration is trying to understand that legacy and come to terms with it in some kind of lyrical artistic fashion that will be accessible to other people.

Rhea Goodman: You know, I'm noticing more and more, Eliot, that creative people, particularly creative people, are looking more and more into their own ancestry.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: It seems to be recovering present theme. Adam McKinney, who will be a guest on my show, and who did *HaMapah*, also traced his Black and Jewish roots. And Judy Fein, the author wrote this book called *The Spoon from Minkowitz*, going back to the Ukraine where her mother, her grandmother was born.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm.

Rhea Goodman: So it seems to be an important thing to not only honor, but to recognize your ancestry. Why is that for you? How does that feel for you? What is that doing for you?

Eliot Gray Fisher: Well, one part of it, I think for me is growing up, you know, I'm 30 now, here we are in the 21st century, and this generation of my grandparents, you know, is fairly disconnected from us. But that time in the 20th century is such a formative time for where we are today. I think it's an important—I think more and more people are becoming interested in history generally. I've realized over the past year and a half doing this project that I'm fascinated with history, but it only started going, pursuing my own personal family history.

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: But I've come to hold a strong value in understanding our history better at as a people. Because, you know, we're facing pretty significant challenges today. And to understand them better, we can go back to previous generations.

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm. What is the line about we are destined to repeat them if we do not recognize the past history, something like that.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Well, and you know, I think it's an interesting, you know, today—since World War II up to today, that war has been such a rich topic for fiction and nonfiction. I mean, it seems like it may be the most written about...

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...movies made about topic. And here we are at the end of, reaching the end of the living memory of that generation that experienced...

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...those things. But yeah, I mean, you know, it remains this profound mythic event for us, you know, culturally, globally, I think, you know, in many ways. And to the point where, you know, a president in the 21st century can refer back to, or maybe even has to, feels like he has to refer back to World War II as the only good war, the example of a Good War for America.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: You know, which it wasn't—which is one of the things that we're trying to look at. You know, I mean, if we can puncture that part of that myth, we'll be much more critical of the way people talk about, you know, what our government is going to be doing in relation to others going forward.

Rhea Goodman: One of many, many myths we are fed from our government. Yeah. What, what did you, what do you see your audiences as coming away with? What would you like for them to come away with from *The Warriors*?

Eliot Gray Fisher: The thing that I've come away with that I hope we can translate to the audiences and that they also leave the show with is an understanding of the deep need for love and peace that this, that these two people felt, and acted on, in spite of what they experienced—the horrific things that they experienced and participated in during the war, you know. My grandfather's book is very candid, you know. He at a time

when not a lot of people, I think, were talking honestly about the sort of morally questionable things that they were asked to do...

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...in the war. So that's the thing that I discovered actually in the process of creating the show: is how profoundly, how deeply anti-war these people were. But not in the way that it's usually sort of thought, you know. They were so interested in beauty and so interested in, in...

Rhea Goodman: Life.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...the human capacity for

Rhea Goodman: Love.

Eliot Gray Fisher: for creation and love, and, you know, those things that just in intrinsically may be the thing that could one day end war. That's just, I mean, I don't think you're going to leave the show with any answers. But just having seen the conclusions that these people reached after what they experienced, you know. And the way that they chose to live their life, their lives together afterwards.

Rhea Goodman: Let's talk a little about ARCOS, because it's a most unusual dance company. I first experienced ARCOS doing a performance at SITE Santa Fe interacting with some of the art. And I was just blown away by it. I loved the show. And I fell in love with the company. I thought, "Oh, what an interesting company." And then I remembered also having seen, *The Warriors* done last year at CCA.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: What's so interesting about ARCOS is the whole multimedia. Its use in production. That it is not just dance, it's not just staging. It's music. It's everything, really masterfully put together. And *The Warriors*, we're talking about, I know your great hope, well, not hope, I think it will happen, this summer will be to take it to the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Right.

Rhea Goodman: Which is an amazing thing. Talk a little about how, what that would look like. How many dancers are, are you bringing?

Eliot Gray Fisher: We're taking a cast of seven, including the directors: my wife, Erica Gionfriddo, and Curtis Uhlemann, who are the choreographers, and I am also a member of the cast, playing myself.

Rhea Goodman: Oh, cool.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: So, it's seven of us going over there. We'll be performing from August 1st to 24th, nightly at 8:30 PM. So it's kind of sometimes referred to as the Olympics among theater artists. It's—you just kind of take a show and dive in there. So we've got this incredible venue...

Rhea Goodman: Every night. Where is the venue?

Eliot Gray Fisher: It's called Zoo Venues. It's just—it's on Nicholson Street, which I'm just sort of familiarizing myself with Edinburgh via Google Maps at this point.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah, sure.

Eliot Gray Fisher: But it seems to be pretty nearby the Royal Mile and sort of where a lot of the activities happen during the Fringe.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah. And the Fringe Festival is famous for having this huge smorgasbord of theatrical events

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: All summer long. I mean, many, many, many to choose from.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Oh, yeah. I mean, they say on their website there are thousands of shows...

Rhea Goodman: Wow.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...that perform

Rhea Goodman: Incredible.

Eliot Gray Fisher: So the trick is trying to stand out among the crowd, you know?

Rhea Goodman: Sure.

Eliot Gray Fisher: But you know, what you mentioned, the thing that we're trying to do with ARCOS, combining the different media and art forms and the way that we do is something that we think does that—does kind of separate us from...

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...other dance companies that may not be using video projections or, you know, theater companies that may not have the high level of dance that you know, we incorporate into our productions. So yeah, that's, and in fact, you know, as we were forming this idea, ARCOS has really just been around for a couple years now. And as we've been moving further and for further down this road of multimedia performance, *The Warriors* was an idea that, when it came to us as a production that we could do, it seemed like a perfect fit, because Ursula was a dancer, you know. Glenn talks about, in his book, talks a lot about the images of the enemy and propaganda and, and media and technology, and the way that it's used to alienate humanity from itself, you know? So it seemed like the perfect format in which to—perfect story to tell in the format that we use to try to, you know, innovatively, but thoughtfully combine these different elements and use the different art forms, use their strengths...

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...in a way that won't compete with each other.

Rhea Goodman: Right. And tell the story, and further the story.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Right.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Right. Right. And that's a thing that I'm interested in, you know, that I really bring to the table creatively and the team is, you know, I've just been introduced to dance more recently...

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...compared to my collaborators, and I still crave some kind of narrative when I see these bodies in front of us on stage.

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: You know?

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: While understanding that dance can be as abstract as music, you know.

Rhea Goodman: And you write the music, and you play the music

Eliot Gray Fisher: Right.

Rhea Goodman: And you're involved in the...yeah

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah.

Rhea Goodman: It's all of a piece.



Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah. And, you know, at this point, we—as an emerging company, we all do everything, which is kind of another ethos that feels fairly contemporary.

Rhea Goodman: No, I love it. I admired the costumes, as a matter of fact.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: Which were, I think, waffle pajama tops and bottoms...

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: ...that Curtis had brilliantly died.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: And the logo itself is just highly sophisticated and really beautiful. Curtis did that too, I gather.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah, he designed that with a couple friends and, you know, they were just searching online for something that looked compelling. And what those are, the letters of the logo are—they're these drawings, from way back in the Renaissance from Italy.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: It's actually the same, you know, Roman capitals that Met Museum uses for their M.

Rhea Goodman: Exactly.

Eliot Gray Fisher: With the little, you know, circles and lines that use the golden ratio and all of that stuff.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah. It's clearly that, because I just, every, I'm a typography nut.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Oh, yeah.

Rhea Goodman: And every time I look at A-R-C-O-S, you know, and the way the spacing, the...

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: The particular typeface that they used is knockout. It's really great.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Well, and that's what, you know, we're interested in as— participating in all of the different pieces of the production. We, you know, are not, you know, control freaks, but we do like to be involved aesthetically in every single piece of our production, including, you know, the look of the promotional materials...

Rhea Goodman: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Eliot Gray Fisher: And all of that.

Rhea Goodman: Oh, yeah. You've got to follow all of that through. We're going to take a little break now, um, and we'll be right back with Eliot Fisher.

[pause]

Rhea Goodman: We're back on *Living Juicy*. We're talking with Eliot Gray Fisher, who is the multimedia director for ARCOS Dance. And we've been talking about this really extraordinary show, a multimedia show called *The Warriors: A Love Story*. One of your recurrent themes, Eliot, in your work is cross-cultural interaction. Tell us about that and what that means for you.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Well, I think that comes from growing up in Santa Fe, actually, you know. We happen to be in a place that is really culturally distinct in the United States. And it's also probably where my interest in history came from too: growing up here. Because the history here is just, we have hundreds and going back thousands of years of history that are really apparent, and the layers are still just right here. And a lot of the

relationships that we can see in our cultural landscape in this region, in northern New Mexico, has its origins hundreds of years in the past. So that's, I think, where I, just by nature growing up here, saw cultures interacting. And bubbling up, and rubbing up against each other, and sometimes clashing, sometimes getting along. So that's been—that's just sort of been one of the things that I've observed when I go other places as well. I took a trip to do some research for *The Warriors* last July to Germany. Spent a few weeks there and saw a very similar thing in Berlin. Berlin even more so probably than here, these raw exposed layers of history—history going back hundreds of years, but especially the last century. I mean, just major global events that happened. You know, you can stand in a spot and see these different places and see the layers of history. I went to a place called The Topography of Terror there, that's a museum that was—it was an SS headquarters in Berlin, the SS headquarters in Berlin. And then as soon as the war ended, the Stasi just moved in. It was in East Germany. And so the East German police just moved in on top of this old headquarters, you know. And on the western side, the Americans did the same. They moved into the military bases and the military headquarters that the Germans had been in. So it's, so that's where—I'm interested in that in the same way. And that's, you know, why *The Warriors* is another great story for me to tell, because it's not only about my grandparents, but it's about America and Germany

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: And Americans and Germans during the war and after the war. And, you know, seeing the process of former enemies becoming lovers, and marrying, and all of that's compelling.

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: What, how does that happen, you know?

Rhea Goodman: You work with students you're teaching at Santa Fe Prep.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: Is it difficult getting students involved in history?

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah, I think it's difficult at first, you know. Early on for students to get interested in history, and even in current political events.

Rhea Goodman: Yes.

Eliot Gray Fisher: The process of being a teenager, being an adolescent is all so much about oneself, you know?

Rhea Goodman: Of course. Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: And that's the first step. And in fact, you know, it's interesting because, you were talking earlier about artists pursuing their roots or...

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...looking at their grandparents or their back into their family history. And I think that may be a phase and a process too, for people at a certain time of life. I feel like that's what I'm—since I've become an adult, that's been an interesting pursuit for me. And I think in 10 years, it may be something else. It may not be directly related to going into my own family history and finding it. But yes, students need really great teachers to get them interested in history, to make it relevant, to contemporize it for them.

Rhea Goodman: Because in my intro, I read something about you considered the process of actively engaging with student artists as an essential element of your practice. So what is there about engaging with student artists is—are you just really wanting to make them aware of what's gone on before? Do you want, are you trying to, just to broaden their view of things?

Eliot Gray Fisher: Well, you know, what's wonderful actually about working with young students is that they, in some cases, they're freer, and they can more freely experiment. And they don't have as strict boundaries defined or drawn about the world or...

Rhea Goodman: They're less afraid to fail?

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah. And they...

Rhea Goodman: As we grownups are.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...they're enthusiastic and they're exuberant. And they bring newness. They bring a newness, which I think is one of the things that we're trying to accomplish as artists is to

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...you know, bring a group of people together and give them an experience that they haven't had before. So working with students, teaching students is related to the process of making or engaging with art, I think. And I think traveling is the same way, in my mind.

Rhea Goodman: Mm-hmm.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Navigating a new experience, you know, testing your...

Rhea Goodman: Testing your own...

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...adaptability and your...

Rhea Goodman: ...resilience.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...improvisational. Yeah.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah.

Rhea Goodman: Improvisational smarts.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah. Muscles.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah.

Rhea Goodman: Let's talk a little more about ARCOS. Where do you see it going as a really unique, um, dance company now, partly in Santa Fe? Partly in Austin?

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm. Well, we're trying to take our show on the road. Basically. We're trying to get out there. And we're also looking at creatively at where we could potentially perform as a multimedia performance company. We may not be restricted to traditional theatrical venues. You know, *The Warriors* at CCA was not, you know, a proscenium stage. It was at very alternate...

Rhea Goodman: Not at all.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...space that we

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...turned into a theater.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: And the SITE Santa Fe show was a contemporary art gallery, museum, you know?

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: So those are possibilities. So that's what we're looking at doing. We're hoping to...

Rhea Goodman: There was something, excuse me, there was something about the dancers interacting with the people who were watching too, that was very important and very compelling. And just breaking that proscenium arch, and doing it in a place like an art gallery was

remarkable. Because I remember the dancers interacting with people. I went and saw it twice. I had such a good time.  
Eliot Gray Fisher: Well we felt it too, during that performance.

Rhea Goodman: Uh huh.

Eliot Gray Fisher I mean, it was like nothing we'd ever had even experienced, even, you know, with a performance where we had the dancers right on the same level as the audience and...

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...coming right up to them. But to have the audience not in audience, not in chairs, not sitting there.

Rhea Goodman: No.

Eliot Gray Fisher: But, you know, having to make decisions themselves...

Rhea Goodman: Yeah, yeah. Exactly.

Eliot Gray Fisher: ...made it really compelling.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah. Get out of the way, you know, for example.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah, that was a decision.

Rhea Goodman: Someone's moving.

[laughter]

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah. And so that—we got very excited by that performance in SITE Santa Fe. That's why we're looking at contemporary art museums and those settings as potential performance venues for us as well.

Rhea Goodman: That's very exciting.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah.

Rhea Goodman: There's a wonderful museum in New York called the Rubin Museum. Do check it out.

Eliot Gray Fisher: We will.

Rhea Goodman: It's a museum of, technically of Himalayan art. And the design of it—it's in the old Barney's building on 17th Street and 7th Avenue with this glorious winding staircase that was done by a great French designer, a woman, I can't remember her name now. Very deco. And the interior design of the walls were done by Milton Glazer. So the colors are, oh, just remarkable. That would be a place for you to do. Check it out.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah, we will.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah. Check it out.

Eliot Gray Fisher: You know, that sort of site-specific stuff is compelling. So yeah, so that's where we're headed. We're looking to, in the next year, be creating work and performing as much as we possibly can. So that will see us hopefully performing in Santa Fe, and Austin, and, you know, elsewhere. We'll be in Edinburgh in August. And we want to see where else we might be able to go in Europe or around the States.

Rhea Goodman: And you're going to do something in Santa Fe in May, June?

Eliot Gray Fisher: It's in June. Yeah, that's right. Saturday, June 14th. We'll actually be previewing about a half hour of excerpts of *The Warriors*. So a few scenes, not necessarily in order, but just sort of a sneak peek for the Santa Fe audience.

Rhea Goodman: Where?

Eliot Gray Fisher: It's at El Museo Cultural, down on the railyard.



Rhea Goodman: Sure.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah.

Rhea Goodman: Extraordinary.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah, it's, it's part of the—we're performing in the Currents International New Media Festival, which is very exciting. It's a great festival. It has a lot of video installation as well as performances, so...

Rhea Goodman: In the last minute, we have, tell me what, for you, Eliot Gray Fisher is "living juicy?"

Eliot Gray Fisher: For me, living juicy is creating art with friends, eating delicious food, traveling. And ideally, if it's possible to do all of those at the same time,

Rhea Goodman: Creative, co-creation—collaborative co-creation.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Mm-hmm.

Rhea Goodman: Whatever you want to call it. It's very juicy, isn't it?

Eliot Gray Fisher: That moment of experimenting with something that you don't know how it's going to turn out.

Rhea Goodman: Yeah.

Eliot Gray Fisher: Yeah. I love it. It has been a great pleasure talking to you, Eliot Gray Fisher.

Eliot Gray Fisher: You too. Thank you.

Rhea Goodman: And ARCOS Dance Company.