

**All Is Fair**

ARCOS Dance makes art from love and war

BY LOREN BIENVENU  
 @SFReporterMusic

In 1959, World War II veteran turned philosophy professor J Glenn Gray published *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*. A little over a half-century later, his grandson, native Santa Fean Eliot Gray Fisher, has metamorphosed elements of the book and of Gray's life into the hugely ambitious multimedia project *The Warriors: A Love Story*.

"I never knew my grandfather," Fisher tells SFR. "He died before I was born, but I always was really interested in getting to know him a little bit through his most well-known book, which looks at the philosophy of modern combat."

The book identifies the enticements of warfare—with the aim of finding alternative ways to satisfy them, thus limiting the need for war itself.

"I always wanted to adapt [the book] into some kind of performance," Fisher, who serves as ARCOS Dance Company's multimedia director, says. "A film, then maybe a play, to translate this kind of dry philosophical writing into something a little more accessible."

As it turned out, his adaptation incorporates film and theater elements, as well as original music and dance with co-directors Erica Gionfriddo and Curtis Uhlemann of ARCOS providing the production's "visceral, athletic choreography."

In this ambitious project, dance is not just a means of expression—it also correlates directly and thematically to the tale being told.

After the war, Gray married a German woman who survived the Allied bombing of Dresden. Ursula was passionate about dance and even studied under some of the legends of the time, including Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca and Hanya Holm.

Gionfriddo, who married Fisher last summer, had the opportunity to meet Ursula during her lifetime. In an example of life imitating art, and vice versa, the recently married couple has been working nonstop since last December to find the best way of expressing this very personalized story, which is itself about the role of artistic expression relative to familial relationships.

Of course, such a large collaboration draws on the family as well as the community; in addition to Uhlemann, key contributors include Gionfriddo's brother Mike, a light designer; Fisher's father Rick, a sculptor; and local musician Karina Wilson.

Fisher says, "I've been composing since last year and, recently, working with Karina to flesh out some of the material...she's going to be playing cello and viola; cello [being] associated with my grandmother and viola with my grandfather."

Wilson is well-known in Santa Fe as a musician. She plays fiddle in Broomdust Caravan as well as alongside Joe West. Fisher says that "it's really nice to be able to just sit down with a pro [and] be flexible and improvisatory, which is what she's all about."

Chadney Everett provided the set design, which Fisher describes as "white, white, white. The whole



Gray Fisher and a projection of Dresden.

set is white, so when we do the video projections it transforms the space."

An integral part of the set is a white baby grand piano, and this, too, serves as a surface for projection.

The piano plays more roles than just instrument and backdrop. It is also a central prop to the story, which opens with a frame narrative: Fisher sitting at the piano at midnight, trying to compose a suitable musical elegy for his recently deceased grandmother Ursula.

Fisher would never have arrived at this particular piano bench if it weren't for a large-scale, successful crowdfunding campaign. Besides satisfying the logistical requirements of funding, the process was "definitely a way to make people feel like they are already [personally] invested enough so that they really want to see the final product."

Ultimately, the success of this final product hinges on how the different artistic and technical components end up harmonizing to create a cohesive story and message.

Fisher acknowledges that the greatest challenge is "how all the elements work and play off each other's strengths."

He goes on to give an example of both the pitfalls and the benefits of combining such diverse elements: "A screen may attract attention away from a live performer, but at the same time, it can never be as powerful as a live performer. So how can we use [the two] elements together? It's all about simultaneity." **SFR**

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**THE WARRIORS: A LOVE STORY**

7:30 pm Friday, Feb. 8 through Sunday, Feb. 17. \$20 adults; \$15 students. CCA's Muñoz Waxman Gallery 1050 Old Pecos Trail, 982-1338