

## Director's Notes:

Many people are not aware that Francisco de Goya – one of the forebears of the modern art movement – became profoundly deaf in mid-career. His most provocative work was created soon after. Perhaps most do not know that Goya happened to purchase a home in the countryside of Madrid that was already labeled “Quinta del Sordo,” (house of the deaf man). Previously owned by a deaf man, the villa was clearly marked for all who passed it. Some of Goya’s darkest and profound art, “The Black Paintings,” were literally painted on the walls of this villa.

Our exploration in movement, masquerade, and gestures began with one etching as a cornerstone to build on – a self-portrait of Goya asleep at his drawing table. He wrote in Spanish on the etching, which translated as: “1st Dream. Universal Language. Drawn and etched by F.co de Goya. 1797.” He also inscribed what one arts researcher identified as stage directions: “The artist dreaming. His only purpose is to banish harmful, vulgar beliefs, and to perpetuate in this work of caprices the solid testimony of truth.”

I was fascinated that this deaf artist thought in theatrical terms in his artwork. Also from this etching, I decided to make it the turning point for when Goya became deaf. All of the scenes before and after it were built from using his other etchings and paintings as our dramatic scenarios. To help the actors ingest the scenario images, which helped fuel their improvisations, we embedded Goya’s images into the written script and sequenced them in a way that revealed some semblance of a plot.

Our questions were: What was Goya’s dream of universal language? Was it gestures? Paintings? Writings? Body Language? All of the above? A wish for people to communicate the truth through a common language? When one loses the sense of hearing or sight, does humanity’s truth become more clear and honest? And, what happens when an artist strives to reveal the truth?

Throughout the development of our visually oriented drama, we discovered insights into Goya’s satirical humor, his mockery of the social mores and superstitions of his time, his caustic views on the ills and follies of humanity, and the effect of his deafness on his art and relationships with people.

- Willy Conley