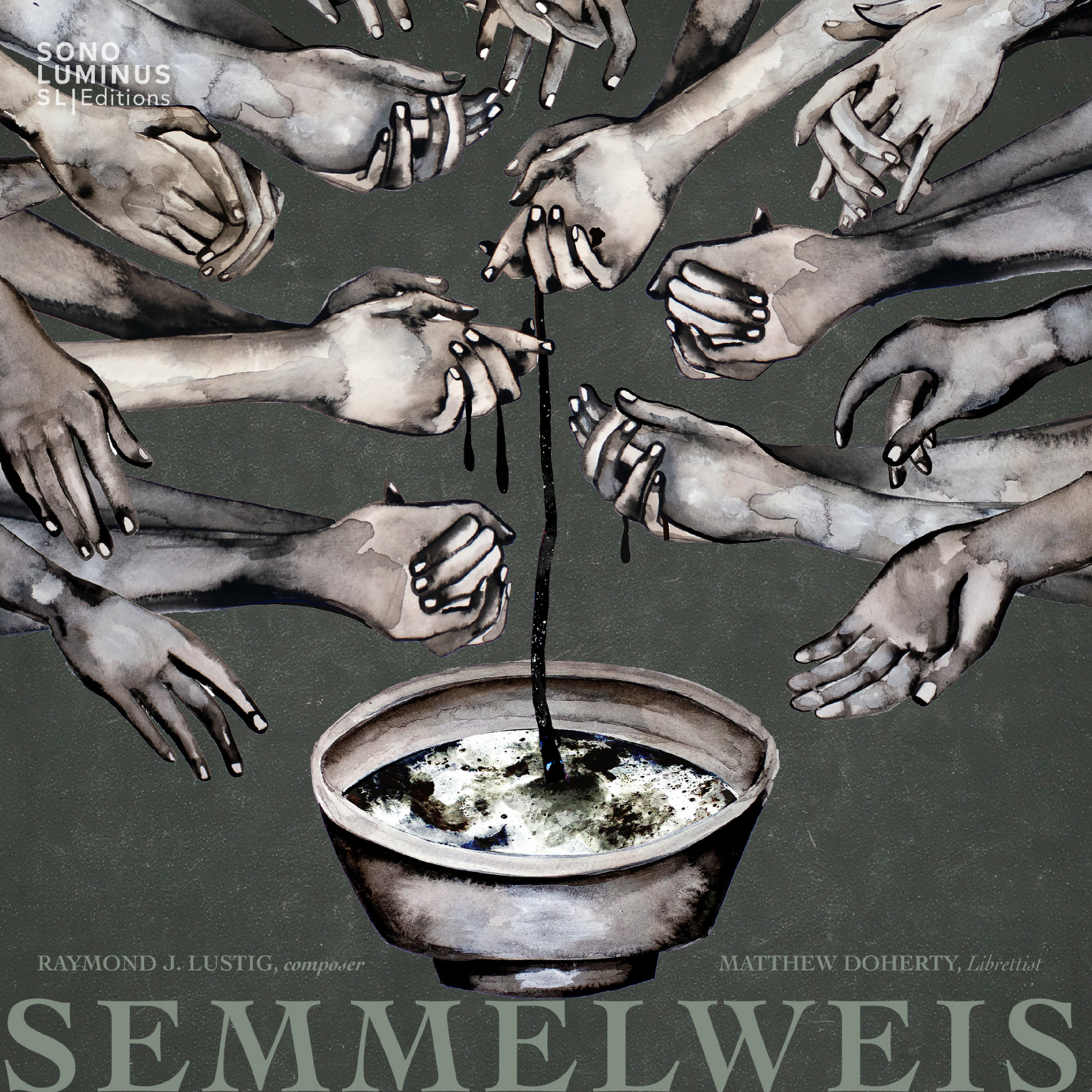

SONO
LUMINUS
SL|Editions
RAYMOND J. LUSTIG, *composer*
MATTHEW DOHERTY, *Librettist*
SEMMELWEIS

1. What is the Day
Day… What is the day
City girl… You're a city girl
You know the way
What is the day

2. Market Squares
In the market squares in Buda and Pest
Old women cut snips from folded paper
And the shape of a mother would unfold
And trailing from her
Were children you had not seen

Invisibly built by that quiet machine
And one wrong cut would cut through everyone
And it seemed like nothing they had ever learned
But knew in their hands how to make
And to make and to make and to make

And I never asked the price
Just watched weave with their scissors
Something too delicate to take

3. Give Birth on the Earthworks
On the earth…
Look out from the earthworks
That roll down from the city wall
Give birth on the earthworks
You're a city girl
Unless you know it's midwives day
What is the day

In the doctors' ward they make you stay
And likely as not you'll die that way
Stay away
Or wait until it's midwives' day
What is the day

In the doctors' ward they'll make you stay
And believe me when I say you'll die that way

4. Best Idea
I could hang myself upon this wall
Would it really be so strange
To see me thus arranged alongside you
It wouldn't be so strange
Come and talk with me
All the lives I will set free
Come here and talk with me
And what I will be

I could hang myself upon this wall
Would it really be so strange
To see me thus arranged alongside
The most brilliant things of all

All the lives I will set free
Come here and talk with me
Come here and talk with me
And all that I will be

Even as a child taking stock
In my father's shop
I watched my hands replace the tins
The shelves we made our living in
And knew my hands and mind could be
What fill far greater galleries
The grandest galleries

The warm hand that wrapped my own
When I was nothing in the town
The clumsiness of learning on a body
What goes wrong
My clumsiness is gone

Did you ever have a best idea
And did it ever seem so clear
That all the engineers
Of everything we hold so dear
Were only selling souvenirs
Were peddling souvenirs

5. My Doctor's Hands
My doctor… My doctor's hands
Pure, pure
Willing to be cleansed
Foreign hands
I am willing… I am willing to be cleansed
Pure, pure hands

6. Never a Choice
It's never a choice
You see who you see
And soon you belong
To the one who trains himself on you

O how you glow
Something planted in your body
Where it grows
And the pain goes everywhere it goes

It's never a choice
You see who you see
And soon you belong
To the one who trains himself on you

Is your body a cathedral
Or candlelight
Passed hand to hand
Against the dark

It's never a choice
You see who you see

So give birth in the cathedral
And quietly there
You are candlelight
A single star against the darkness
That rolls down from the city wall

7. Out in the Yard
On the earth…

Out in the yard where the
Bodies go out in the yard
Where the bodies go out in
The yard where the bodies go

8. Archaeology
On the streets of Vienna, you were a living city
On this table, antiquity

I come down off the streets
Where the lamps are lit and sweepers sweep
This day for you could be a thousand years
Your ruined city waits
For the careful turning of a spade

Wipe the ash from your skin
And down into the ground
Give this mystery to me, Archeology
I dig down and down…
Down and down…

And in a ruined tomb I find my own
My own self lying there
My own self lying there
A careful spade still turning in my hand

9. Our Skin So Fair
Is it our hair
Is it our skin so fair
Or something in the springtime air
Something…

Through the open windows
In the halls
The ringing of the bell

All the things we just can't bear
Something in our breast
Something you don't have

Foreign hands that touch us
Our skin so fair
The springtime air
Foreign hands that touch us

Touch us…
Our skin so fair
Something in the springtime air
Something…

On our backs or on our side
When you find it
What has led you there
Touch us
Semmelweis

What's the difference, Semmelweis?

10. As if Your Body Were a Cathedral
As if your body were a cathedral
Lit by candlelight

Ligamentis discitis
Et neuritis tuberculosis
Cujus sistema simpaticus
Simpaticus tuberculosis
Apoteca catullus catullus
Oedema conventio
Scandalum lumbago diabetes
Lumbago diabetes
Testosterone lumbago
Rododendron absurdum ipso
Facto rododendron absurdum
Lumbago testosterone lumbago
Scandalum diabetes tuberculosis
Oedema conventio
Cujus sistema apoteca
Ligamentis discitis
Sinus sinus cosinus cotangens
Et cotangens dinosaurus

11. You Cannot Stay
[instrumental]

12. My Dark Disgrace
Any who see me in my dark disgrace
See a man from another place
Where we think we know why we do what we do
We don't know
I don't know

The women stay with me
And their bodies glow
In my mind their faces
Like children grow

I do not myself know how to make
I do not build or prosper
Soon I am thirty, and unwed too
God's own house I have rummaged through

Is there a ship to take me there
Or a train away from here
Where I might meet
My own self on its way to me

To Venice…
I think it's better if I go away
To think if there is another way
They say it's better if I go away

13. Etiology
[instrumental]

14. Eureka
I could hang myself upon this wall
It wouldn't be so strange
To see me thus arranged alongside
The most brilliant things of all

I lived there for an hour all alone
When they want you they will bring your body home

In a stranger's voice I heard
Spoken in no tongue I know
These murmurs from across the sea,
That still somehow were made by me

In clear but broken semblances
Intact as separate languages
My mind a coach on two roads at once
Riding over cobblestone and mountain both

That turned together into nonsense
And this truth that now I see
Will be visible to all
But now only to me

Did you ever have a best idea
And did it ever seem so clear
That all of the engineers
Of the knowledge that we hold so dear
Were only selling souvenirs
Only peddling souvenirs

I can see the fallen world anew
And see the lines the masons drew as all askew
And I can see a world that's true
A world so observed as makes my mind unnerved
Our learned truths are artifice
And I am somehow an artist
Who must make the mundane startle us
Must make the mundane startle us

I took my book out in the rain
I had to see where I went wrong
Or should I just play right along
And found the page
Where I had sketched the veins of streets

And pages full of women's names
Death figures copied from the wall
It looked so strange
I watched the veins become the street
I was going home
I was going home

And we are not the saviors
We who rummage through the bodies
Looking for the truth
The ones who spread dangerous stories
Will find an enemy in me

15. I am the Experiment
I am the experiment

Child after child
Born into the clean hands of their father
And their mother still alive

How desperately he tries to prove himself
To start again in my body another child
And sling another arrow
Through the apple on my head
And walk me around – not dead

16. Madness
[wordless]

17. Once a Candle
Once a candle lights another candle
The first one can go out
My mother too lived until I was born

Once a candle lights another candle
The first one can go out
Now where the baby was it is myself in there

Once a candle lights another candle
The first one can go out
My flesh I too must abandon completely

18. The Only One
Out in the past where bodies go…
The Finding of the San Marco moved me so…
In a notebook page, ruined and dry
I still can hear that rainstorm
And came home to find you gone

You were my best idea
Where I find you lights my ruined mind
Why did you bring me here
Come down from your cross
You were nothing at all
Dark figures changing on the wall
I can't recall, I can't recall
Come down from your cross

Now I hear them
Listen, listen close to what I say
Only now to prove me mad and keep me locked away
What is the day
You know the way

Am I to you a dangerous one
Stay
And is the revolution come
You know the way
How was I the only one, the only one who knew
I am the experiment
Dark figures changing on the wall
I can't recall, I can't recall

And see what happens to a body that resists
A body that resists
That is your empire of genius men, of murderers
Is it our hair
Is it our skin so fair
Something in the springtime air

Now I hear them
Listen, listen close to what I say
It's my blood you wash your hands with
Once again today
Something in the springtime air
And if you are alive because of me
Am I not your father
The lives that I set free come back to talk to me

Come down from your cross
You were nothing at all

You were my best idea, here and here and here
Where I found you lights my ruined mind
You started me, you started me
And just some words could make it so

Through the open window
In the hall
The ringing of the bell

All the lives that I set free come back to talk to me
All the lives that I set free come back to talk to me
Dark figures changing on a wall
We killed them all, we killed them all

And I could hang myself upon this wall
Beside the darkest things of all
And with you I am not so out of place
My mind is a disgrace
I was going home, I was going home

I need an experiment…

You started me, you started me
Now finish me
I'm gone without you here
And I could hang myself upon this wall

An unfinished man who went away
My best idea, you've gone
And this is me

19. Lullaby
Kimennék én ajtóm elejibe
és föltekinték nagy magos mennyekbe
Aludjál el Istennek bárányа
Szeretetből jöttél e világra

[I went out in front of my door
And looked up to the big tall heavens
Fall asleep God's lamb
You came to the world from love]

20. Finale
[wordless]

The music of this album derives from the stage work SEMMELWEIS, whose initial creation and development came about with the generous help of the American Opera Project, Budapest Operetta Theater, The Bartok Plusz Opera Festival, the Charles P. Sloan Foundation, Ensemble Studio Theater, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Edward Andrews, Dr. Laszlo Rosivall, Dr. Ana Berlin, Dr. Warren Widmann, and many others listed in the thank-you section. It premiered at the Bartok Plusz Opera Festival in a production directed by Martin Boross, which ran in Budapest and toured throughout Hungary.

The music of SEMMELWEIS underwent significant artistic development with help from director Martin Boross, music director Dániel Dinyés, dramaturg Diána Eszter Mátrai, and assistant director Julia Jakubowska.

This album has deep roots and owes its thanks to so many who have supported it, informed it, encouraged it, critiqued it, coached it, lent a listening ear to it, brought it to stages, performed in earlier live versions of it, helped find opportunities for it, etc.

Much gratitude to:
Ana Berlin, Eva Berlin-Lustig, Dr. Daniel Seidman, Luigi Porto, Matt Gray, Dániel Dinyés, Mila Henry, Charity Wicks, Hans Tashjian, Peter Thall, Tara Khozein, Troy Germanow

Alejandro Berlin, András Tucker, Audrey Jakab, Bartók Béla Chamber Chorus of Szolnok, Carola Timmel, Chaitanya Sangco, Charles Jarden, Conrad Cummings, Daisy Press, Emi Ferguson, Erwin Maas, Éva Molnár, György Lőrinczy, Hermann Szabolcs, John Corigliano, Joy Tamayo, Karmina Šilec, Katelan Terrell, Nina Colosi, Ryan McAdams, Sandcastle New Music, Szilveszter P. Szabó, The Streaming Museum, Veronika Nádasi, Maryna

Abigail Fisher, Ákos Podráczky, Alice Lustig, Amy Justman, András Juhász, Angel Orensanz Center, Balassi Institute, Bill Jones, Brett Umlauf, Brian Meece, Bryan P. Hurley, Ph.D., Carolyn Stem, Catherine Hancock, Charlotte Dobbs, Christopher Botta, Dániel Patkós, Dina Rose Rivera, Dora Halas, Dóra Tési, Dr. Bernhard Küenburg, Dr. Jonathan Miller, Dr. Sherwin Nuland, Edward Bilous, Elaine Larson, Elena Kieffer, Elena Kowalsky, Enikő Lévai, Eszter Nemethi, Evan Fein, Ferenc Kumin, Gábor Csonka, Galapagos Art Space, Gary Shapiro, Gertrúd Andrási, Glenn Fleshler, Glimmerglass Opera, Greg Knowles, Greta Berman, Guadalupe Peraza, Guy Coolen, Howard Lieberman, Ildiko Eri, Inge Ivchenko, James Paulk, James Schaeffer, Jennifer Panara, Jenny Horváth, Jessica Miller-Rausch, Jessica Savage, JoAnn Dolan, Joanna Ebenstein, Joel Kalow, Joerg Ahlgrimm, John Brown, Mary Brown, John Lustig, Joseph Keckler, Josh Mertz, Júlia Hadi, Julianne Zahl, Julie Nagel, Kate Maroney, Kelly Horsted, Kendall Briggs, Kerry B. Grennan, N.P., Kiara Duran, Laura Kaminsky, Lee Streby, Lili Raubinek, Lisa Romain, Luke Canterella, Maeve Höglund, Marcy Richardson, Marguerite French, Martin Verdrager, Matthew Curran, McGinn Educational Center at Staten Island University Hospital, Megan Schubert, Michael Marcotte, Michelle DiBucci, Miron Kováts, Moirae Ensemble, Molly and Marvin Brooks, Music Theater Now, Musiktheatertage Wien, National Arts Club, Ned Canty, New York Academy of Medicine, Nissa Kahle, Norman Ryan, Opera Grows in Brooklyn, Opera on Tap, Operadagen Rotterdam, Patricia Price, Patrick Porter, Paul Dolan, Paul Haas, Paul Schneider, Paula Mlyn, Peter Flint, Phil Simmons, Raymond Lustig Sr., Regina Lustig, Robert E. Lee III, Ryan Andes, Samantha Martin, Samuel Katz, Samuel Zyman, Sára Zalányi, Sarah Small, Sophie Delphis, Stephanie Griffin, Steven Osgood, Susan Jakab, Tamás Keller, Tara Geer, Thomas Campbell Jackson, Thomas Desi, Tünde Frankó, Zita Vadasz, Gerd Kühl, Ildikó Barabás, József Dreiszker, Kelly Guerra, Marton Szegedi, Máté Vincze, Megan Ketch, Olivia Baseman

SEMMELWEIS

Music by Raymond J. Lustig
Words by Matthew Doherty
Additional Latin words: Martin Boross, Diána Eszter Mátrai, Julia Jakubowska

Charlotte Mundy - voice of Woman and the Mother Ghosts
Raymond J. Lustig - voice of Semmelweis, piano, organ, accordion, music boxes
The Rhythm Method - string quartet
Leah Asher - violin
Meaghan Burke - cello
Ranjit Prasad - double bass
Chrystof Knoche - bass clarinet

Produced by Raymond J. Lustig and Maximilien Hein
Executive Produced by Raymond J. Lustig
Additional Production by Drew Schlingman ("Best Idea", "Eureka")
Recorded by Maximilien Hein and Drew Schlingman
Mixed by Maximilien Hein
Mastered by Daniel Shores

Recorded at The Hit Factory, NYC and Respirano on Hudson, NYC from 2023 to 2025
Assistant Engineer at The Hit Factory: Brendan O'Neill

Album Artwork by Alex Sopp
Cover Direction by Maximilien Hein
Layout by Josh Frey



SEMMELWEIS

1. What is the Day
2. Market Squares
3. Give Birth on the Earthworks
4. Best Idea
5. My Doctor's Hands
6. Never a Choice
7. Out in the Yard
8. Archaeology
9. Our Skin So Fair
10. As if Your Body Were a Cathedral
11. You Cannot Stay
12. My Dark Disgrace
13. Etiology
14. Eureka
15. I am the Experiment
16. Madness
17. Once a Candle
18. The Only One
19. Lullaby
20. Finale



0 53479 70460 3