



A GUN SHOW

SŌ PERCUSSION AND EMILY JOHNSON
IN PERFORMANCE
DIRECTED BY AIN GORDON
BOOK BY ADAM SLIWINSKI AND
LYNNE DESILVA-JOHNSON





the operating system print//document

A GUN SHOW

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in collaboration with Eric Cha-Beach, Jason Treuting, Josh Quillen,
Ain Gordon and Emily Johnson; in tandem with its performance at the
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first edition

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A GUN SHOW

PREMIERED AT THE BROOKLYN ACADEMY
OF MUSIC NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL,
BROOKLYN NY
2016





acknowledgements, thanks, or inscription? here or on facing page?
could also have full acknowledgements in the back





A GUN SHOW

INTENTIONS
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PLACES
DATA
SQUAW WOOD
NOISE
CONSPIRACY
WELL REGULATED
GATHERING / STORIES
BACKMATTER





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INTENTIONS

This book is a documentation
of the evolution
of the making of difficult work
about a complicated subject.

Often, performance pieces like this one
are the result of years of collaboration
and yet
while the result of much textual back-and-forth
between their collaborators
and perhaps the subject (if one is lucky)
of an elucidating interview or review
there is rarely a substantive record left
of the process of its making.

We felt it could be productive
for the audience
for the public
for our students
for fellow creative practitioners
and for ourselves
to insist upon not just creating the piece
but documenting it
and in so doing
clarifying our intentions.

And it was.

We do not suggest that we have the answers
but here we've taken you along
to show you how we asked the questions
and shaped them into something
we hope has meaning,
now and in the future.

Thank you for coming along for the journey.

- Adam Sliwinski and Lynne DeSilva-Johnson -

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/// 8 | DIRECTOR'S NOTE ///





NOTES ON PROCESS/HISTORY FROM A DIRECTOR IN COLLABORATION

Approaching this divisively monolithic issue with respect, interrogative stamina, outrage, and creative energy BUT *not* sliding to a “liberal” propaganda-stance OR reflexively harnessing the research for artistic self-confirmation of a position (likely) few we encounter (in our “professional” life) actually disagree with.

Then finding out that, in fact, our assumption of internal moral agreement mildly splintered when it came to the minutiae of legal implementation.

I had to ask who are we to “tell” anything to anyone? AND, regardless, are we not primarily required to provide something called “performance?”

That “performance” required locating a response to the “issue” to which I felt we had integral right – a response that could then form a launch whose structural integrity would hold as we stretched and prodded to make something to, yes, hear and watch. I felt we (or at least the “I” of “we”) needed a litmus test that would permit us to invent – to *please* be released into invention – but still have the option to check our invention against our inciting emotion. **Protest** and **mourning** became, for me, that (hard to hold) litmus. No, I don’t think we hemmed ourselves in with those words or stuck to them religiously but, for myself, they were the first open door, those two words.

The title.

For more than a year this project was titled “Content Redacted.” That choice had logic; the work was primarily incited by the Sandy Hook

/// DIRECTOR'S NOTE | 9 ///





shootings and researching that investigation as the Public Information Act made material available – heavily *redacted* material. That sense of absence, masking violence as *more* violence, hidden-ness, silence, removal - this flooded our generative process. But then came a moment, in my mind, when that generative principal began to impede. Where deploying redaction for creation was causing us to make something that perhaps broached hiding itself – almost shrinking from expression. Redaction as an inspiring tool somehow kinked into a self-referencing cloak hiding what the uninitiated couldn't even know had once been there. This (again, this is *all* my view) further kinked by fusing with our own doubts as to our “duty or responsibility” as citizens inside this artist project.

It felt almost as if our citizen-self and our artist-self each had to approve each swath of material – this somehow heated up spurts of trying out overt political screeds (citizen-self) fairly quickly modified by creative redaction (artist-self) leaving material sometimes hiding from itself (let alone an audience). Ironically, my request that we simply revert to our original “working title” (*A Gun Show*) turns out to have been, perhaps, the first step to confronting what we were not fully confronting.

The open-faced blatancy of that title, perhaps allowed us to look back at our material, not to become literal (the work is a meditation full of “narratives” but, by choice, not a linear literal object) but to reassess the redactions that resonate *out* from the stage as opposed to the ones nervously self-imposed. (Having just reread this paragraph, I hope that ultimately our citizen-selves and artist-selves were able to collaborate rather than, like a slightly adversarial author and producer, “negotiate”).

The set.

Well there are a few reasons, some more juicy for the historicizing of this project, others more personally pragmatic.

1) This is my second collaboration with Sō Percussion. In the first collaboration, *Where (we) Live*, we sort of took the myriad junk filling the group’s studio and recreated a mildly hothouse fantasy version of it on stage. My hope was to frame the group as I found them magnified for performance. So...we couldn't do that again. I wanted something more “purposeful” (or differently purposeful).

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2) A lot of early material for “*A Gun Show*” was made/played/performed sitting or kneeling on the floor (ironically much of that material has altered or been discarded). I liked it, folks crawling around and playing on their knees but how could I make it “seeable?” That’s when I came up with the raked platform – to literally lift the performers up as they stayed on their knees.

3) A seminal part of our research were visits to a gun range (I am not detailing that here as I am sure others will have elsewhere in this publication – I went with Josh and Eric). The gun range was disturbing to me in many ways – especially its banality – it was friendly and normal, it could have been a visit to your-cousin-who-you-don’t-really-talk-to-but-your-parents-said-you-had-to-go. In the lounge area (vinyl peeling couch like those found in basement dens of outer-boro houses where I got high as a teenager) was a huge wall-size mural of two deer amid a bucolic early fall landscape. The deer looked right out at you, apprehensive. They knew about guns in a way I never could. I just wanted that mural.

Ain Gordon

/// DIRECTOR'S NOTE | 11///





||| 12 | DICHO TOMY |||





DICHOTOMY

{noun} a division into two especially mutually exclusive or contradictory groups or entities <the dichotomy between theory and practice>; also : the process or practice of making such a division <dichotomy of the population into two opposed classes>

It is apt that we begin the documentation accompanying a project steeped in tension with an entry on division, both seeming and actual. The country in which we live is a study in the second part of its definition -- that is to say, of *the process or practice in making such a division* -- and indeed difference (whether real or perceived) between races, classes, genders, religions and cultures of origin defines our climate's tenor in particular in election years.

The ways in which these dichotomies play out on the national stage are often closely linked to conversations about guns -- to gun violence, gun legislature, and police culture, in particular.

There's no one dichotomy that best describes our culture at the moment, encapsulating all of our problems and issues, but the increasing animosity and misunderstanding between rural and urban/suburban populations comes close. That tension is, as of this writing, playing out in a terrifying and unprecedented way in the U.S. presidential election.

It is one of the founding binary oppositions of our republic: Hamilton and Jefferson, Industrial and Agrarian, Blue and Red, North and South, Multi-ethnic and "White". It reveals that citizens can view the fundamental character of our country in very different ways depending on where they come from.





The latest data indicate that there are 357 million guns in circulation in the United States. That's 40 million more guns than there are people.

Chances are astronomically high that you live among them.

The view one takes on whether these guns are destructive, helpful, terrifying, or necessary is often correlated to the type of environment in which one has been brought up and continues to live -- though of course it is vital that we take a step back from the polarizing way the media represents this dichotomy and recognize its many subtler shades, including (just as a tip of the iceberg example) the huge number of immigrants living and working in rural areas of the United States which are so often represented as being "low income / blue collar whites" (etc etc)

For *A Gun Show*, we've chosen a backdrop image that resembles the scene at the gun range we visited in New Jersey: a placid rural idyll with two deer looking quizzically up at the viewer. Whether this image will be shattered in moments by gunfire is not clear -- it might only be a snapshot.





CONTENT REDACTED

Making art in response to unspeakable acts is difficult.

Early in the process of researching this piece, Josh investigated information and resources about the Sandy Hook Elementary shootings in Newton, CT, the events which were the initial impetus for the project.

What he found was chilling, as much for what was left unseen as for what it showed.

In the Sandy Hook reports, a lot of information and photographs were released to the public , but heavily redacted. For the most part (unless you are a full blown conspiracy theorist), the redactions make sense. Based on what we know of the event, what happened to those children is beyond imagining. And yet, the redactions force us to do exactly that -- to create our own internal images of the unimaginable.

In the section labelled “photographs,” there are documents consisting entirely of pages and pages of this (see next page.)

/// CONTENT REDACTED | 15 ///





01 02 03 06 12

/// 16 | CONTENT REDACTED ///





Some of the labels on the files indicate perfectly well what they contain: “autopsy” and “ID” are especially plain.

They are photos of murdered children, and the strange black void with numbers at the top creates a blank canvas for our own imaginations to run wild. The numbers are codes, although I’m not totally sure what they mean.

**I have noticed a few patterns, such as that every time the children are referenced, I see this code:
01 02 03 12**

/// CONTENT REDACTED | 17 ///





Eric notified me that there is a number code index at the beginning of the report:

Redaction Index

#	Statute	Brief Description
01	CGS § 5-210(b)(3)(B)	Identity of minor witnesses
02	CGS § 5-210(b)(11)	Names/addresses of students enrolled in public school
03	CGS § 5-210(b)(2)	Personnel/medical/vulner files, invasion of personal privacy
04	CGS § 5-210(b)(3)(A)	Identity of confidential informant/witness
05	n/a	Court order of J. Blawie dated March 27, 2013
06	CGS § 5-210(b)(47)	Visual image depicting a homicide victim
07	CGS § 29-286f	Pistol permit information
08	CGS § 179a-813	Records of OCME examinations/findings
09	CGS § 5-200(5)	Items not meeting the definition of public record, including but not limited to seized physical evidence
10	CGS § 5-210(b)(3)(i)	Signed statements of witnesses
11	18 USC 2724	Information protected by the Federal Driver's Privacy Protection Act
12	UN/CT Constitution	Right to privacy (UN Const. Amend. 34) and/or Victim Rights (CT Const. Art. 1 Sec 81)
13	CGS § 5-210(b)(3)(f)	Investigatory techniques not otherwise known
14	CGS § 5-210(b)(1)(b)	Safety risk to persons and/or buildings
15	CGS § 29-284f	COLLECT (Connecticut On-Line Law Enforcement Communications Teleprocessing) system records
16	28 USC 534	NCIC (National Crime Information Center) Records
17	CGS § 5-210(b)(3)(e)	Unsubstantiated allegations subject to destruction pursuant to CGS 5-218
18	CGS § 5-210(b)(3)(A)	Trade secrets and/or proprietary information
19	CGS § 5-210(b)(5)(B)	Commercial and/or financial information given in confidence, not required by statute
20	CGS § 5-210(b)(3)(f)	Arrest/investigatory files of a juvenile compiled for a law enforcement purpose
21	31 USC 532(b)(2)	Records protected by the Bank Secrecy Act
22	31 CFR 101.186f	Records protected by Federal regulations promulgated under the Bank Secrecy Act
23	CGS § 5-210(b)(1)	Preliminary drafts and/or notes
24	CGS § 5-210(b)(17)	Educational records not subject to disclosure pursuant to 20 USC 1232g
25	n/a	Code not used
26	CGS § 12-15	Tax returns and return information
27	CGS § 5-210(b)(10)	Communications privileged by common law and/or general statutes
28	CGS § 5-17a	Photo/computerized image in connection with state issued identification
29	CGS § 5-210(b)(3)(d)	Information prejudicial to a prospective law enforcement action
30	Public Law 112-55	BATF Records

/// 18 | CONTENT REDACTED ///

The reports are available at <http://cspssandyhookreport.ct.gov>.





Early in our creative process, this theme of redaction came up over and over again. Just as the police used it to shield the viewer and protect the privacy of the victims, we thought we might use it to make our work, approaching the topic and yet not having to look at the whole awful thing all at once.

Many times the redaction manifested as a creative filtering process. One collaborator would come in with a story or composition. Another might apply some redaction to that piece, either through number patterns or in a more symbolic way.

The very first movement we perform in *A Gun Show* is a hand ballet which was originally a piece for snare drums. The drums were placed vertically, so that the wire snares on the bottom of the drum could be scraped on the side. Emily Johnson loved the look of this piece so much that she asked us to take the snare drums away, just to see what the hand motions would look like. Without the context of the drums, they were strange but effective.

Thus our entire show begins in silence with a redaction. In a way it is our tribute to these blank black pages, full of numbers and patterns but devoid of content.

Elsewhere, straightforward texts are redacted microcosmically, leaving them on the verge of incomprehensibility. During the climactic tam-tam piece near the end, Jason passes the cacophony of the tam-tam through pedals that mute the sound off and on, constantly redacting the chaos in a controlled fashion.

We originally even considered calling the show “content redacted,” but we felt that this itself was too much of a redaction of our real purpose, which was to explore gun culture. Also, it might confuse the subject with other pressing issues such as NSA surveillance.

/// CONTENT REDACTED | 19 ///





NARRATION

Early in the process of making this piece, we latched onto the idea of including a chorus. Initially we modeled their role after the choruses from the great Greek tragedies. We even resolved to read Aeschylus and to meet with an expert on Greek tragedy at Princeton University to examine how that might work.

In the end our chorus skewed away from providing direct commentary (a role we increasingly assigned to the overhead slides). They started more to represent the anonymous crowd, engaged in mourning, remembrance, and action.

During the development process we met with the late Tim Vasen, then a professor of drama at Princeton's Lewis Center for the Arts. We asked him to give us a layman's tour of how these ancient Greek dramas really worked, to see if there was anything that would help us. One of the themes he emphasized was that tragedy and comedy embodied distinctive roles.

In Ancient Athens, comedy was the genre wherein a playwright could address contemporary issues and even real living characters.





The deflative nature of comedy provided an escape valve, and it was actually considered a badge of honor for a statesmen or sponsor to be “roasted” in one of these plays. He was judged by the public on how graciously he accepted it.

Tragedy, on the other hand, confronted serious pathos, horror, and pity by telling stories of remote historical or mythical characters. The audience could experience some level of identification without being triggered to feel the events too closely.

I was struck by how much we still imitate the Greeks. Comedy and satire allow a performer like Steven Colbert to stand right next to a sitting president and mock his foibles.

We realized that this laid a kind of trap for us dramaturgically with *A Gun Show*. We were going to be neither funny nor remote in the way we tackled this subject. We had to find a way to make compelling art about this difficult and traumatizing subject without traumatizing the audience.

After meeting with Professor Vasen and deciding to read the *Oresteia* together, I sent the following email to my collaborators. At this moment, we were grappling with whether we had the collective courage to deal with this issue.

/// NARRATION | 21///





to: Eric Cha-Beach, Jason Treuting, Josh Quillen
from: Adam Sliwinski
re: Aeschylus

First of all, if you guys got the Penguin edition I sent along, it has a great essay with commentary. I recommend going back and forth between the text and the commentary, because - well it's Ancient Greek. The context is clearer.

At the outset, I thought "what could be more horrible than Newtown, how could we ever address that." But in the first long chorus, we find out that Agamemnon lured his daughter into her own murder by promising her a wedding and then having her killed in her wedding dress.

I thought about the talk we had at Princeton, about how tragedy was mythical while comedy was topical. I think that's something for us to consider, though I don't know how.

But I also thought "ok let's not be afraid." Unspeakably horrific acts are not a unique condition of our time, and I think that's why we feel drawn to tragedy. If we imagine Iphigenia's joy and anticipation turning into panic, fear, and the most unimaginable sense of betrayal, it does actually compare with the pain and sadness of Newtown, except that it's not real, so we can keep it at a distance after the play is over.

Aristotle believed that this catharsis was the benefit of tragedy: we could experience some echo of the tragic emotions while retreating to safety at the end.

I feel emboldened reading Aeschylus, because it's really only the tools that have changed. Madness, hate, and violence have not. In the end, we're trying to learn about these tools of death, but also about our inner nature. The Greeks show us a reflection that is not easy to stare at.

Also, the chorus gets a LOT of lines and important content.

-Adam





In the end, we decided that while we still had a performed chorus in certain parts of the show the silent slides in the corner of the screen would function as another “chorus” of sorts. In early workshops, we only had a few. Feedback from those audiences indicated that the slides were a lifeline, in that without sufficient contextualization we ran the constant risk of allowing the show to become unnecessarily opaque and vague.

Gradually, Eric and Ain started introducing new slides and examining how each piece of information might influence the audience’s experience of what they were seeing and hearing on stage.

Of course, each one accompanies a precise moment in the show. But taken together, they also provide a libretto for the overall experience. The voice they embody is very ambivalent and tentative, but still reliable.

A Gun Show was conceived of after many conversations following the Sandy Hook shootings.

And then many conversations about many issues that do and don’t clearly orbit gun issues.

The show’s original title was “Content Redacted”, which comes from information the public can’t receive through the Freedom of Information Act.

These hand movements were originally done on snare drums, but Emily took the snares away (i.e. she “redacted” them).

Those of us who made the show largely agree on questions of gun control.

When we started to go into detail, consensus





and clarity started to fracture.

When we tried to formulate that into text for this slide, we couldn't figure out what to say.

Some of these names are not victims of gun violence.

We're playing this piece on Russian sniper rifle parts. Bought online.

Here they are.



We lost the name of the website we bought the parts from, but there are tons online.

Like:

gunbroker.com
gunsamerica.com
grabagun.com

During research for this show we visited a gun





range in New Jersey.

The clothes we're wearing are the ones we wore to the gun range.

Not really the exact clothes, but something like this.

This mural was hanging in the classroom at

/// NARRATION | 25 ///





the gun range. -->

Actually, not exactly this one.

The real one looked like this.

They're both nice.

3 - 1 - 5 - 1 - 3

is the sequence of numbers that this piece is based on.

That comes from the number 31,513

That's the number of gun deaths in the US in 2010.

**19,308 Suicides
11,015 Homicides
600 Accidents**

Those 3 numbers don't actually add up to 31,513.

We don't know why they don't add up.





COUNTING

What were the children in Sandy Hook doing in their classrooms before hell descended upon them? There are accounts in the police reports from teachers who survived, saying that they made up games, gave drawing assignments...anything to distract the students from what was happening outside. Perhaps this is happening in classrooms all over the world in countries where war is a constant. Is this what children in grave danger have become accustomed to doing, every day?

The Newtown victims were in first grade, so they were 6 and 7 years old. Children at that age are taught the basics of language and numbers through rote repetition and memory games. Early in our creative process, Jason brought in several pieces that were reminiscent of these kinds of games. One of them focused on the common English vowels: A, E, I, O, U (we will leave “sometimes Y” out of things for the moment).

We spoke the vowels rhythmically, adding them in sequence while showing numbers on our fingers to correspond to how many vowels we were saying. This rhythmic game involved slightly altering the syllables so that they were easy to say fast:

A = Ah
E = Eee
I = Ehh
O = Oh
U = Ooo

Keeping that in mind, here's how the piece was constructed. Each vowel equals one beat, which is repeated while the hands show





how many syllables in a row are being said. The vowels are added one at a time, with a beat of rest in between each addition. The first vowel acts as a placeholder – similar to the “one” digit in the “tens” place – while the second vowel counts up. When the second vowel cycles through, the first vowel notches up to two vowels, and so on.

It might be easier to explain by showing the pattern:

A _ A _
 A _ A E _
 A _ A E I _
 A _ A E I O _
 A _ A E I O U _

AE _ A _
 AE _ A E _
 AE _ A E I _
 AE _ A E I O _
 AE _ A E I O U _

AEI _ A _
 AEI _ A E _
 AEI _ A E I _
 AEI _ A E I O _
 AEI _ A E I O U _
 AEIO _ A _
 AEIO _ A E _
 AEIO _ A E I _
 AEIO _ A E I O _
 AEIO _ A E I O U _

AEIOU _ A _
 AEIOU _ A E _
 AEIOU _ A E I _
 AEIOU _ A E I O _
 AEIOU _ A E I O U _





Meanwhile, with both hands up, the performer shows a number of fingers corresponding to the number of syllables said.

From here, the piece can be constructed in a number of ways. For instance, the additive processes might begin in different places for different performers, creating canons of shifting meters. Performers could count in opposite directions, converging and diverging symmetrically.

Although this piece was interesting to us, it didn't make it into *A Gun Show*. Remnants of it are left, though. Towards the beginning of the show, Emily first appears onstage during the most climatic moment of the opening drum music, showing this finger game high in the air during the thunderous percussion exchange.

At various points in the show, we task the chorus members with stepping back while they are not playing and distracting themselves with a similar counting game with their fingers. Staring down, occupied, they touch their fingers together and count, over and over again.

I have a stepson, born in 2005. In 2012, he was exactly the age of those children at Sandy Hook Elementary. The steady barrage of school shootings since Columbine had anesthetized me to the trauma of hearing about them. Something about this shooting broke through that barrier.

At that age, a parent spends every day guiding their child around common and insignificant dangers. The focus and care this requires is exhausting but rewarding. You anticipate issues as best you can, feeling a genuine sense of accomplishment in steering them through each stage of growth.

I imagined sending my child off to school, hoping merely that he wouldn't skin his knee or struggle with his math assignment. I could not conceive of the idea that someone would use an arsenal powerful enough to lay out half a police force against children. Even the Columbine killers followed some kind of (flawed and





wrongheaded and dangerous) narrative: the geeks taking their revenge against the cool kids. What could these young children possibly have done?

I shattered. A child dying in an accident or natural disaster doesn't scale against what you imagine those children saw, how incomprehensible it must have been to their eyes. I first heard about it in the car, and I had to pull over to the side of the road so that I could fall apart.

When my son is feeling anxious, his most frequent coping mechanism is to focus down into a video game on his Nintendo DS system. Some kind of repetitive task or controllable environment helps a child feel safer, gives them a sense of knowing what to do in an unsure moment. One of the teachers at Sandy Hook was in the library at the time, and knew this well. She immediately pulled out paper and crayons for the children to draw with.

At the time, my reaction seemed reasonable to me. It was a truly and uniquely horrific event. That night I saw on President Obama's face the same mixture of fear and engulfing sadness that I too felt. With four years of hindsight, I know see that part of my sadness lay identification with the circumstances. That school was in a neighborhood like mine, where citizens assume a default level of safety.

At this moment, children in Syria are experiencing this kind of a hell on a daily basis. History contains far longer periods of suffering. The story of the slaughter of the innocents from the Bible never conjured this kind of revulsion and pity when I heard it. I still don't feel unjustified in how much this event hurt me, but I am ashamed to realize that I don't suffer equally for all children who face such horrors.





SNARE

The snare drum is one of the fundamental instruments in western classical percussion training. There are three pillars in the standard percussion program: snare drum, mallet (keyboard) instruments, and timpani.

In some ways, timpani is the outlier, in that it is the most specific and least broadly applicable skill. Snare drum training can be thought of as containing the essential elements of playing rhythms with two sticks, which is the basis of most percussion playing. Keyboard instruments, because of their relationship to the piano keyboard, intersect with much of the melodic and harmonic foundation of western music. Timpani training is specifically an orchestral skill, but is crucial in developing a good ear for pitch.

The first instrument that a young percussionist learns on is a snare drum. Everything about being a “drummer” relates to it.

Jason wrote a lot of music for *A Gun Show* revolving around the snare drum. This is partially a nod to the symbolic history of the instrument as a military tool. Snare drums and their ancestors were used to signal troop movements, coordinate marching, and inspire courage. In colonial America, they also served more mundane functions in village life, calling citizens to town meetings.

/// SNARE | 31 ///





Handwritten note: *Handwritten note in a box, possibly 'S + P 4'*

"S + P 4" snare solo 32

Jason Treuting

Handwritten musical notation for measures 1-15. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. It features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped in pairs or fours. There are various annotations including 'S', 'P', and '4' above notes, and '1', '2', '3' below notes. A yellow highlight is present under a note in measure 10.

Handwritten musical notation for measures 16-23. Similar to the previous section, it features rhythmic patterns with handwritten annotations. A bracket labeled 'snare- 31513-31547' spans across measures 20-23.

Handwritten musical notation for measures 24-31. A long arrow points from the end of the previous section to the beginning of this section. The notation continues with rhythmic patterns and annotations.

Handwritten musical notation for measures 32-39. The notation concludes with a final rhythmic pattern and a double bar line.

||| 32 | SNARE |||





In many ways, the snare drum is the central metaphor for *A Gun Show*. Although not designed for direct violence, it played a role in facilitating conflict. But the modern percussionist hardly thinks of this at all when studying percussion. There is nothing inherent in the instrument that makes it violent.





The relationship of a musician to an instrument can be similar to that of a gun owner and gun. Setting aside the connotations about what the instrument is used for (yes, this is a huge thing to set aside), it is something that has feel, weight, action, response. The operator comes to know it intimately, obsessing over how it feels in the hands, or how it vibrates.

All of us in Sō Percussion are accustomed to this intimate, obsessive relationship with an object – but none of us have that relationship with guns. An instrument like the snare drum stands in for that other object in *A Gun Show*.

The traditional use of a snare drum was very direct and limited: loud playing on the top head according to a set of “rudiments,” or standard beating patterns. When Jason experimented with how he wanted to use the instrument in our show, he immediately explored ways to subvert this common function.

He created pieces where the instrument was flipped either upside down or sideways. Instead of beating out loud patterns, the percussionists scraped the bottom snares with fingers, tapped on the shell of the drum, and brushed the texture of the top head with fingernails. This way of playing the instrument would have made no sense to a traditional military drummer. It also reframes the sound and sense of the drum.

At the beginning of the show, we present a juxtaposition: the four members of So silently perform what was originally one of these sideways snare drum pieces, for which Emily redacted the instruments completely, leaving only the ghost of our playing motions. After a few minutes of this, the first sound in the show comes from the chorus playing actual snare drums, at first *niente*, but steadily building in intensity. This is the snare drum of war, and by the end of this first piece (composed by Eric), the volume is nearly deafening.





The shell of a drum is designed to resonate and amplify the vibrations from the head. The wire or gut snares buzz against the bottom head, creating the characteristic crackle of the snare drum. Throughout *A Gun Show*, we choose moments where the drums serve as resonating chambers for noise.



/// SNARE | 35 ///





BREATH

Breath is life, and the fundamental purpose of a gun is to take life. This is qualitatively what separates it from any other object that we might make facile comparisons to, such as a car. Gun rights advocates are quick to equivocate about the dangerous potential of cars, but the danger of driving a car is a resultant effect of its nature, not the sole purpose for which it was designed.

Throughout *A Gun Show*, we breathe. Sometimes, it accentuates a musical texture, performed closely into a microphone. Other times, we've tasked ourselves with difficult physical movements and feats of endurance, and heavy breathing is a natural result.

When we feel the oppressive sadness of loss, breathing deeply helps us restore balance. It reminds us that we're alive.





/// BREATH | 37 ///





ENDURANCE

We wanted to make sure that effort, exertion, and toil were present in the performance of this piece. The subject is so absolutely serious that facile and breezy virtuosity seemed out of place. Making work like this presents an acute challenge, because we needed to portray those exertions in somewhat of an artful way. That is, the experience shouldn't be a feat of endurance for the audience. This pulls us back toward the Greeks, who wanted the audience to feel the artistic weight of tragic events without being drawn into their own real time tragedy.

Endurance adopts multiple forms: physical, emotional, psychological, even political. Much of *A Gun Show* is about the crushing impact of gun culture on our own small lives.

One aspect of that impact is the question of how to cope, especially for those of us who choose not to arm ourselves. Undoubtedly, citizens who do arm themselves have plenty to cope with, but they've chosen their primary response already. Endurance is patience, peace, and strength. It means choosing those qualities over violent retaliation or paranoia. It sometimes feels fruitless in the near term.





In the first third of the show, Emily and Jason perform an enigmatic duet that involves incessantly jumping up and down. They jump in tandem, periodically reaching even higher together. This movement is extremely tiring for both of them, which is compounded by the fact that we perform *A Gun Show* on a raked (inclined) stage. Their breaths are audible as they pulse up and down.

/// ENDURANCE | 39 ///





We decided not to credit Emily as “choreographer” in this show, both because she is too important in non movement-oriented aspects of the show, and also because she is more of a creative facilitator than choreographer. During the development phase of the project, she and Jason would get together periodically to cultivate new ideas for this piece.

To start, they carved out improvisation sessions with a set time, usually ten minutes. In this case, the professional dancer (Emily), and the decidedly not professional (Jason) both improvised gestures and movements that grew out of a spontaneous response to the subject of the show.

At the end of ten minutes, they would reconvene to evaluate what each of them came up with. As a choreographer, Emily is always interested in the movements, gatherings, and gestures of ordinary people. Jumping up and down is natural – anybody can do it.

Much of Emily’s work explores the grey area of personal subjective experience. More and more, *A Gun Show* veered in that direction, as

we realized that the only things we could say for sure about this subject were personal and subjective.

Late in the show we have an entire piece that revolves around a single tam-tam. Josh holds the tam-tam while Emily scrapes and hits it. The rest of the ensemble manipulate guitar pedals which turn the sound on and off (redacting it). Originally, we thought of this piece as being a massive test of physical endurance for Josh. It still is, but originally we performed it for 30





minutes on a timer. It is virtually impossible to hold up something that heavy for that long. His exertion became part of the theatrical aesthetic of the piece.

The tam-tam piece is a vent for anger and confusion. It is one part of the show which audience members have told us doesn't seem evidently connected to the issue of guns. In terms of overt references this is true, especially compared to when we play on gun parts.

But much of *A Gun Show* is about the emotional residue of gun culture and violence. The noise, confusion, and exertion of this piece captures a certain impotent rage that we harbor.

Whether you've seen the performance or not, imagine the difference between hanging a gong on a stand to do all these things, versus a person having to hoist it up, changing positions periodically, grunting with effort. It's quite striking, and so we left that aspect in even after cutting the piece down in length.

Originally, the opening drum battery music – which goes on for quite awhile – was all performed deafeningly loud. This was aesthetically exciting, but in preview performances we found that it had a certain exhausting effect on the audience very early in the show. As I mentioned above, we came up against the need for illusion in theatrical work. On some level, our job as creators is to provide an aesthetic echo of the experience, not the actual experience itself.

/// ENDURANCE | 41///





Our audiences felt worn out inside of the first 15 minutes, and that's not necessarily what we wanted to do. So we changed that piece to start at a whisper, barely audible as it crept out of the silent hand ballet that opened the show. It then crescendos steadily, much like Maurice Ravel's Bolero. It reaches deafening levels, but does not sustain them for long. We decided that there could be other ways to portray endurance effectively.





THE BLUES

Several times throughout the show, our chorus sings the iconic blues chord progression (I, IV, I, V, IV, I). This is a nod to the fact that gun culture in America is inescapably tied to its history of oppression through enslavement. The weary hopefulness of Afro-American diaspora music has had a profound influence on us, although we try very hard to be respectful and not appropriative of that influence.

Here it's worth mentioning that the symbolism of the drum gets very richly complicated. I wrote above that percussion instruments were often invented to facilitate violence, which is true. But in America (and now really the world), those same instruments like the snare drum and cymbals are most closely associated with one of the great American instruments, the drumset. African-American musicians played a singularly important role in adapting these instruments from their purpose of violence to one of joy, expression, even ecstasy. To watch a drummer like Tony Williams, Philly Jo Jones, or Max Roach, one can only think of flow, creativity, and inspiration. Growing up as a drummer, we worshipped these black performers, and to be a percussionist in the USA is to be profoundly affected by this tradition.

We cannot ignore that two of the primary social movements of our time – gun control and “black lives matter” – are intimately intertwined. In our opinion, one of the frustrating blind spots of the gun issue is when white proponents of gun rights refuse to acknowledge that guns have been the primary tool of oppression against people of color. They reduce this thorny history to “guns don’t kill people,” as if there’s no significance whatsoever to the power that widespread gun usage exerts in social hierarchies.





When the chorus sings, they often gather. In fact, we tend to speak of the blues and gathering as one and the same in this show. There are many moments to gather, and the purpose is not always defined. Early in the show, after the frenetic violence of the initial drum piece, we all move towards the enigmatic stool on the upper left of the stage, where a metronome has been pulsing since the beginning. We lift our feet in two unison groups, in a sort of half-marching and half-meandering stationary step.





We can gather to mourn, to commune, to sing, to play, to remember...gathering makes us feel good and human amidst the weight of sadness that this subject evokes in us.

Over the four years of this piece's evolution, several current events played out in parallel to the gun issue in America. Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown - the relentless procession of men (and boys) of color being gunned down by police in American streets splashed all over the news.

While observing all of this, I wrote several verses where I tried to capture a bit of what I was feeling and thinking. For the most part, it was useful in helping me process my feelings, but the words were not particularly useful for the show. We tried some of them out in workshop rehearsals, and one stanza did seem to fit:

**“Sing when your voice feels faintest
Sing lullabies for their cold dead eyes
Sing of those mechanical precursors
For the instruments were souls and steel
Combine, bond, renew
See it true.”**

Actually, it was the first line that stuck. “Sing when your voice feels faintest.” I guess I was thinking of the blues, and of how the most soul-rending, blistering, joyful expressions I’d ever heard in music came from African-American voices like Mahalia Jackson. When I first heard her sing “His Eye is on the Sparrow,” I wondered how such music could emerge out of a history of so much violence and sadness. It seemed that she had an endless reserve of spiritual strength to sing those songs, and that their power worked in inverse proportion to the heaviness of sorrows that she felt.





I also frankly was afraid to make this show about this subject. I felt a sense of risk and a great potential for failure and misunderstanding in merely tackling it.

To some extent, that line was an admonishment to myself that my risk of artistic failure was a pale shadow of suffering compared to generations who had found the strength to make music with joy and abandon despite their circumstances.

It is the very moment when you feel yourself falter that your voice is needed the most in the world.

We end our show with a lone performer reciting this line. It encapsulates something that we all share: a faltering sense of futility mixed with hope that our small voices, when raised, will amount to something.





RIFLE PARTS

During the research phase of this project, a number of us visited a gun range in Hudson County, New Jersey (just a couple of miles from where I used to live in Weehawken) to take shooting lessons.

For some, like Jason, it was the first time we'd done anything like this. On our "gun stories" blog, (where we collected community reflections on gun culture) Jason relates his experience:

"After an hour of learning about how to hold the gun, how to load and unload it and how to shoot it, we went into the shooting gallery, which was really a concrete basement-like space that had lanes for multiple shooters. It felt a little like an underground indoor batting cage. We each chose our target. I couldn't bring myself to shoot at anything other than a bulls-eye.

They offered ones with perpetrators with dark skin or a turban climbing through the bulls-eye like the paper was the window to your house.

I was trying to approach it more like a sport. It turned out I wasn't very good at the sport. I think if I was at a rifle range, I would've had an easier time getting into a sporty frame of mind."







Josh was curious to find out how easy it would be to procure actual gun parts online. The answer was predictable: it is shockingly easy.

He ordered parts of a Russian sniper rifle, which it turns out is only restricted by one component, so that you technically cannot put a working rifle together from what you get in one order.

He wanted to repurpose the parts to see if they could be played as percussion instruments. This was familiar territory for us: finding ordinary objects and making them speak by hitting them.





Josh decided to make rhythms out of 1-7 syllable words, and to find words that related to guns by combing through the papers.

Here's the first draft of the score, without a reference yet for what the performer would be doing:

Individualism (7)	Classification (5)
Black (1)	Enthusiast (4)
Individualistic (7)	Fortunate (3)
Memorable (4)	Export (2)
Irresponsibility (7)	Geography (4)
(A)	(A)
Contest (2)	Continuation (5)
Time (1)	Eleven (3)
Forecast (2)	Self-preservation (5)
	One (1)
	You (1)
Ten Thousand Four Hundred Six (7)	Responsibility (6)
Indistinguishable (6)	Air (1)
Cafeteria (5)	Twenty-Seven (4)
One Hundred Thirty Four (6)	All (1)
Familiarity (6)	Demonstrator (4)
Car (1)	(E)
Five (1)	Art (1)
Her (1)	Combustible (4)

(D)	Lunatic (3)
Availability (6)	----
Testimony (4)	Prejudgment (3)
One Hundred Thirteen (5)	Guarantee (3)
Characterize (4)	Twenty-Eight (3)
Enthusiastic (5)	Drowning (2)
	Non-fiction (3)
Contest (2)	
Time (1)	Fifteen (2)
Forecast (2)	Picturesque (3)
	Duty (2)
Puritanism (5)	Thankful (2)
Authority (4)	Motherhood (3)
Sophisticated (5)	
Absolute (3)	(F#)
Historic (3)	Rigid (2)
(F#)	Limit (2)
Car (1)	Tip (1)
Five (1)	Global (2)
Her (1)	Snitch (1)





He arrayed 7 gun components on a table, and started playing the number of letters in each word as a rhythm within one beat corresponding to that number. So 1 would equal one pulse, 2 would have two notes per pulse, etc.

Here is what the next iteration of the score looked like after figuring this out:

<p>7 1 7 7 4 R (1) (A) ----- (Reset) - L (2) (A) 1 R - (2) (END) (A) ----- (Reset) - - L - - (7) 6 - - - L (5) R - - - - (6) ----- (Reset) 1 1 1 (Reset/REST) (REST) (REST—canon only) (REST—canon only) - - L - - (6) (LEFT) (E) - R - (4) R - - - (5) - - R (4) 5 ----- (Reset) - L (2) (D) 1 R - (2)</p>	<p>R - - - (5) - - - (4) L - - - (5) 3 L - - (3) ----- ----- (Reset) 1 1 1 (Reset/REST) (A) (REST) (REST—canon only) (REST—canon only) 5 (RIGHT) (A) - R - - (4) - - L (3) R - (2) (A) - - - (4) ----- (Reset) 1 4 R (1) 3 L (1) ----- (Reset) R - - (3) (E) 3 3 - R (2) 3 ----- (Reset)</p>	<p>2 3 2 - R (2) L R - (3) (Reset/REST) (REST) (REST—canon only) (REST—canon only) 5 (LEFT) (A) 3 R - - - (5) 1 R (1) ----- (Reset) - - - L (6) 1 - - R - (4) 1 4 ----- (Reset) R - (2) (E) R - (2) 1 2 1 ----- (Reset) FORM Intro A B Intro ½ start A (play form) ½ start B (play form) A (first four in unison) Split off to intro loop: A-1st cell only (END)</p>
---	--	--

/// RIFLE PARTS | 51 ///





Josh subjected the musical process to various twists and turns at this point, adding little bell notes on crotales, sequencing us in different canonical relationships, etc.

This is our version of “beating their swords into plowshares.”

Could the components of a gun have a purpose other than killing?





PLACES

In several key moments during the show, one of us moves to the back of the stage, where an iPhone is waiting with a microphone. We pick up the microphone, glance at a notepad with a few addresses scribbled on it, and refresh the web browser.

The website on the browser is www.gunviolencearchive.org, which compiles the latest statistics about gun incidents in the USA. The frequency of such incidents is absolutely numbing.

There are places we associated indelibly with gun violence: Columbine, Newtown, Aurora, and so many others. But even more frequent, though not as vivid and dramatic, are Knoxville, Chicago, Indianapolis, or Los Angeles. We can't bear to confront the fact that America is a country of near-constant daily gun usage.

While writing this chapter, we pulled up the last 72 hours of reported incidents on gunviolence.org.

What is found here, even for such a short period of time, was staggering. It is also important to note that these data do not include suicides, which account for 2/3 of yearly gun related deaths.

The following data are a random sample of incidents of gun violence in the US on any given day. We've included approximately 48 hours of incident reports - for the full 72 hours we ran the numbers on, the volume nearly doubles.

You are welcome to run numbers of your own for today or the date of your choice. The site is for public use.





Source: gunviolencearchive.org

Databased referenced: 11:30am, Thursday, November 3rd, 2016

Incident Date

State

City Or County

Address

Killed

Injured

3-Nov-16

Mississippi

Biloxi

Rodenberg Ave.

0

3

3-Nov-16

Ohio

Hamilton

3100 block of Oregonia Road

1

0

2-Nov-16

Virginia

Hampton

1900 Block of Cunningham Drive

0

0

2-Nov-16

Utah

West Jordan

6761 South Redwood Road

1

0

2-Nov-16

Tennessee

Knoxville

4301 Tomlinson Street

0

1





2-Nov-16
 Indiana
 Indianapolis
 1200 North Girls School Road
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Alabama
 Gadsden (Glencoe)
 307 Aderholt Street
 2
 0

2-Nov-16
 South Carolina
 Columbia
 300 Block of May Oak Road
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Georgia
 Warner Robins
 300 Carolina Avenue
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Pennsylvania
 Spring Grove
 N/A
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Memphis
 2700 block of Deadrick
 0
 1

/// PLACES | 55 ///





2-Nov-16
 South Carolina
 Anderson
 653 SC 28 B
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Washington
 Yakima
 800 block of North Second Street
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Missouri
 Kansas City
 Meyer and Prospect
 1
 0

2-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Fairborn (Beavercreek)
 N/A
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Pennsylvania
 Philadelphia
 E Lycoming Street
 1
 0

2-Nov-16
 Texas
 Dallas
 1200 block of Aspermont Avenue
 0
 1

/// 56 | PLACES ///





2-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Springfield
 140 W. Lenox Ave
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Georgia
 Valdosta (Remerton)
 Melody Lane
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 1200 block of West 22nd Street
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 Century 21 Drive
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 2000 West 26th Street
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 4200 West Moncrief Road
 0
 1

/// PLACES | 57 ///





2-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 Southside Boulevard and Beach Boulevard
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 9800 Arnold Road
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Florida
 Miami (Kendall)
 SW 200th Street and SW 157th Avenue
 2
 2

2-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 5100 block of West West End
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 1500 block of South Komensky
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 300 block of South Whipple
 0
 1

/// 58 | PLACES ///





2-Nov-16
 Iowa
 Des Moines
 Merle Hay & Sheridan
 2
 0

2-Nov-16
 New York
 Bronx
 400 block of East 154th Street
 1
 0

2-Nov-16
 New York
 Bronx
 400 East 180th Street
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Kentucky
 Louisville
 Fordhaven Road
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 California
 Los Angeles (county)
 N/A
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 California
 Fresno
 3187 Borth Parkway Drive
 1
 0

/// PLACES | 59 ///





2-Nov-16
 Georgia
 Atlanta (College Park)
 5400 block of Old National Highway
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Nebraska
 Lincoln
 2700 block of Laredo Drive
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Colorado
 Grand Junction
 F 1/4 Road and Temple Way
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Texas
 Fort Worth
 3800 block of Ryan Avenue
 2
 0

2-Nov-16
 Kentucky
 Lexington
 1111 Centre Parkway
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Maryland
 Baltimore
 2700 block of Saint Paul Street
 0
 1

/// 60 | PLACES ///





2-Nov-16
 Maryland
 Baltimore
 900 block of North Calhoun Street
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Louisiana
 Houma
 1367 LA-182
 1
 0

2-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Clarksville
 800 block of Peachers Mill Road
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Alabama
 Mobile
 O'Connor Street
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Mississippi
 Meridian
 Old Highway 45 North
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Mississippi
 Lee (county)
 Interstate 22
 0
 1

/// PLACES | 61///





2-Nov-16
 Mississippi
 Jackson
 329 Bell Street
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Indiana
 Fort Wayne
 901 Forest Avenue
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Louisiana
 New Orleans
 2400 block of St. Roch Avenue
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Indiana
 Indianapolis
 21st and Arlington
 0
 0

2-Nov-16
 Texas
 San Antonio
 2400 block of Potosi Street
 0
 2

2-Nov-16
 Louisiana
 New Orleans
 St. Bernard Avenue and North Claiborne Avenue
 0
 1

62 | PLACES





2-Nov-16
Louisiana
Shreveport
4100 block of Pines Road
0
1

2-Nov-16
Ohio
Cincinnati
1500 block of Vine
0
1

2-Nov-16
Alabama
Lanett
800 block of South 13th Street
0
1

2-Nov-16
Alabama
Tuscaloosa
400 block of 29th Place
0
0

2-Nov-16
Utah
Carbon (county)
N/A
2
0

2-Nov-16
Maryland
Capitol Heights
4100 block of Byers St.
1
0

/// PLACES | 63 ///





2-Nov-16
 New York
 Schenectady
 400 block of Shannon Street
 0
 2

2-Nov-16
 Nevada
 Las Vegas
 1825 Lewis Avenue
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Missouri
 Saint Louis
 1900 block of Winnebago
 1
 0

2-Nov-16
 Washington
 Seattle (Shoreline)
 300 Block of NE 151st Street
 0
 2

2-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Cleveland
 East 136th Street and Harvard Avenue
 0
 1

2-Nov-16
 Washington
 Seattle
 1400 Block of Rainier Avenue South
 1
 0

64 | PLACES





2-Nov-16
 Virginia
 Newport News
 800 block of 80th Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Washington
 Lakewood
 10600 Block of Douglas Drive SW
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Vermont
 Bennington
 South Branch Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Utah
 Salt Lake City
 1000 North Star Crest Drive
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Centerville
 1 Pine Tree Village
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Pennsylvania
 Pottstown
 47 King Street
 0
 1

/// PLACES | 65 ///





1-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Springfield
 100 block of Race Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Columbus
 5600 block of Beechcroft Road
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Texas
 San Antonio
 6600 block of Monterey Street
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Pennsylvania
 Philadelphia
 3100 South Front Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 South Carolina
 Beaufort
 Duke Street and Church Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Texas
 San Antonio
 6600 block of Monterey Street
 0
 1

66 | PLACES





1-Nov-16
 Georgia
 Union City
 4050 Morgan Road
 1
 1

1-Nov-16
 Oklahoma
 Enid
 1501 S 2nd
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Georgia
 Atlanta
 2261 Cascade Road
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Georgia
 Atlanta
 200 block of Alison Court
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Alabama
 Birmingham
 7000 block of 4th Avenue South
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Memphis
 2100 block of Kilarney Avenue
 0
 1

/// PLACES | 67 ///





1-Nov-16
 Indiana
 Indianapolis (Lawrence)
 7013 E 56th St
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Virginia
 Norfolk
 W. Ocean View Avenue
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Columbus
 4600 block of Lakehurst Court
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Cincinnati
 Central Avenue and Findlay
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 North Carolina
 Charlotte
 Mallard Creek Church Road
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Missouri
 Saint Louis
 4100 block of Taft
 2
 0





1-Nov-16
 South Carolina
 Greenville
 Pinefield Drive
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 New York
 Buffalo
 1000 Block of Lovejoy
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 North Carolina
 Greensboro
 3600 Block of Belmont St
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Nebraska
 Omaha
 5529 S 30th Street
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 New York
 Brooklyn
 1109 Manhattan Avenue
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Pennsylvania
 Allentown
 1st block of North 16th Street
 0
 0

/// PLACES | 69 ///



1-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Cincinnati (Bond Hill)
 Dawn Road and Reading
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Nevada
 Carson City
 505 South Roop Street
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Pensacola
 200 block of Ariola Avenue
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Colorado
 Canon City
 Sherman Avenue and Grand Avenue
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 2900 block of West 12th Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Palm Bay
 Palm Bay Road and Bass Pro Drive
 0
 1

/// 70 | PLACES ///





1-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Cleveland
 3266 W 117th St
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 2900 Justina Road
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 8400 118th Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 1700 Lansdowne Drive
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 1700 Hodges Road
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 6400 Buffalo Avenue
 0
 0

/// PLACES | 71///





1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Jacksonville
 1900 North Edgewood Avenue
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 West Palm Beach
 7700 block of Arbor Crest Way
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Wellington
 8400 block of St Johns Court
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Boynton Beach
 1900 block of North Seacrest Boulevard
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Boynton Beach
 100 block of West Ocean Avenue
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 South Carolina
 Greenville
 Railroad and Center Streets
 0
 1





1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Fort Lauderdale (Oakland Park)
 345 Northeast 56th Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Boca Raton
 1300 block of North Dixie Highway
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Kissimmee
 N/A
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 New Hampshire
 Derry
 10 Block of Pinkerton Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Miami
 600 Northwest 10th Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago (Roseland)
 600 block of West 107th Street
 0
 1

/// PLACES | 73 ///





1-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Memphis
 5200 block of Zodiac Rd
 1
 5

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 East Saint Louis
 St. Clair Avenue and 11th Street
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 8600 block of South Morgan
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 Mississippi
 Jackson
 4540 Manhattan Rd.
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Kissimmee (Poinciana)
 600 block of Royalty Court
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 4500 block of South Wood Street
 0
 1





1-Nov-16
 Rhode Island
 Providence
 88 Althea Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 600 block of North Ridgeway Avenue
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 7100 block of South State Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 1000 block of East 93rd Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 4100 block of West 19th Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago (Englewood)
 6700 block of South Wolcott
 1
 0

/// PLACES | 75 ///





1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 1000 block of North Homan
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Kentucky
 Glasgow
 100 Embark Ct
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 0 block of North Wood
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 North Carolina
 Charlotte
 Sirius Lane
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 8000 block of South Muskegon
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Michigan
 Detroit
 Cambridge and Steel
 0
 0

/// 76 | PLACES ///





1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago
 5300 block of West Crystal
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 District of Columbia
 Washington
 1900 block of 14th Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 New York
 Brooklyn
 Lincoln Place and Eastern Parkway
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Massachusetts
 New Bedford
 24 Warren St
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 North Carolina
 Durham
 412 E. Pilot Street
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Massachusetts
 New Bedford
 88 Ruth St
 0
 0

/// PLACES | 77 ///





1-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Madison
 99 East Webster Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Alabama
 Flomaton
 Evelyn Street
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 New Jersey
 Trenton
 100 block of Hudson Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Louisiana
 New Orleans
 Marigny and Burgundy
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Georgia
 Atlanta
 2090 Dunwoody Club Dr # 125
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 California
 Sacramento
 Highway 99 and Mack Road
 0
 1





1-Nov-16
 Virginia
 Chesterfield
 2900 block of Galena Avenue
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Massachusetts
 Boston
 357 Seaver St
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 California
 Long Beach
 600 block of East 9th Street
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 California
 Pomona
 800 block of East La Verne
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 California
 Bakersfield
 Del Mar Drive
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Georgia
 Atlanta
 600 block of Smith Street
 1
 2

/// PLACES | 79 ///





1-Nov-16
 Georgia
 Riverdale
 Eagles Feather Lane
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Youngstown
 730 E Avondale Ave
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 California
 Fresno
 Van Ness and Shields
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Missouri
 Jefferson City
 820 Chestnut St
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Minnesota
 Minneapolis
 4300 block of 4th Avenue S
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Massachusetts
 Worcester
 29 Kelley Square
 0
 0

/// 80 | PLACES ///





1-Nov-16
 Washington
 Amboy
 12000 block of Northeast Grantham Road
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Washington
 Kent (Covington)
 25700 block of 160th Place Southeast
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 Kansas
 Wichita
 Kellogg and Woodlawn
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Urbana
 200 block of South Grove Street
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago (Roseland)
 11100 block of South Michigan Avenue
 1
 1

1-Nov-16
 Virginia
 Petersburg
 100 block of Perry Street
 0
 2

/// PLACES | 81 ///





1-Nov-16
 Iowa
 Davenport
 1300 Division St.
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Nashville
 31st Avenue North and Alameda Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Massachusetts
 Springfield
 Boland Way
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Texas
 Spring
 3100 block of Flaming Candle Drive
 1
 1

1-Nov-16
 Florida
 Tampa
 3200 block of East Deleuil Avenue
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 North Carolina
 Eden
 304 E. Arbor Lane
 0
 0





1-Nov-16
 Texas
 Marshall
 400 block of Spruce Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 North Carolina
 Winston Salem (Winston-Salem)
 Redbud Lane
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Alabama
 Birmingham
 19th Street Southwest and Jackson Street Southwest
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Alabama
 Birmingham
 20th Street Southwest and Francis Avenue
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Pennsylvania
 Trout Run
 T847 and Lake Road
 2
 0

1-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Nashville
 401 Walton Ln
 0
 0

/// PLACES | 83 ///





1-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Nashville
 Cathy Jo Circle
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Iowa
 Des Moines
 Merle Hay and Aurora Avenue
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 California
 Stockton
 3500 block of West Benjamin Holt Drive
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 Maryland
 Hyattsville (Lewisdale)
 6700 block of 20th Avenue
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 California
 Oakland
 2400 block of Magnolia Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Michigan
 Lansing
 4030 Hartford Road
 0
 1

84 | PLACES





1-Nov-16
 Connecticut
 Bridgeport
 Madison Avenue and Alice Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Michigan
 Grand Rapids
 Leonard Street Northwest and Turner Avenue
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 District of Columbia
 Washington
 700 block of Fairmont Street NW
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Centralia
 South Bond Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Michigan
 Detroit
 1400 block of Chalmers Street
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 New Jersey
 Newark
 Goodwin and Renner Avenues
 0
 0

/// PLACES | 85 ///





1-Nov-16
 Illinois
 Chicago (Englewood)
 1800 block of West 58th Street
 1
 1

1-Nov-16
 Louisiana
 Lafayette
 3700 block of La. 665
 0
 3

1-Nov-16
 Maryland
 Baltimore
 900 block of N. Eden St
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 Delaware
 Wilmington
 200 block of E. 24th St.
 1
 0

1-Nov-16
 District of Columbia
 Washington
 1300 block of Congress Street SE
 0
 2

1-Nov-16
 Iowa
 Cedar Rapids
 Coe Road NE
 0
 1





1-Nov-16
 District of Columbia
 Washington
 1565 Morris Road SE
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Kansas
 Wichita
 McCormick Street and Southwest Boulevard
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Humboldt
 North Avenue
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Arkansas
 Jonesboro
 2200 block of Clover Drive
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Tennessee
 Antioch
 Treetop Drive and Pebble Creek Drive
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Texas
 Corpus Christi
 Deer Creek
 0
 0

/// PLACES | 87 ///





1-Nov-16
 Alabama
 Birmingham
 Avenue Q and Terrace Q
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Alabama
 Birmingham
 4100 block of Pinson Valley Parkway
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Texas
 San Antonio
 Oakdale and Pin Oak Drive
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Ohio
 Hamilton (Lindenwald)
 N/A
 0
 1

1-Nov-16
 Pennsylvania
 Mcadoo (McAdoo)
 34 James Street
 0
 0

1-Nov-16
 Connecticut
 New Haven
 N/A
 0
 1



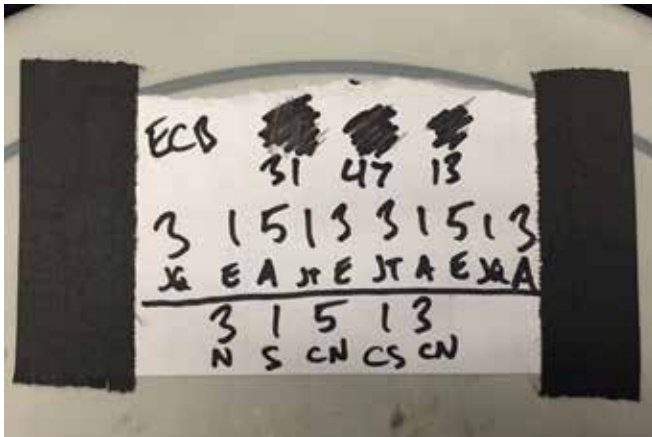


DATA

In most of Jason's snare drum pieces, the number 31513 is the constant generator of structure.

This number, as we indicate in the narrative slides, is a statistic we happened upon in our research for the total number of gun deaths in the United States in a particular year.

The number also happens to be pleasingly symmetrical, with its palindromic pattern adding up to 13, a very unintuitive grouping to feel in music. Much of the music we are all used to hearing and feeling works in square groups of 4, 8, or 16. A meter of 13 is disorienting -- a phrase you almost never get used to feeling without exerting great mental effort.



/// DATA | 89 ///





The way in which we've connected this numerical structure with the gun death statistics would never be evident to the listener, which is why we briefly explain it in the overhead slides. But the structure of the number itself throws the music permanently off kilter.

It never allows the listener to settle into a comfortable (and therefore comforting) groove.





The statistics about gun violence are so voluminous that they can easily be cherry picked to serve any gun-related agenda, for or against. While doing preliminary research, Eric Cha-Beach noticed that the saturation this creates has the effect of a kind of deluge of imagery and information. He tried earnestly to seek out data representing both sides of the issue. It quickly became apparent to him that if he only got his information from one side, for instance on social media, the way in which the information was presented and manipulated would inexorably tip his bias towards that viewpoint.

Data visualization is one of the most important current trends in how we consume information. The highly visual nature of online consumption makes it an increasingly effective tool in grabbing people's attention and swaying their perspective. Eric gathered dozens of graphics related to gun statistics. At the end of *A Gun Show*, a blistering montage of them whizzes past.

On the pro-gun side, some of the arguments are intentionally misleading, as anybody with rudimentary training in logic can see. My all-time favorite is this one below:

This graphic is put out by a website called "naturalnews.com." This might appear to be an ordinary website about holistic and natural health-related issues, possibly left-leaning. Actually, it's a right-wing conspiracy website, where the "natural" issues mostly have to do with government plots to poison people. One of the most enthusiastic endorsers of the website is the mega-successful conspiracy peddler Alex Jones of infowars.com.

The graphic attempts a rather bold feat: to create a context in which the appalling total number of gun deaths in a year seems insignificant next to the bold yellow statistic "deaths by the US medical system," which is intentionally vague.

The first obvious objection is "what do these things have to do with one another?" The answer of course is "absolutely nothing." But the graphic emphasis and the relative difference in size of the numbers is meant to instill a feeling that one is more significant and the other less.

/// DATA | 91 ///





What's more, as you look at the fine print you see that about half of the "deaths by the US medical system" statistic includes "bedsores, infection, malnutrition, unnecessary procedures, and surgery related deaths." The appears to indicate basically anybody who died in a hospital, which they misleadingly attribute as deaths that directly resulted from negligence or harm by the medical system.

These kinds of statistics only fuel the flames of false equivalency and the "both sides" fallacy that is rampant in our media landscape. If the entity giving out information is skilled enough at manipulating the conditions of which two sides to consider, they can create the impression that their chosen poles are valid.

The next graphic we use supports gun control, appealing to our sympathy for children. I am far more aligned with this viewpoint, and I don't see any logically issue with this statistic. But the graphic clearly represents an emotional appeal, pitting the avowed patriotism of those on the political right against our universal concern for childrens' health and safety.





The way we think about data in *A Gun Show* owes a debt of influence to the artist Luke Dubois, who uses data to create visceral work.



In the installation *Take a Bullet for This City*, Luke attempts to bash through the wall of primitive emotion and identification that separates us from statistics. He rigged an actual gun to go off in response to reported instances.

/// 93 ///





What follows is the description of his piece:

“In the middle ages, townspeople relied on the town crier to provide them with official pronouncements. “Three o’clock and all is well” was the original form of open data available to city-dwellers, marking time and, in the night, assuring them of safety in their streets.

In New Orleans, there have been, as of this time of writing (September, 2014), 2262 calls to 911 reporting a “Discharging Firearm” since January 1st. The bulk of these shootings occur at night, on weekends, and in the wee hours of the morning. In much of this city, this data tells us, though it may be three o’clock, all is not well, and hasn’t been for a very long time.

Take a Bullet for This City is a proof-of-concept for a piece that could serve New Orleans, or any community plagued by gun violence. A simple computer-driven mechanism pulls the trigger of a gun loaded with blanks in response to a shooting in the city, ejecting a spent cartridge into a vitrine that accumulates empty bullets. The noise and flash of the gun provides an alarm that is itself meant to alarm; the vitrine resembles a wishing well, only it represents wishes taken away, not granted. This piece is hard data in both senses of the word: it is based on facts; facts that are, by their very nature, intended to hurt us.

In the iteration created for *Guns in The Hands of Artists*, Jonathan Ferrara’s incredible group show timed to coincide with the third iteration of PROSPECT: New Orleans, a Walther PPK fires on a schedule based on the shootings reported by the public to the NOPD a week and twelve hours ago in time, commemorating, a week later, violence that is so common as to be quickly forgotten as individual occurrences. A visitor to the gallery at 10am on Sunday is hearing the shootings of 10pm the Saturday before. These time-shifted events are intended to alarm, marking time by sudden bursts of violent noise followed by the ever-rising tide of spent cartridges at the sculpture’s base. This piece could listen to any city, and it could run for years, and it belongs, perhaps, out-of-doors. The new town crier, but in reverse; all will be well only when this gun finally falls silent.”





Handwritten musical notation on lined paper:

♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

⊗	4	11	6	¹ ⊗	4	9	11	12
1/2	1	4	6	9	12	12	1/2	4
4	6	9	12	4	4	6	9	12
12	X	4	4	6	9	12	6	4
6	9	12	6					

Follow Jason - cymbal over snare/rod moments
 c/c 31513×5 - hit downer
 rim shots/echo - follow engine
 drum basket - 5x dms, 1x rns (1+2+1ans) 31513×3 w/ 4b
 [: @ 3 4 5 6 + @] Jim c/c (456) 1/2 51 rns 15 rns

/// DATA | 95 ///





SQUAW WOOD

For the first half of the show, we rely on Eric’s overhead slides to guide the audience through our process. In the second, the emphasis shifts to the performers onstage. “Squaw Wood” is a combination, partially redacted and edited, of stories by Josh and Emily. Emily’s Yupik ancestry is an important part of her personal and professional identity, and so the appearance of the problematic word “squaw” in Josh’s story is a knowing and intentional wordplay between the two of them.

As the six of us (including Ain Gordon, the director) sifted through our memories of guns, Josh and Emily recognized that their rural upbringing brought them in closer proximity to gun culture than the rest of us. “Gun culture,” of course, is not a monolithic thing. It is part of a broader culture, and we are fascinated by exploring the outlying issues it affects.

The two stories have their own cohesion and linear sense, even despite some jumping around. In the performance, they are redacted and combined into one story that is one step further removed from the original. Josh and Emily read them in unison, further confusing the issue of which story belongs to whom.

Below is a page of Josh’s performance script for “Squaw Wood.” The combined story has a dreamy and ominous sense, heightened by a highly stylized performance in which the word “shooting” is elongated during the “shhh” sound, almost to the point of breathlessness (marked in green), and certain lines are performed in a pitched sing-song style (marked in blue).

\\ \\ 96 | SQUAW WOOD \\ \\





Squaw Wood

(E) I never remember things I'm supposed to remember.

I felt guilty for gathering that wood. Being sworn to secrecy made us feel important. We looked at him and swore an oath to never tell anyone what we had just seen and heard.

I'm thinking of a pattern. The thing, that thing that happens again and again. Remember, forget, remember, forget.

They gathered us in a circle in our uniforms with a good pair of running shoes. (JQ) (A solemn heaviness to the whole evening and a feeling of respect and nostalgia, coupled with the sudden awareness that the world might be a slightly different place now.) **It's like looking into her face**...you don't recognize her because the key parts of what made her who she was weren't there anymore.

The things I never remember: names.

(E) (I never remember names.)

Standing in a long line with the friends I spent all week tying knots, (JQ) shooting guns, and making black powder bombs with, we walked through the woods for about 30 minutes until we had to squint to see what was just ahead of us. Our masters, the men who guided us through what it meant to be men, we're **trustworthy, loyal, helpful/friendly, courteous, kind/obedient, cheerful/thrifty, brave/clean, and reverent**. These were guys like my dad/...and Howdy, Bob and Dan. Good people who we knew we could trust because they smoked pipes and whittled.

Today I remembered

(E) shooting guns in the woods. A rifle.

They led us out there and sat us down in a little clearing in front of a fire pit. A gentleman I didn't recognize stood and told us to stare into the fire pit and sit on the ground without saying a word. (JQ) (No fire burning.)

Rifle practice/Not really practice/I was too little to practice. We were helping my dad... "set his sights" (LEAN OUT) but I don't know if that's what it's called: "setting sights."

For an hour or so until it was dark, we sat. There was only peace in the air, and the sounds of the woods, and I was with my friends. (JQ) (One of my last moments of calm.)

I remember (E) shooting bullets at empty cans. **Four or five cans lined up. Probably on a log, definitely in the woods. Probably on a log, definitely in the woods. Four or five cans lined up. Probably on a log, definitely in the woods.** I don't remember if I ever hit one. **Probably not/I was pretty small.** My brothers were even smaller... But we were all there, "helping". Kind of helping - but not really helping (LONG PAUSE—wait for bells to come back in, Emily lead)

/// SQUAW WOOD | 97 ///





We arrived at a clearing and were seated on the ground in a tight group. And *as quickly* as/they arrived, they disappeared without a trace. Again, we were left alone as a group *after* after about 15 (sign I and ") minutes our breathing settled and we could hear someone taking slow steps toward us in the woods. *It was a man dressed as a chief - the full deal chief. It was a man dressed as a chief - the full deal chief.* He spoke slowly and calmly and never raised his voice, and he didn't speak long. [PAUSE]

That day, in rehearsal, a boat went by. A huge boat with many sails, and I think I was imagining a *tree* at the time, *because of the storm.*

we were *allowed to be there.*

All day, pictures of fallen down *trees* sent to me from home, with huge *roots*, just laying up and over the concrete, dripping dirt. *It took an hour and a half for our neighbor to drive home. Trees were all over the streets.*

I was sitting with Emily and Stephanie *west* *little cloud* *I never know* which to say - THE president or OUR president - when he read the names of the kids who were *killed* *(batman)*

When I get home it is going to look *strange* - Holes and space and nothing. Where the trees used to be.

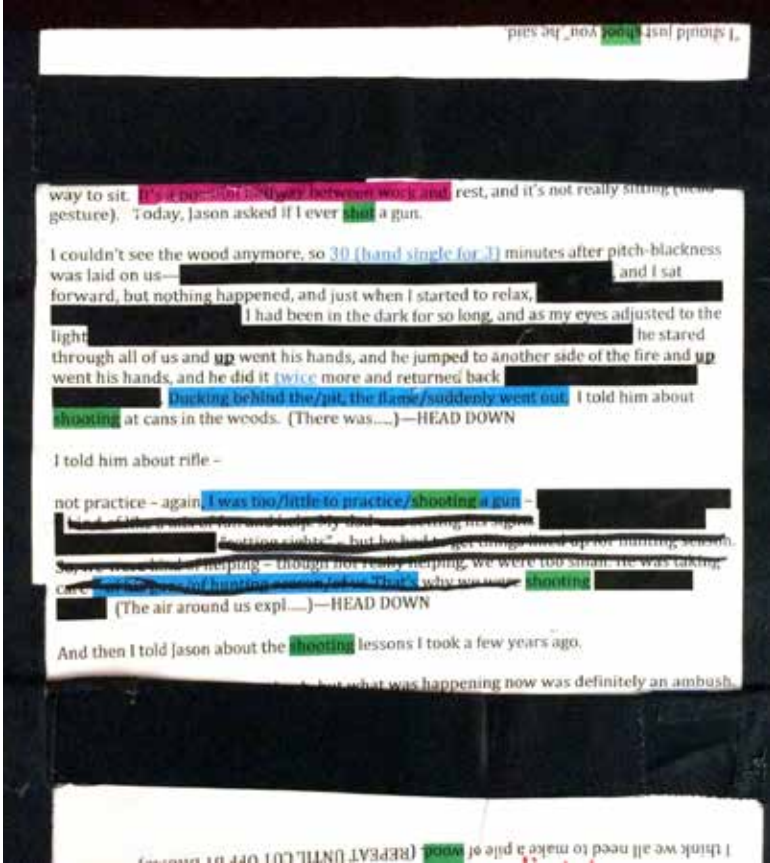
I'm imagining our neighbors *not* looking at the trees, asking for help, *not* even knowing *how to ask for help*, but trying.. *to ask for help.*

"And I thank you." You're supposed to clean the stone with the oil from the skin on your nose. *deep breathe*

ll: I think we all need to make a pile of *wood* :ll. A huge pile of wood... *same* We can sit at the fire *and remember* *same*

(whisper audibly) The smallest gun was the hardest to shoot. It was the last one. It was silver and tiny, much tinier than my hand. And my body shook when I looked at it. I can't remember if I pulled the trigger. And my body shook when I looked at it. It was the last one. It was silver and tiny, much tinier than my hand. The smallest gun was the hardest to shoot. It was the last one. *small*

||| 98 | SQUAW WOOD |||





We were too small. He was taking care - of his guns/of hunting season/of us. That's why we were, there. [E] shooting at cans in the woods. My dad had to hold us, me and my brothers, he had to hold us up so that when we pulled the trigger on the rifle the [A]m up, lean left)...I'm not sure if it's called *reverb*, but so that it wouldn't throw us down.

When brought to a small clearing by men you love, and told by a stranger to stare at a fire pit with no fire, you tend to trust the process. We all sat for an hour, staring at a pile of rocks.

I remember: [E] shooting at cans in the woods, the cans lined up on a log, my dad showing us how to aim, him holding us up. And I'm glad we did that. I'm glad I kind of knew, sort of knew, just kind of knew the basics, of how to hold a gun/And a gun/Holding a gun/Holding a gun to my hands/Someone holding a gun I remember/someone holding a gun.

We were required, in order to get into camp, to bring 1 square foot of what was called "squaw wood." Squaw wood is a grey, dried up piece of wood that burns quickly and is good for starting fires. I always took pride in my ability to get a perfect square foot of wood. The squaw wood had 2 porcupines, the first of which, [cue] [IQ] we were all about to find out.





Accompanying this text is music composed by Eric, in which the chorus and Eric play extremely quiet unison figures on the outlying drums and a small set of bells.

It is illuminating to read the original stories, before they were combined:

Emily

I never remember things I'm supposed to remember
 I'm thinking of a pattern
 The thing that thing that happens again and again
 remember forget remember forget
 the things I never remember
 names
 I never remember names

today I remembered shooting guns in the woods
 a rifle
 rifle practice not really practice
 I was too little to practice
 we were helping my dad set his sights.
 But I don't know if that's what it's called - setting sights
 I remember shooting bullets at empty cans
 four or five cans lined up
 probably on a log definitely in the woods
 I don't remember if I ever hit one
 probably not
 I was pretty small
 my brothers were even smaller
 but we were all there helping
 kind of helping
 but not really helping
 we were too small
 he was taking care of his guns
 of hunting season
 of us
 that's why we were there

/// SQUAW WOOD | 101 ///





shooting at cans in the woods
my dad had to hold us
me and my brothers
he had to hold us up so that
when we pulled the trigger on the rifle
the - I'm not sure if it's called reverb -
but, so that it wouldn't throw us down
I remember shooting at cans in the woods
the cans lined up on the log
my dad showing us how to aim
him holding us up
and I'm glad we did that
I'm glad I kind of knew
sort of knew
just kind of knew
the basics of how to hold a gun
and a gun
holding a gun
holding a gun
in my hands
someone holding a gun

I remember someone
holding a gun
and that made me remember
the time someone said they wanted to shoot me
I forgot about that
until i remembered
and then I forgot again
not really forgot
you can't forget someone saying
I should just shoot you

today, Jason asked if I ever shot a gun
I told him about shooting at cans in the woods
I told him about rifle not practice
again i was too little to practice
shooting a gun - i think
it was more for fun
kind of like a mix of fun and help my dad





was setting his sights
I'm still not sure that's what it's called
setting sights
but he had to get things lined up for hunting season
so we were kind of helping
though not really helping we were too small
he was taking care of his guns
of hunting season
of us
that's why we were shooting
at cans in the woods

and then I told Jason
about the shooting lessons
I took a few years ago
and then i remembered
for the first time in a long time
that other memory
about someone telling me they wanted to shoot me
I should just shoot you he said

today in rehearsal a boat went by
a huge boat with many many sails
I think I was imagining a tree at the time
I know why
because of the storm
all day
pictures of fallen down trees
sent to me from home
huge roots just laying up and
over the concrete
dripping dirt
James said it took an hour and a half
for our neighbor to drive home
because the trees were all over the streets
I didn't really understand until I saw
the pictures

I was sitting with Josh and Stephanie
when the president -

/// SQUAW WOOD | 103 ///





our president -
i never know which to say
THE president or
OUR president
when he read the names of the
kids who were killed
when i get home
it is going to look so strange
holes and space and nothing
where the trees used to be

I'm sad every time a tree falls
is cut
dies
and so many at once
is too difficult to imagine
I'm imagining our neighbors
out in the street
looking at the trees
asking for help
or not even knowing how to ask for help
but trying
trying to ask for help

James said
Brenda was really scared
she gets sad at many things
I imagine her sadness now too
I do think we will need to make a pile of wood
a huge pile of wood
to burn
we can sit at the fire and remember
each name
the smallest gun was the hardest to shoot
it was the last one
it was silver
and tiny
much tinier than my hand
and my body shook when I looked at it
I can't remember if I pulled the trigger





Josh:

I felt guilty for gathering that wood. Being sworn to secrecy made us feel important. We looked at him and swore an oath to never tell anyone what we had just seen and heard.

They gathered us in a circle in our uniforms with a good pair of running shoes. (A solemn heaviness to the whole evening and a feeling of respect and nostalgia, coupled with the sudden awareness that the world might be a slightly different place now.) It's like looking into her face...you don't recognize her because the key parts of what made her who she was weren't there anymore.

Standing in a long line with the friends I spent all week tying knots, shooting guns, and making black powder bombs with, we walked through the woods for about 30 minutes until we had to squint to see what was just ahead of us. Our masters, the men who guided us through what it meant to be men, we're trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. These were guys like my dad, and Howdy, Bob and Dan. Good people who we knew we could trust because they smoked pipes and whittled.

They led us out there and sat us down in a little clearing in front of a fire pit. A gentleman I didn't recognize stood and told us to stare into the fire pit and sit on the ground without saying a word. (No fire burning.)

For an hour or so until it was dark, we sat. There was only peace in the air, and the sounds of the woods, and I was with my friends. (One of my last moments of calm.)

When brought to a small clearing by men you love, and told by a stranger to stare at a fire pit with no fire, you tend to trust the process. We all sat for an hour, staring at a pile of rocks.

We were required, in order to get into camp, to bring 1 square foot of what was called "squaw wood." Squaw wood is a grey, dried up piece of wood that burns quickly and is good for starting





fires. I always took pride in my ability to get a perfect square foot of wood. The squaw wood had 2 purposes, the first of which, we were all about to find out.

Sitting in this fire pit was a bundle of this wood. I spent the entirety of the hour doing one of two things--shifting slightly to keep my legs from falling asleep, and trying to determine if the wood in the fire was MY wood. Sitting this way is a peaceful and earnest way to sit. It's a position halfway between work and rest. It's not really sitting. You have to be constantly aware of your legs and prevent them from falling asleep. I don't sit "Indian-style" if I don't have to.

I couldn't see the wood anymore. 30 minutes after pitch-blackness was laid on us—that's when we saw it. The bundle of wood shifted slightly, and I sat forward, but nothing happened. Just when I started to relax, the fire blossomed. It was bright orange, and made my eyes hurt since I had been staring into darkness for so long. As my eyes adjusted to the light, a muddy Indian jumped up from behind the pit, dressed like an _____. He stared, with Charles Manson-eyes, through all of us and up went his hands. (The fire followed him.) He jumped to the side of the fire, raised his hands again. (The fire followed.) He did it twice more and returned back staring at us with the final burst of flame. Ducking behind the pit, the flame suddenly went out.

(There was nothing again)

The air around us exploded.

I've never experienced a life and death type of ambush, but what was happening now was definitely an ambush. Flares popped like the guns we had been shooting all week and flames shot out. The men holding them were wearing next to nothing and covered in mud. I felt an intense pressure on my right shoulder and I looked over and saw a hand pulling me to my feet. They seemed to be all around us as they pushed us into a tight single-file line. We were pushed in a way that indicated we were supposed to run.

We ran all night, and then abruptly stopped. (This was the scar-





iest part.) The _____ would race right up to you and stare right in your face and breathe heavily into your eyes. (This happened several times.) Their breath smelled like they had been eating play-dough. This smell wasn't a new one. He was the guy who had been teaching me how to make a rope swing earlier in the week. I never confirmed it, but I can only assume that real _____ wouldn't kidnap us and run us through the wood and breathe on us for no reason.

We arrived at a clearing and were seated on the ground in a tight group. And as quickly as they arrived, they disappeared without a trace. Again, we were left alone as a group to stare at a fire. After about 15 minutes our breathing settled and we could hear someone taking slow steps toward us in the woods. It was a man dressed as a chief--the full deal chief. He spoke slowly and calmly and never raised his voice, and he didn't speak long.

He told us that everything we had seen and heard this night was to remain a secret. We were part of an elite group of people who were privileged to receive this ceremony.

His short monologue:

"We are growing into men of maturity. As young boys we rely on each other to get through tough times. We held each other's hands and played together. Now you are mature and no longer need to do that. Only the immature boy holds another boy's hand."

(long pause)

"A faggot is a stick or a bundle of sticks. You brought us this bundle of squaw wood at the beginning of the week. And I thank you."

We were then invited up one at a time and were given what's called a "pipestone".

It's a type of stone found in Ohio. It symbolized the 5 years we had spent at camp running, swimming, doing community service, learning survival skills and playing cards and cutting down trees.





There was also a considerable amount of time spent Troop 90 blowing things up with black powder. We would steal our scout-master's chewing tobacco can and fill it with the black powder Chris would steal from his dad's gun cabinet. We would light it and run.

One law that never was formally taught to us was that in order to do good, you had to know how to do bad. You're supposed to clean the pipestone with the oil from the skin on your nose.

We were also handed a single stick from the bundles we had gathered.

Bringing us close to him one at a time as he breathed is wet-clay breathe on my cheek, he whispered:

“Place this faggot on the fire and speak of this to no one.”

Sometimes gathering wood is just gathering wood. For years I gathered the wood for that moment in the fifth year, and finally was told why. Placing a faggot on the fire was a simple gesture that meant something to the chief and the larger order of things, but to me, it didn't mean anything. I love those men I trusted, and my time with them, but at that moment, I stopped being one of them on paper. Being sworn to secrecy made me feel anointed in a disturbing way, but not knowing why robbed me of the self-important weight of that moment.

We could have just gathered wood and left it at that.



NOISE

“I believe that the use of noise to make music will continue and increase until we reach a music produced through the aid of electrical instruments which will make available for musical purposes any and all sounds that can be heard.”

John Cage: The Future of Music - Credo, 1937

Since Cage wrote these prophetic words, noise has become one of the fundamental tools of the percussionist's trade. In the musical sense “noise” has a somewhat more focused definition than in everyday life. It need not be “noisy” in an annoying or hectic way. In Cage's world, noise is simply the world of sound that occurs when we stop obsessing about the tones of the piano keyboard and open ourselves up to all the many sounds that exist in the world, or that can be produced by percussionists on ordinary objects like tin cans.

Sō Percussion is steeped in this kind of noise. We prefer not to think of it as the opposite of beauty, because many noisy sounds can be quite aesthetically compelling.

During the course of this project, we harnessed these sound resources to connect our tidy musical idea of noise with the more common association: noise as distraction, a barrier, a confusing sensory assault.

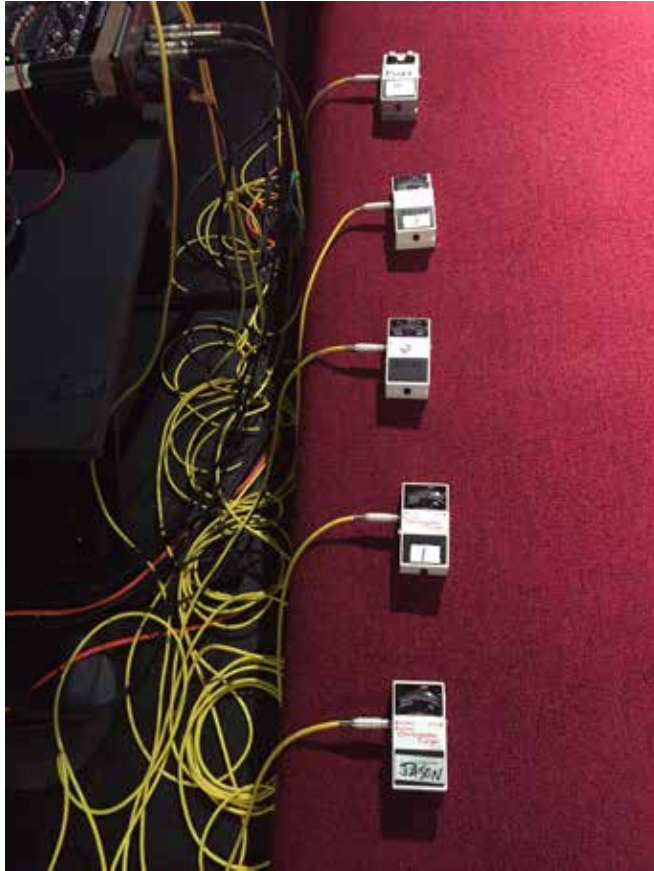
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Many aspects of the gun issue suggest noise. Guns, as industrial machines, are exceedingly loud and abrasive by nature. The flood of perspectives and statistics surrounding guns create a kind of white noise for anybody who wishes to make sense out of the issue. Finally, how do we process our anger and hopelessness? Making noise is a primitive but innately human way of expressing such raw feelings.





/// NOISE | 1111///





I don't think we deliberately set out to make noise a thematic part of our expressive vocabulary in *A Gun Show*. It simply exists in the basket of contemporary musical options.

As I solicited input from my colleagues about where this concept manifested in *A Gun Show*, we came to realize that it was EVERYWHERE:

Feedback - Many of the noisy moments in *A Gun Show* could have also stood alone as abstract experiments. Immediately after finishing our romp on the rifle parts, Jason launches into a transitional piece with tin cans. Instead of playing the cans as we would in a John Cage piece, he holds them close to a speaker and inserts a microphone inside the hollow container. This creates a signal feedback, normally an undesirable effect (unless you are Jimi Hendrix). Jason discovered that kind and size of can produced its own unique feedback tone, and he created a looping sequence of feedback from three cans.

Bowed Cymbals - Cymbals are wonderfully complex instruments. It is virtually impossible to draw exactly the same combination of tones and overtones out of them each time you bow the edge of the cymbal. Jason experimented with placing the cymbal partially on top of an upside-down snare drum. Depending on how much of the cymbal is on or off the head of the drum, different types of noisy tones result. He writes this into the climax of the snare drum piece in the middle of the show. The sounds are grating and barely controllable.

Tam tam - The largest-scale exploration of noise is during the penultimate piece in the show, the tam tam piece in which Josh holds the instrument aloft. The tam tam is fixed with 11 contact microphones and long cables spindling outwards down the stage. Members of Sō Percussion and the chorus feed these cables into guitar pedals that "gate" or shut the sound off and turn it back on.

Emily scrapes and hits the tam tam irregularly. The rest of us follow a regular pattern of turning her sound off and on. Jason composed this pattern starting with a sudoku puzzle. The methodical and determined nature of our pedal switching contrasts with the





abandonment of Emily's assault on the tam tam. We have collectively found this moment to be the most saturating and intense of the show.



Eric designed all of the video effects of *A Gun Show*. Earlier on, this is mostly channelled through the explanatory slides. At the end of the show, he has compiled a blistering montage of data visualizations, intentionally switching them more quickly than the viewer can understand what they are. The result is another kind of noise: a deluge of information without meaning or context. Sifting through it is an enormous and burdensome task.

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CONSPIRACY KOO HY DNAS

The Sandy Hook shootings, like many contemporary tragedies, are ripe for speculation by conspiracy theorists. Today's political climate is more charged than ever by misinformation. The internet has enabled these voices to find legions of followers, who amplify each other's paranoia.

In September 2012, soon before those events, the pop singer Ke\$ha released a song called "Die Young." It's a mediocre pop song about partying and bacchanalian abandonment. The official video for the song contains a number of images of pyramids and triangles, favorite symbols signifying "illuminati" conspiracies.

After Sandy Hook, a theory gained traction that Ke\$ha was mixed up in a conspiracy to predict and possibly stage the Sandy Hook murders. Proponents of the theory pointed to alleged symbols such as the "SH" in her name being focused at the center of the album cover. Conspiracy hunters tried slowing the song down and playing it backwards, finding a moment where they believed they could hear "sandy hook" as a secret code buried in the song.

Most people find these theories wacky and disturbing. Josh was fascinated by trying to understand what motivates people who, instead, find them viable -- why a sinister and far-fetched plot would appeal to them.

He brought a piece into rehearsal that sampled a chord progression from the song, slowed down and played backwards. Over it, he had us sing some of these words that he found circulating around the conspiracy:





KESHA SONG

The truth shall set you free...

Warning

This video contains
new and compelling

Event Upon

this

Justice Young by
Keshha Backwards you
can clearly hear

Let's begin

The truth shall set you free..

/// CONSPIRACY | 115 ///





Possibly the most heinous claim advanced in these speculations is that the children in Sandy Hook Elementary schools were “crisis actors,” staged to make the event look particularly dreadful to advance a hidden agenda such as gun control.

With “information” like this zooming around the internet, it is many times more difficult to have a reasonable dialogue about important issues. A conspiracy theory almost always has one flaw, a hypercompetent, massively organized nefarious controlling entity, often the government. As most people who have ever worked in government could attest, the level of collusion and absolute mission success that would be required to pull these feats off doesn't really exist.

On some level, our society is bewildering and complex enough to believe that we might not know the extent of what is going on behind the scenes. Edward Snowden showed many of us that the extent of NSA surveillance on normal citizens was indeed vast, more extensive than most of us would have imagined.

And so a dance ensues between suspicion and delusion. I believe that every conspiracy theorist's greatest fear is that horrific events like these are actually a combination of random, senseless collisions of circumstance. The illusion that somebody is in control and willing the events to happen, more matter how malevolent, is somehow more comforting to them than the possibility of true chaos.

This piece in the show eventually morphed into something different. After a few mid-process workshops of *A Gun Show*, we and our director felt that the show needed a stronger emotional catharsis at this point in the show.

Josh went back to the drawing board, but wanted to keep this conspiracy component in focus. He came back with an extraordinary montage: two female singers performing a slowed down and altered version of the “Tennessee Waltz,” reminiscent of the slowed down Ke\$ha chords, and the entire chorus performing drones on hand-cranked sirens. Josh slowly rolls on tuned almglocken, while explaining parts of the conspiracy theory.





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The effect is chilling and touching at the same time. Emily choreographed the siren players to walk a lugubrious pinwheel pattern around the middle of the stage. It is the closest we get in the show to elegy, recognizing that the pain and confusion of sudden, violent tragedy spirals out and affects people in different ways.

During an interview after a workshop performance, an audience member said she wasn't sure whether it was clear enough how we felt about this conspiracy, i.e. that we condemn it. The question took us aback, because it had never occurred to us that anybody would think we believed it.

In *A Gun Show*, we have been looking to find the cracks in human experience where gun culture warps human experience, and this particular conspiracy seemed so inhuman.





WELL REGULATED

“A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

The Second Amendment to the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution

The history of interpretation of the second amendment of the bill of rights might surprise many people who are currently bombarded by gun lobby messaging. The commonly accepted idea of a personal, virtually unlimited right to bear arms is a contemporary anomaly, not a standard historical perspective.

One of the most insightful resources I found while researching this issue is a law review paper entitled “*The Hidden History of the Second Amendment*,” by Carl T. Bogus. I quote it at length below:

“While in the past scholars have not ignored the Second Amendment quite as much as the courts, even within academic circles it was a reasonably dormant topic. Then about a decade ago [paper was written in 1998], things changed; suddenly there was an explosion of academic interest in the Second Amendment. The Second Amendment became the subject of a constant stream of books, articles, conferences, symposia, and even entire organizations. This is not the result of mere chance; it is part of a concerted campaign to persuade the courts to recon-





sider the Second Amendment, to reject what has long been a judicial consensus, and to adopt a different interpretation -- one that would give the Amendment judicial as well as political vitality and would erect constitutional barriers to gun control legislation.

The Second Amendment has been the subject of so little judicial activity because courts have unanimously adopted what is generally referred to as the 'collective rights' theory. According to this view, the Second Amendment grants people a right to keep and bear arms only within the state-regulated militia. In contrast, those who advocate an 'individual rights' theory believe that the Second Amendment grants individuals a personal right to keep and bear arms. This model has long been advocated by the firearm industry, shooting organizations, and political libertarians. However, state and federal courts consistently adhered to the collective rights interpretation, and it became clear that further head-on assaults would likely be counterproductive. The gun lobby apparently decided to suspend efforts to have the courts reconsider the Second Amendment until a body of secondary authority could be developed to support its position.

For a period of time, legal challenges to gun control legislation studiously avoided the Second Amendment. The challenge to the Brady Act, for example, was made exclusively on Tenth Amendment grounds. Meanwhile, the gun lobby pursued an aggressive campaign to build a body of favorable literature. An arm of the National Rifle Association (NRA) dispensed sizable grants to encourage writing that favored the individual rights model, and even stimulated student articles with a Second Amendment essay contest. Gun rights advocates then decided that the project had borne enough fruit to return to the courts."

Source: ***"The Hidden History of the Second Amendment"*** - Carl T. Bogus; U.C. Davis Law Review, Winter 1998; Volume 31, number 2; pages 311- 408

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It may come as somewhat of a surprise to those of us born during or after the Reagan years, but the individual right interpretation of the second amendment is not the standard historical perspective. And this one clause, “well regulated,” seems to be the lynchpin of the collective interpretation.

To even concede the great argument of “originalism” or “textualism” vs. a dynamic, fluid, modern constitution: why the heck would they put that clause in there? If the individual right was obvious to them, why make a qualification like that?

Since we are artists and not constitutional lawyers, any more sophisticated analysis than this is beyond the scope of this book and this project.

The clause has been systematically de-emphasized. It stands in the way of this organized assault on the collective interpretation.

So we emphasize it. I say it, rhythmically and hypnotically, like a mantra, into a microphone - “well regulated well regulated well regulated...” Jason loops up my voice until it resembles one of Steve Reich’s early tape pieces. Further electronic elements are drawn in, escalating the noise and the din. We place the snare drums from earlier in the piece next to amplifiers so that the rattle of their snares catches the noise from the speakers.

There is anger and futility in it, but there is also the artists’ prerogative to express their perspective. Saying those two words over and over again shouldn’t really be a radical gesture. But it symbolically attempts to place back into the discussion the elements that are most crucial to its reasonable meaning.





GATHERING / STORIES

Although it was always clear to us that we were not interested in positioning ourselves as experts or skilled public educators in any way around the issues *A Gun Show* explores, it didn't feel complete for this project to exist solely on the stage and in perhaps a single audience Q&A. Working together with The Operating System via this collaboration, we endeavored to not only create this document you now hold in your hand, but also to establish a platform for story gathering and dialogue before, in response to, and after the performances at BAM.

To this end, we started a blog to collect stories about people's relationship to gun culture, gun violence, or any of the many issues that surround and attach themselves to guns.

(<http://so-gunstories.blogspot.com>)

We hoped to open this dialogue with humility and grace, from the outset speaking frankly about our own limitations as well as acknowledging our continually evolving, imperfect process:

Throughout the process of developing this piece, the complexity of the issue started to spin and unravel as we delved deeper.

The purpose of these stories is not to advance any particular political agenda or point of view. We invite people tell their own stories, from their own perspective. Some may be from folks who own guns and enjoy them as an everyday part of life for hobby, sport, or hunting. Others may have had traumatic experiences that they feel would help others to know about. Still others may have stories about issues attached to guns, such as racial injustice.

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We want as much diversity in points of view and experience as possible. We feel that too often the conversation around guns and gun violence is binary, simplified, and reductive. Opening up some space for dialogue is urgently needed, and that begins by listening to each other.

Visitors were invited to read, and to share their own stories, which we continue to collect. You are welcome to join us, and share your thoughts and/or experiences. If you'd like to contribute to this project, email us at gunstories@sopercussion.com -- and take, if useful, these prompts into consideration:

We're interested in any way that you might react to the issue, and submissions could take many forms (essays, poetry, etc.), but here are some questions and guidelines:

Was gun culture a natural and accepted part of your life growing up?

Have you or anybody in your family suffered the effects of gun violence in a way that would be beneficial to share with others?

Do you want to write about how the issue affects you on a personal level? For instance, we created this show partially to process our feelings about the Sandy Hook shooting. Have you felt like a silent and powerless bystander while these horrors unfold in our society, and is that something you'd feel compelled to share?

Do you have opinions and experiences that inform how other subjects intersect with guns? An example might be racial injustice, or the concept of "rights" and the second amendment of the constitution.

If you have a military history, does your use and training affect your feelings about private gun ownership or usage?





We've been accepting submissions as both written essays and audio files, encouraging participants to simply speak into their iPhones if they find it more natural.

And now, we are grateful and excited to announce that in collaboration with The OS, BAM, and Storycorps, there will be an ongoing collection of Gun Stories at the Storycorps app, a permanent archive to which you will be able to add your reflections at any time in future.

We're equally grateful to the following contributors, who have chosen to remain anonymous, whose stories we share with you here.

Robert: My Father

When I was ten, my family moved from the suburbs of Long Island to a new home in the Catskill Mountains. I left a town where most working dads commuted back and forth to New York City to one where working dads had their own farms. There were 300 kids in my 5th grade class on Long Island. In the Catskills, there were just 28 kids when I entered 6th grade. Culture shock doesn't begin to describe the experience. Back on Long Island, guns for my crew of friends were hockey-sticks held with the bent part under your arm, or something we made from pieces of scrap-wood and a "Ka-pow!" with each pull of an imaginary trigger. In the Catskills, guns for my new friends were actual working rifles that fired actual bullets that could hurt or kill or put a hole in a tree or turn a phone book into confetti. BB guns, Pellet guns, .22 caliber rifles, small-gauge shotguns – all of my friends, all of them, had one or several. And their parents, fathers mostly, had guns (never just one) which I could see in a case in their living rooms or on a high shelf or mounted above a fireplace or on the back window of their truck. These guns were serious – hunting rifles with bullets longer than my fingers, 12 gauge shot guns that fired "slugs" of lead the size of a gumball, even a few Civil-War era muskets. These guns, whether in the hands of my friends or their fathers, were used for hunting, something else that all of them did. Squirrel, Quail, Rabbit, Fox, Deer, Geese and occasionally a bear.





It was shortly after this move to our new home when I discovered that my father had guns of his own, several of them and none of which I had ever seen before. It was mostly a collection of older guns – two Civil War muskets, an M-1 Carbine from WWII, a German Luger, a Russian Nagate revolver – but along with a modern hunting rifle, scope attached, which my father used to hunt deer on a few occasions. There were boxes of ammunition for each in a closet. Then there was a BB gun for my brother and me to share, followed by a .22 caliber lever-action rifle as a Christmas gift when I was twelve, and a 12-gauge shot gun for my brother the following year when he turned twelve. We “played” with these presents, with close supervision by my father, by shooting at targets or turning old bottles into sand. My father’s collection grew over the years to include more modern guns – a professional .22 caliber target pistol, an M-16 rifle, and a .44 magnum Desert Eagle among them. The sound and the excitement and the power of that Desert Eagle, which he let us try a few times, was unbelievable. It could put a hole the size of your thumb through the front cover of a 3 inch phone book and leave a hole through the rest the size of a grapefruit. It was an intimidating weapon, and it was clearly not meant for hunting. This gun was for “protection”, though I never understood what it was protecting us from.

With this gun culture came gun stories – his dad nabbed a 12 point buck, but his got a 14 point; that kid’s dad got a bear; turkey dinner at their house means spitting out buck-shot throughout the meal. But other, darker stories were in the mix as well. These hunters fought in their camp after drinking and one killed the other; a man swung his gun around to take down a pheasant and didn’t see that his brother’s head was in the way when he pulled the trigger; that old guy had cancer and used a shotgun to his stomach, pulling the trigger with his toe, to end his pain; that kid, the one with the drug problem and always in trouble with the cops sent his siblings outside and a minute later they heard a gun shot. Then there were my own stories – the time I accidentally shot a hole through the pants of my friend standing next to me, not even remembering pulling the trigger (he later took his own life with a gun during the early years of a career in the US Army); my brother cocked and pulled the trigger of his shot gun which was pointed at my father, not checking first to see if it was loaded (it wasn’t); my first kill, age 13, plucking a squirrel out of a tree, something I never expected to accomplish. And that was the last time I ever pulled the trigger on a gun.

Fast forward to spring 2012, my father now living on his own in Florida at the age of 84. Over the years he slowly sold-off his collection of guns, mostly at gun shows where the transaction was easy – cash and a receipt exchanged, done. My father’s existence in Florida was depressing for him. My mother had divorced him a year prior, his health was failing,





his older friends were sick or dying, he couldn't care for himself very well, yet the thought of moving nearby to me and to his grandchildren, perhaps into an assisted living home, was impossible for him to consider. On March 24, 2012 my mother phoned me to tell me that my father had died. Not a heart attack, not a stroke, not by natural causes, but that an old shotgun that he was working on went off and killed him. "Where did he get a gun?" was my immediate response, thinking that he had gotten rid of them all. I flew to Florida that night and the true story unfolded over the next day or two. A neighbor across the street was asked by my father to drive him to Walmart (my father had become legally blind and no longer able to drive himself) so he could buy a box of 12-gauge slugs. "He was trying to repair a gun and wasn't sure if it was working" is what the neighbor said. A kind yet direct Police Detective, and then a Florida State Coroner, confirmed that my father had disassembled the gun to a point where it would still work, loaded a single slug in the chamber, put the barrel directly into his mouth and ended his life in the most horrifying way. The gun was taken away, but the report showed it was the same shotgun given as a Christmas gift to my brother decades earlier, one that I'm sure my father kept for "protection."

The following day, I stood in the room where he did this to himself (where he did this to me, to my brothers, to my mother, to his grandchildren, to his friends). The room had been expertly cleaned and the floor repainted – there are companies who do this in these situations. There was a hole the size of my thumb in the ceiling of that room through which I could see the sky. Outside, there was a hole in the roof the size of a grapefruit. I found the box of shotgun shells, one of them missing, along with a receipt from Walmart, which my father had hidden in the clothes dryer in that same room. The police had to come and take the box away. I thought at the time, "How is it possible that an 84 year old man, unhealthy as he was, legally blind, living on his own, could simply walk into any store that sold lethal ammunition, lay down a few bills and walk out without a single question asked." It's a question I struggle with still today. And I came to learn that my father's demographic – single, white, 80+ years old, failing health - fell directly at the top of the highest suicide rate in our country. I didn't know any of that until after he was gone. Do people who sell ammunition know this?

I am writing this anonymously, mostly for the protection of my own children who do not know how their grandfather died, because of the very slim possibility that they might come across this blog. I will tell them someday when they are older. My children play with imaginary guns like I did when I was young. I pray that they never touch a real gun in their lives. I hate that they have been deprived of their grandfather. I hate him for that. I think of him every day. I miss him every day.





“John” - The Complexity of the Issue

“John” works in academia. He prefers anonymity because he doesn’t usually discuss these personal political issues as part of his public activities.

In the interest of full disclosure, it has been extraordinarily difficult for me to write this. There are some days when guns are in the spotlight, when dealing (or not dealing) with gun violence in our world is the most important issue. Guns, gun rights, and gun violence are important issues, but lately it feels like they have taken a back seat. Right now there is a presidential candidate in our country spewing hate, misogyny, racism, bigotry, Islamophobia, and xenophobia every time that he opens his mouth or uses a keyboard. Like I said, there are some days when talking about guns is, unfortunately, the pressing issue. Recently, it seems that worrying about these hunks of metal, wood, and plastic has fallen a few spots down on the priority list. Have more of them or melt them all down? Guns might not be our biggest concern if someone like I described above is in charge of this country. That said, I’ll do my best...

In a nutshell, I’m complicated. I don’t think that’s a bad thing, though. In a culture that tries to reduce all political thinking to two parties, and requires that every idea or thought to only occupy as much space as a bumper sticker, a meme, or 140 characters, it seems that we’ve lost the ability to have any kind of nuanced opinion or perspective. I hate that. That doesn’t work for me. It doesn’t work for me when it comes to my thoughts about guns, and it doesn’t work for me for much else. Since this is about guns, I’ll keep my thoughts on topic. To give you an idea of where I’m coming from, here are some of the highlights (in no particular order):

I own guns.

I own the types of guns that have been hotly debated in the media and on the internet, both recently and in the past.

I have shot, on multiple occasions, and have friends who legally own, fully automatic weapons.

I have a permit to carry a concealed weapon, which I have done at times.

I am a college professor.





To go a step further, I am a college professor in the arts.

The vast majority of my political leanings are progressive, which makes the whole issue of guns somewhat of an outlier.

I do believe that this country has an issue with gun violence. - I do believe that this country also has an issue with mental health. But, I do not believe that the mental health issue is a substitute for the gun violence issue. I am frustrated by people who attempt to use mental health as a scapegoat/diversion/excuse for gun violence. While the two have aspects that may overlap in some scenarios, they are also separate.

I hate the NRA. They peddle fear and conspiracy theories to further their own agenda. The top item on their agenda is padding their own bank account. They intimidate elected officials to keep any meaningful progress from being made on the issue of stopping gun violence.

I have taken it upon myself to obtain additional firearm training and practice time at the range, above and beyond what is necessary to own or carry a gun.

I believe that we need more, and better, training of anyone carrying a firearm.

I am Catholic. I believe that, from a religious and moral perspective, violence is wrong. Taking a human life is wrong. For lack of a better term, I am a pacifist.

I believe that we should close the “gun show loophole.”

I know that many people could not afford to feed their family without using a rifle to hunt.

I know many people who own guns responsibly. They keep their guns locked in safes, they shoot them in controlled and responsible settings, and they have no interest in ever using them to harm anyone. I believe that it is possible to own powerful firearms without causing a public safety issue.

I would imagine that you have been surprised to see some of those bullet points listed beside one another. A Christian gun owner who has a concealed carry permit usually doesn't also look like a progressive college professor in the arts who is vehemently opposed to violence of any kind. I have found my opinions evolving over time, and I'm proud of the fact that I am becoming more empathetic and compassionate, and





more concerned about the world around me than myself. I think some people call that maturing. I am glad that this gives me an opportunity to revisit my beliefs, and to challenge my assumptions and perspective. One of the most difficult ideas that I wrestle with is the thought of potentially using a gun to defend myself.

There's a gun on my nightstand, and I hope I don't ever have to use it. It sits there, in a small safe, in case I need to protect myself or my family. I'm not sure how I feel about that. I like shooting old beer bottles and cans, pieces of paper with concentric circles or cartoon drawings of zombies, and the occasional old kitchen appliance. When I first purchased a gun I told myself that I was alright with using my gun if the need ever arose to defend myself. Lately, I've been doubting that. My morals and my religion tell me that violence is never justified. Am I comfortable with the idea of killing another person? Can I live with the emotional and psychological consequences of that decision? Should I be the deciding factor for when another person lives or dies?

I was told that being a responsible gun owner and carrier meant that I could rely on my training to act quickly and decisively. I would anticipate a threat and react to it with resolve. I would know the laws of my state, and I would be confident knowing that the legal system would protect me when I responded with deadly force. Unfortunately, this type of mindset leads to the types of shootings that have put law enforcement officers across our country in the media. It doesn't acknowledge the nuances that make up every situation in our world. It lets the person who has the gun make life-changing, or life-ending, decisions. That training has led to rhetoric within the gun community that suggests that some people "deserve" to be shot. Some people "deserve" to die. Some people's lives are more valuable than others. Even worse, some people's possessions are more important than other people's lives.

So, does it make me a bad gun owner to be questioning my ability to shoot someone? Does it make me weak? Will I hesitate? Or, does it make me a better gun owner to feel the weight of that responsibility? What does it say about the world we live in when there is guilt and anxiety associated with NOT being willing to kill another person? How far has our national dialogue wandered off course when we applaud someone getting shot, regardless of whether or not you think they are "good" or "bad"? Am I a good gun owner, or a bad gun owner to be thinking like this?

The only thing that I'm sure of, is that I'm not sure about anything.





BACKMATTER

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FACILITATION AND DOCUMENTATION PROCESS NOTES

Lynne DeSilva-Johnson, Creative Facilitator / Editor

As an interdisciplinary artist and educator, my practice has often been as influenced by first person documentation of others' work and mission as by the work itself: by manifestos and transcribed lectures, process documents, journals, and other ephemera. These documents have been invaluable to me in material ways, of course, but even moreso in finding and charting a path for the constant work behind the work: the work of being a creative practitioner in the world.

I am lucky that my own mediums include text, and that I am also a scholar (if rogue academic), but I worry that the creation of documents or tracts of our creative practice is something that our now highly specialized, often siloed disciplines hamper when critical thinking and writing skills are not taught as essential in every creative and performing arts program.

My intention in working with performers and others who might not create a document like this one without facilitation is, first and foremost, to leave behind an archival record: of not only the performance, work, or project itself, but also of the process behind it -- for the use of the creators themselves, in future, for other creators and collaborators, and for students (and educators) now and in the future.

When we consider the hagiography of our creative history, it is clear that while certain artists stood the test of time because others chose to support or sponsor their success, at least an equal number did because of their will to become part of the story -- a story they were more than happy to begin to tell.

Looking around me, seeing the incredible work of today's creative forces too often vanishing into the ether, I resolved to begin facilitating the documentation of projects like this one.

Critically, however, part of what makes a performance document like this so different from a traditional publishing project is that no book or manuscript exists at the beginning of the process of our working together.





Rather, a document is generated out of an active, ongoing dialogue between the facilitator and performers/collaborators and takes a variety of shapes, at different stages.

The goal of this extended engagement is not as much the physical object that you hold in your hand but goes far deeper: in search of clarity, for all involved, via participant observation. It's a process that collaborators often find richly rewarding, as defining and framing the language, mission, and program of a piece together serves the evolution of the work itself, especially as performance nears.

Always playing both sides -- thinking about both final document and the evolution of the process at hand, as a facilitator I'm gathering field notes and collecting ephemera from the work at all stages (notebook scribbles, iphone photos, email exchanges) while playing devil's advocate, socratic debater, and so on.

It's essential to be both container and guide, because I'm always coming into a project with visions and theories about best practices, but facilitation isn't coaching or direction, it's a collaborative process in emergence: which means holding space for freethinking experimentation and open dialogue, but so too constantly adapting to the project's evolution with prompts and questions of my own, based on both observation of the collaborators' process as well as feedback from my own ongoing research, happening at all times in tandem.

As part of the facilitation process for *A GUN SHOW*, for instance, I asked the members of Sō Percussion the same set of questions, with instructions to respond as they saw fit -- to skip, to add, to respond specifically to each or cohesively, whatever felt most productive.

My interview with Adam, the longest of these, originally appeared on The Operating System's online platform, as "Complicated Work: Exploring *A GUN SHOW* With Sō Percussion's Adam Sliwinski", on August 23, 2016. All members of the group also worked with these same thought questions, and their answers are included here, following this writing.

But that was already towards the end of the process. In this case, conversations with Adam and I began more than six months earlier.

Over the four years this project was in the works, one challenge for the members of Sō, as well Emily, and Ain, that had never quite gotten resolved was how, in addition to processing and making sense of their feelings and





impressions about the epidemic of mass shootings in the USA (as well as gun culture in general), to bring as many other voices to the table as possible, something Adam expressed as being vitally important.

When I came on as a facilitator, in addition to working with the collaborators around documentation and clarification, it was clear that Adam and I were aligned around this issue, as before he even brought up this challenge to me, I had already immediately gravitated to the potential social impact of the project -- and, accordingly, the potential avenues for public engagement, education, outreach, and community participation it invited.

For me, in my chosen life role as agitator / public intellectual/ social justice activist, there was no question as to that this would be part of the work, but of course in action this is more complex -- and it also brought up, for all involved, tricky questions about the social responsibility of the artist.

You'll see these questions in my prompts for Sō, as it is standard material from the OS's [Re/con]versations series with creators from a vast array of mediums over the past five years. They're always sticky, with the potential to mire a creator in a panic of hows and shoulds, in particular if education or public engagement is unfamiliar territory.

Luckily, with Sō, no strangers to the classroom or to community service, it presented a welcome challenge -- and also ushered in clarifying distinctions about how the development of creative work, when designed across platforms with a clearly stratified plan of operation, can offer freedom within the work itself when no longer as burdened with the full responsibility of carrying a social intention or "message" as a more direct and obvious take away -- something that had been somewhat of a struggle.

Artists in every medium are no stranger to the dictum that the art should "speak for itself," and yet a critical, intersectional awareness of the multiple languages both artists and audiences bring to creative expression and its reception might suggest that a one-to-one correspondence of full, immediate "understanding" of a work's intentions is perhaps impossible.

Knowing that a social/community strategy as well as a document are part of the wider program for a piece changes the field completely in terms of what "needs" to be included in the presentation itself, as your work extends beyond the time and space constrictions of the performance or piece into a more flexible frame within which there is room for explication, exploration, and *invitation* -- this last aspect being perhaps the most critical of all.





Adam and I spoke at length about the challenges both practical and artistic this presented, and resolved to not only continue the task (already begun) of finding, reading, and studying others' perspectives, but then, too, to invite and nurture contribution and conversation with not only our our circles but the "public," as wide as we could reach.

We are living in the wake of the result of silences -- of divides between communities and cultures within this one geographic "place," the US, and watching the fallout from our lack of true understanding of each other. If possible, we wanted to open a safe platform for storytelling, sharing, dialogue, and examination of these issues both personally and politically; in the months leading up to the performance, with gun violence in this country fixed to center stage and ire rising, it became more more difficult and more necessary.

Scaling up a complex, yet necessarily tender project of this scope was challenging, particularly in a time when the signal to noise ratio has been so high vis-a-vis vying for an oversaturated public's attentions. As is also true in so many of our projects, it was necessary to navigate institutions and check the various boxes necessary in order to work cooperatively with BAM, the presenting organization of this particular string of performances, and now with Storycorps - but we are thrilled to have established these partnerships, with our stories now permanently in both text and audio archives.

Where design is concerned, every book should be as different as the intent of the artist(s) for the project at hand, both in terms of how it looks and feels, as much as what it should contain: should it be a score, fully replicating (or allowing for open source reproduction of) the work itself? In this case, our goal was the documentation of questions as much as answers, alongside both the data gathered to that end, as well as alongside the resultant programmatic elements and visuals from the show itself: pieces of score, slides, descriptions of instrumentation and movement, et cetera.

Adam and I agreed that we wanted to present the problem we sought to consider, with all its blemishes and challenges front and center. Presenting the disparate elements of both complex social issue and musical/stage performance taxonomically, rather than in a more linear, traditional approach felt appropriate to the content, which both we and the audience receive similarly: as a complex list of things to contend with and make sense of that don't always connect neatly to one another.





I exaggerated this sense of nonlinear textual engagement by working with big blown up fonts for the types of pull quotes with which we're familiar in magazines and internet reading, a nod both to the types of sites from which we're getting our daily dose of Guns-in-America stories as well as to the changing way we read and process information, coming ever faster, louder, and more.

Now that we're finishing up the book and show in tandem, I think we've struck the elusive, delicate balance we were looking for - and that there's much room to learn and grow from this project, well beyond the stage, with these pages in hand.





COLLABORATOR PROCESS QUESTIONS:

ADAM SLIWINSKI

Lynne DeSilva-Johnson: It's hard to even begin to describe this piece, in language that feels adequate, in a time like this. That said, can you give us your elevator pitch? IE: what is 'A GUN SHOW,' in a few sentences?

Adam Sliwinski: The ways in which Americans perceive guns seems to intersect with numerous serious issues that confront our society – race, economic inequality, public safety, constitutional rights. *A Gun Show* is an exploration of these issues through music, text, and movement.

LDJ: What was the impetus that originally drove you to start developing this piece?

AS: After Sandy Hook, we were all devastated. My stepson was exactly the age of those children from Newtown, and there was something about that shooting that just pierced you when you heard about it. We've long been interested in the idea of Art as a response to social issues...perhaps not a responsive action, and definitely not a substitute for action, but more of a way to process our humanity. We realized that it wasn't just these dramatic mass shootings that brought the gun issue out. The culture itself was saturated with their use and imagery.

We've all had different experiences with guns. Some of us, like Josh or Emily, grew up in rural areas where they are commonplace. Others, such as me, grew up mostly in suburbs where they really weren't present. My views on guns were formed mostly as political views. I never had that human-object relationship with a gun that many others have, or that I have with one of my musical instruments.

Many of our percussion instruments, which we have such a joyful relationship with, were originally used as instruments of war. They have potential violence embedded in their very nature.

We began researching, talking, and making work. Many of our percussion instruments, which we have such a joyful relationship with, were originally used as instruments of war. They have potential violence embedded in their very nature. That seemed to provide a bridge from the issue to a work of music theater.

LDJ: Who was involved at that point? Did you already have a vision about





what sort of collaborations you envisioned? I imagined it evolved organically, as these things always do, but can you tell us a little bit about its early genesis and first steps?

We decided very quickly that Ain and Emily, who we worked with on *Where (we) Live*, would be the perfect collaborators for the next project. They had the taste and sensitivity to tackle this difficult subject. The first steps evolved out of sidebar collaborations. Emily and Josh wrote texts independently of each other, then began combining them into something more ambiguous. Jason fixated on the number of gun related deaths in a recent year (31513) as a structural building block for new abstract rhythmic compositions.

Many of the pieces in *A Gun Show* reflect abstract concepts and emotional states. This was often the only way we could wrap our heads and hearts around such a fraught subject. More than any other project, we really didn't know what eventual shape it would take. How do you even begin to make art about such a complicated subject? The emerging answer was that you make complicated work.

Almost any time we tried to say something definitive about gun violence, it felt reductive. The ultimate reduction is the NRA's assertion that "guns don't kill people, people do." Every time one of our statements started to approach that level of simplicity, we recoiled.

LDJ: Tell me about your role in these early conversations – and in the piece's development.

There's certainly a good deal of interplay between influences, story, and reflection on personal experience – talk a little about how you all, as collaborators, brought your history / reflections / emotions into framing the piece. How and when were other collaborators brought on, and how did they become involved?

AS: Yes, there is. As I wrote above, Emily and Ain were involved very early on. Our emotions and reactions to the gun issue could probably be grouped into several categories: personal, political, artistic.

Politically, we are mostly aligned with the prevailing educated urban viewpoint: that responsible regulation should be assertively applied in trying to curb the number of people who suffer from gun violence.

Personally, our experiences were all over the map. But these memories and impressions became a key part of making the work, as we realized that any attempt to reduce the issue as it affects other people felt wrong.





Artistically, there lingered this issue of what art can actually DO when it comes to a political or social issue like this. Leonard Bernstein has a quote that gets trotted around on Facebook whenever a gun tragedy or terrorist attack happens: “This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.” I’ve always hated it, and working on this show gave me cause to analyze that reaction.

Bernstein was responding in the wake of the Kennedy assassination, so I think it’s a bit unfair to hold him to this quote. He was a deeply intelligent and sensitive communicator.

I think if Bernstein’s quote were slightly altered, I’d agree with it.

“Despite the pervasiveness of violence in our society, we will continue to make music even more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.”

There is something definitive about Bernstein’s wording when he says “this will be our reply.” It suggests an attitude that was much more prevalent in his day among artistic and social elites, that art had the direct social purpose of ennobling humans and making them somehow “better.” According to this mindset, making and experiencing great art could in some sense directly address social problems. This premise is dubious, and it doubly bothers me because it funnels art towards a purpose that doesn’t always suit its strengths.

For me, art can fill in the cracks of human experience. That DOES NOT require it to always be noble or transcendent. In fact, art often creates problems in the sense that it addresses complexity through images and sounds that are difficult to speak about (just ask Wittgenstein).

My alteration of Bernstein’s quote suggests that art provides us with an opportunity to demonstrate our resilience and determination not to be intimidated by violence and terror (domestic or foreign). I secretly think that this is more or less what he was getting at.

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LDJ: I think what may be difficult to parse for the general public is the ways in which each of you brings these elements not only to the concept of the show and its staging, and then to visual and textual factors within the production and its framework, but also to the composition of the percussion arrangement, itself.

AS: The primary symbolic importance of percussion in our performance is that many percussion instruments were originally designed to facilitate violence. After a delicate opening in which a quiet piece for snare drums is performed with the drums removed from our hands, the entire ensemble begins a Bolero-like accumulation of drum patterns that clearly references gun and cannon-fire. Our “chorus” of 8 percussionists returns to this role periodically throughout the show.

At other times, we force symbolic objects to become percussion instruments. Josh ordered pieces of decommissioned Russian sniper rifles online, which we Velcro-ed to tables in order to play. Many of the metal parts sounds surprisingly good. This is perhaps a small gesture towards “beating swords into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks.”

Towards the end of the show, Josh hoists a large tam tam so that Emily can play it. Yellow cables splay out down the inclined stage, connecting to guitar pedals that turn the sound on and off. The tam tam doesn’t have a specific reference, but Josh’s struggle in carrying it connects the vibrations of the instrument to the spider-like cables, and the performers filter the intensity of that sound.

LDJ: Are all members of the ensemble equally involved in the composition process? Talk a little more about the development of a piece — especially when it has conceptual elements, like this one — how much do (and, in compositional, instrumental, musical terms how do) these influences come to bear on this process, collaboratively or individually? How has the influence of other, non-percussion based collaborators changed or directly influenced the evolution of the piece?

AS: This is a good opportunity to address Emily Johnson’s role in the process. She is a co-creator of the piece, and we talk about her contribution mostly in terms of “movement,” although she also wrote some of the texts and contributed musical ideas. The word “choreographer” doesn’t really suit our concept of what she does, because it too easily brings to mind a very limited idea of what dance looks and feels like. None of us dance during the piece in the traditional sense, but a lot of what Emily does is think about bodies and dynamics: groupings, obsessions, relationships.

Emily has brought an entire vocabulary of movement to the piece which





tends to address our topic in oblique and abstract ways. Rather than finding some way for us to act out or dance a response to gun violence, she tends to occupy us with tasks that hint at the emotional and psychological states we inhabit while dealing with it.

Throughout the show, performers are tasked with small back-and-forth foot stomping, which sometimes feels like military marching, at other times like meandering distraction. She pushes us to perform tasks that are exhausting, like jumping repeatedly, primarily for what they authentically produce in our bodies and minds, i.e. not as any literal portrayal of gun-related symbolism. During a particularly moving section of the piece, eight of us walk in a slowly moving pinwheel around the center of the stage while droning on hand-cranked sirens. There are multiple interpretations of these movements – general walk, a beautiful shape, or what?

Musicians are usually focused first and foremost on sound. Other visual and theatrical aspects of what we do often fall out as a by-product of this focus. Go to many classical concerts to see how strange this can be. We're often not aware of how we look, while a great dancer or actor can spend a lifetime figuring out how to walk across a stage. Sometimes, Emily simply asks us to perform a task faster or slower, changing our sense of purpose or intention.

Emily and Ain constantly challenge us to evaluate, and often subvert, the reasons why we move onstage. It would be impossible to overstate the influence of this mindset on how the music comes out in the show.

As for the musical composition process, this is very fluid. I compose the least, tending to focus more on programmatic elements, writing like I'm doing now, and sometimes contributing text. I wrote a few poems during this process that were mostly throw-away, but one line from them stuck out and became a constant element in the show: "Sing when your voice feels faintest."

Usually a text piece in our shows has been written by Josh, and in *A Gun Show* he and Ain (who is a brilliant and award-winning playwright) worked intensively on those texts. Jason and Eric wrote the pattern-based percussion pieces, such as the opening drum chorus.

LDJ: You're performing together but in some ways all maintain individual identities within the piece – there are solo elements, movement elements, and other aspects that are performed or led by individuals. Can you talk about this and how it does or does not represent or correspond with your voices / input into the piece?

AS: Our concept of a chorus originally was meant to hew more closely to





the function of a Greek chorus in the great tragedies. We studied a few of them and thought about how this might manifest in our new work. In the end, their function has become more abstract, but it has allowed the five of us to be more individual characters within the drama. A lot of Sō Percussion's repertoire is about the four of us blending into uniformity, but the 8-member chorus now absorbs that role.

In the last part, I obsessively recite the phrase “well-regulated.” Jason conceived of this piece with my voice and way of intoning rhythm in mind. He knew that I enjoy using my voice, and that I'd also enjoy the task of obsessively layering my recitation on top of itself over and over again. Jason and Emily have a particularly close relationship when generating new material. They love to get together and try stuff. There are a few moments, such as an early duet, where the two of them move through some sequences that Emily composed. Many of these started as discreet ideas which we then weaved into the show.

Similarly, Josh and Emily wrote independent texts which they merged together into a piece called “squaw wood,” a dark and impressionistic recollection of childhoods spent in the woods and half-remembered experiences with guns.

One element that Ain and Emily get to toy with and take for granted is our established virtuosity as percussionists. We do not always feature it in a traditional way, but it can be pulled out if it fits the conceit. In “gun parts,” Josh wrote for three of us to play on pieces of sniper rifles. The piece is essentially a Sō Percussion piece, with canons and complicated rhythmic elements. Ain directed us to change some of our natural behaviors when performing a piece like this, to make it a bit more regimented visually.

In this way, individual personalities constantly emerge and recede, but the possibility of Sō Percussion members playing complex music together always lingers.

LDJ: How literally has the concept of creating a piece around the loaded question of the GUN influenced the music/composition? Can you paint a more detailed picture for us of the soundscape you've created, and what might differentiate the experience of A GUN SHOW in performance vs. other Sō Percussion pieces? There's vocal elements, both sung and spoken, marching, and drumming on gun parts, but not exclusively and not throughout the performance — nonetheless in attending rehearsal recently I felt like there were elements of dirge/funereal music, perhaps fife and drum or early military marches, and other nods. Can you talk a little more about this interplay, and your intentions around literal inclusion / allusion / etc?





AS: Many times, literal allusions felt dissonant for us. There are still plenty, but we started to focus our creative process more and more around how the individual and/or collective human is affected by this societal scourge. Most of our political dialogue pits archetypal characters against each other: the gun-toting white rural “patriot,” the inner city gang member, the sensitive and concerned educated urbanite. But the real human truth is MUCH more complicated than the political operatives would have us believe.

One of the constant compositional elements in the piece would be difficult to discern from hearing the piece (even though we explain it in the overhead slides). In the year for which we had most recent data, the number of gun deaths in the United States was 31,513. This number stuck in our imaginations, and many of the percussion pieces in *A Gun Show* are literal soundings of this pattern. It creates an off-balance meter of 13, which rarely allows us to play in a squarely satisfying groove. We’re constantly kept off-balance, and constantly reminded of this number.

Eric’s opening drum music is quite literal in its evocation of gunfire, especially the canon impact of the bass drums. This music is violent enough and persistent enough to remind you that percussion instruments have this potential.

One of the constant compositional elements in the piece would be difficult to discern from hearing the piece (even though we explain it in the overhead slides). In the year for which we had most recent data, the number of gun deaths in the United States was 31,513. This number stuck in our imaginations, and many of the percussion pieces in *A Gun Show* are literal soundings of this pattern. It creates an off-balance meter of 13, which rarely allows us to play in a squarely satisfying groove. We’re constantly kept off-balance, and constantly reminded of this number.

Some of the music symbolically represents an issue that orbits around gun culture. Several times throughout the show, our chorus sings the iconic blues chord progression (I, IV, I, V, IV, I). This is a nod to the fact that gun culture in America is inescapably tied to its history of oppression through enslavement. The weary hopefulness of Afro-American diaspora music has had a profound influence on us, although we try very hard to be respectful and not appropriative of that influence.

Here it’s worth mentioning that the symbolism of the drum gets very richly complicated. I wrote above that percussion instruments were often invented to facilitate violence, which is true. But in America (and now really the world), those same instruments like the snare drum and cymbals are most closely associated with one of the great American instruments, the drumset. Black musicians played a singularly important role in adapting these instruments





from their purpose of violence to one of joy, expression, even ecstasy. To watch a drummer like Tony Williams, Philly Jo Jones, or Max Roach, one can only think of flow, creativity, and inspiration. Growing up as a drummer, we worshipped these black performers, and to be a percussionist in the USA is to be profoundly affected by this tradition.

We cannot ignore that two of the primary social movements of our time – gun control and black lives matter – are intimately intertwined. In our opinion, one of the frustrating blind spots of the gun issue is when white proponents of gun rights refuse to acknowledge that guns have been the primary tool of oppression against people of color. They reduce this thorny history to “guns don’t kill people,” as if there’s no significance whatsoever to the power that widespread gun usage exerts in social hierarchies.

LDJ: Now we get perhaps to the stickier stuff – let’s talk about the social and community potential / intentions of this piece.

For a little background – you’re all educators, directly, running the institute and doing substantial work in schools – am I missing anything? Has there always been a didactic element of what you do as musicians? How has that part of your work evolved individually and/or as an ensemble?

AS: Yes, it has always been a part of what we do. I actually always imagined I’d be a teacher, partially because it seemed one of the only avenues open for doing what I wanted to do. Many gigs and residencies in the classical circuit expect and require you to do teaching, whether as community outreach or university classes.

We currently have a very heavy teaching load: we are the ensemble in residence at Princeton University, we run the percussion department at the Bard Conservatory of Music, and we have our Summer Institute and teaching that is tied to touring.

What we’ve found is that we’re all as passionate about teaching as we are performing. If you gave me ten million dollars right now, I’d definitely take more vacations, but I wouldn’t stop teaching.

As co-teachers we’ve slowly learned how to lean on each others’ strengths. Percussion is a vast subject, and any one teacher can only facilitate all the different kinds of learning that might be involved. The four of us work together constantly to provide the best instruction we can.

LDJ: What’s SP’s general position on public education and community engagement via the creative arts? Do social issues inform your work with any frequency? Beyond the sort of standard post-show talk-back or Q&A, ei-





ther individually or as an ensemble have you sought to engage in public dialogue about particular issues or conflicts via particular compositions or performances in the past?

AS: We've never tackled a social issue like this directly. By and large, we do not see ourselves as an issue-based artistic collective. There was something shattering and infuriating about Sandy Hook that just tipped us over into wanting to deal with this subject.

...our opening drum piece is much more evocative of war than it is of a mass shooting or some other domestic conflict. The bass drums sound like cannons, and by opening with that piece I think we remind people that the overall militarization of a society has consequences for its domestic life. We see now that US police departments often resemble SEAL strike teams more than constables. Eisenhower warned us that permanent militarization would produce this....the role of the gun in contemporary life is our main concern, without losing sight of the gun as a historical tool as well.

LDJ: Though the initial impetus was gun violence and gun control, in the US specifically, does this mean that questions as to militarization and war, import and export of weapons, etc, beyond the US borders, whether in relationship to the US as a major exporter of weapons (and of wars), is also part of the story? Since its non-us military weapon pieces that are being used as percussive elements, there is already a nod to that. Would you say that, in general, the main topic is the role of the GUN in contemporary US life? Human life? Media? History?

AS: This is undoubtedly part of the story. I think our opening drum piece is much more evocative of war than it is of a mass shooting or some other domestic conflict. The bass drums sound like cannons, and by opening with that piece I think we remind people that the overall militarization of a society has consequences for its domestic life. We see now that US police departments often resemble SEAL strike teams more than constables. Eisenhower warned us that permanent militarization would produce this.

I would say that our focus is really the USA. The Russian sniper rifle was chosen more for its availability than for its provenance. But yes, the role of the gun in contemporary life is our main concern, without losing sight of the gun as a historical tool as well.

LDJ: Whose voices have been considered in the process of putting together the piece so far? (ie, whether specific people or specific groups of people / interest groups / books, etc). What has the research process consisted of to date? I know we've spoken a lot about the potential crowdsourcing of stories from various communities in relationship to putting the book together.





AS: At the moment, two distinct paths are emerging: what's in the hour-long show itself, and what else we're planning to gather/solicit/put out there. In the show, we endeavor to constantly speak with voices that we know and experiences we've had. This means that Emily or Josh's background of growing up in rural areas where guns are commonplace is reflected in the show, but stories about what life is like in gun-saturated minority urban areas is not.

A lot of the research has been focused around the statistics of gun violence and the political conversation. Our main protest is against the binary and oversimplified nature of the dialogue around the issue.

We've also immersed ourselves by visiting a shooting range and spending some time with rural hunters in Vermont. Our primary interest has been in trying to understand the perspective of people who want gun rights to be protected. What we've mostly found is that the vast majority of gun enthusiasts are reasonable people who wouldn't have a problem in principle with some basic controls and regulations. But the NRA plays a zero sum game with them, telling them you're either all in or you're out.

We are working on several supplementary activities right now (including this dialogue with you) that will make room for a broader and more diverse collection of voices that could flow into our project.

LDJ: We've spoken at some length about A GUN SHOW's desire to not be a singular statement on gun control or gun violence, so perhaps it's most accurate to describe it as more of a meditation around the role of the gun in our lives both actively and in our imaginary. If A GUN SHOW needn't have an agenda, or an answer, where is the line drawn in terms of ENOUGH? Ie: how does one determine what is essential to include, or ok to leave out?

AS: This has been an active conversation among our collaborators. We spent a fair amount of time thinking about what we wanted to avoid – misrepresenting or appropriating voices of people of color, exploiting the suffering of gun victims for the sake of an artistic statement, etc – and now we're thinking more about what we want to stand for.

We've all agreed that we can't be completely agnostic, as much as we want to make room for multiple sides of the issue. In that spirit, we believe that we can sum up what we stand for by saying "sensible gun regulation now," and "black lives matter."

The last section of the work is about 500 utterances of the phrase "well-regulated," so the show is not truly agenda-less. What we fervently want is to be





able to have an aesthetic experience and a conversation that doesn't immediately retreat to the pre-scripted corners of identity and partisan bickering that usually defines it.

LDJ: When I work with performers or visual artists on documenting their work, they often find that the act of considering writing in tandem to the performance or art itself shifts the burden somewhat away from the work vis-a-vis its responsibility in concretely carrying the social message. You're already a writer who considers your work via language as a personal practice. Have you found that this is the case with A GUN SHOW? We've been talking about a book / documentation in tandem for some time, and you've always planned on some additional materials. Tell us more about where and how you've decided to speak directly to the issues and where you've allowed it to be more sensory / experiential, and how you found (or are continuing to find) this balance.

AS: As I mentioned previously, I think art is much better at dealing with humanity than with a specific issue. The universal experience of suffering, fear, and hope are not just about gun issues, but they can be magnificently conveyed in a work of art.

It has been enormously helpful to me to think about a multi-pronged way of dealing with this project, where I can articulate thoughts and ideas to you in a more concrete way, while our staged work deals with the cracks and corners of human experience.

LDJ: What are your hopes for this piece, both in its upcoming performances and beyond? What sort of impact or potential positive conversations might it generate? Would it be something you'd like to see other professional or school ensembles performing and using to encourage dialogue in their own communities?

AS: I hope we get more opportunities to do it (several are already booked as of this writing). We've already had many positive conversations around showings of the work. Along the way, even people we know well have shared stories with us about a suicide or other gun-related impact on their life. The ubiquitous nature of guns in our society is not always felt on the surface, but it's there in surprising quantities that we don't always talk about.

I cannot imagine this being a repertory piece for anybody but us. So much of the storytelling and movement is meant for our own bodies and voices.

LDJ: Could and should this piece continue to evolve and change in response to the continuously fraught story of guns in this country and worldwide? If others wanted to perform this piece but customize it in some way, including





their own stories and images, would you be open to that? Is there flexibility in the piece for continued growth and adaptation?

AS: It certainly could, but I'd say that we've been honing it relentlessly, so that it doesn't feel like a modular piece. (Our last show "Where (we) Live" was explicitly modular).

I shouldn't say now that there's no way others could do it, but I can't currently imagine that.

Our guiding principal, which I think is a good one when making art, is to listen to our own inner voices and consciences. On some level, we just wanted people to be in a room together where they can feel some sense of humanity and connection to each other over this issue. The overriding emotions conveyed by the media are fear, suspicion, and rage. I think music and theater have great potential to open up such a space.

LDJ: Do you feel that this piece can help us begin to heal and work together? What audiences do you feel would most benefit from this piece and discussion around it? Is it possible that by including music in the conversation, we are accessing subconscious emotional spaces of connection around our human experiences of fear and anxiety, care for loved ones, a desire for safety, etc? Have you intentionally worked with the emotional landscape of the piece in considering audience reaction and potential affect?

AS: I really don't know what it can or can't do. Our guiding principal, which I think is a good one when making art, is to listen to our own inner voices and consciences. On some level, we just wanted people to be in a room together where they can feel some sense of humanity and connection to each other over this issue. The overriding emotions conveyed by the media are fear, suspicion, and rage. I think music and theater have great potential to open up such a space.

A lot of our most intensive honing of the piece has to do with feedback we've gotten from audiences. This is a very delicate place to tread, and any muddled intentions or mis-read cues can backfire in conveying what you want to. We've worked hard on the emotional experience. I'd sum it up as communal, contemplative, and sometimes challenging. But we work really hard to not make the audience feel alienated. That matters to us a great deal.

LDJ: What are your next steps, for future projects? Do you feel a growing commitment to create work that speaks to major subjects in the social imaginary? Has (and how has) working on this project shifted your consciousness about the role of performers / composers in community dialogue and healing?





AS: It's funny, we've just finished another project in parallel to this in the Northeast of England. Called "From Out a Darker Sea," it's a meditation on the people and landscape of that historical industrial area, formerly full of coal mines and shipyards.

In this particular piece, our last movement memorializes a young man who died an accidental and senseless death down in the mines 30 years ago. Some of his comrades from the pits were at our show, and the emotion on their faces made it evident that the incident still felt like yesterday to them. There really was no need to have any conversation about whether our contemporary practices were accessible, because there was something deeper and more immediate that spoke to their aesthetic experience.

Working on *A Gun Show* has given us confidence to meet social complexities head on through our art, and our other project was immeasurably helped by that process.

LDJ: Do you feel in general, as a performer and therefore someone commanding public attention, that you have a responsibility to the public to at least engage with and/or to take clear political and social stances on issues? Is it enough to just perform and teach the arts without clear relationship to / engagement with art and creativity's (historic and potential, continued) role in activism and social justice/change?

AS: I and we are still grappling with this. Our mission as an organization is generally not geared towards political advocacy, hence my long and slow process of deciding where to draw the line on gun politics. I do think that teaching and making art/music/theater can be helpful in this regard even if your work isn't specifically political. Values like diversity and inclusiveness are moving to the forefront of our concerns as a group, and that's where I think we'll see the most activity in the near future.

JASON TREUTING

LDJ: It's hard to even begin to describe this piece, in particular in language that feels adequate, in a time like this. That said, can you give us your elevator pitch? IE: what is A GUN SHOW, in a few sentences?

JT- *A GUN SHOW* is a personal exploration by these 6 core collaborators on the issues we face with gun violence in our country. It attempts, through our personal lenses, deal with the anger and sadness we feel daily with the needless violence caused by guns and it attempts to find ways to push the discussion, at least for us and hopefully with others, from the naturally





screamy, each-side-take-there-corners place that has become commonplace for this hot button topic and tries to seek places of common ground. I yearn for a practical way forward that embraces the large common ground most Americans have on the subject and I also yearn a place to question the larger question of what places guns should have in our society, not what place they do have. (OK, maybe the first sentence was the elevator pitch...)

LDJ: What was the impetus that originally drove the development of this piece? Tell me about your role in these early conversations - and in the piece's development in general.

JT- So made a show with Emily Johnson and Ain Gordon (and Grey Mcmurray) several years ago called Where (we) Live. That show went to BAM in December of 2012 and as we were gathering the gear from our Greenpoint studio to load up and head to BAM, we got word of the mass shooting of elementary school children and teachers along with the shooter and the shooters mother in Newtown CT. This day and the days that followed, this mass shooting had a different affect on us and we talked about it in new terms. As we toured over the next year, it was what we talked about in the van on the road and over drinks after shows. As a band, we tend to alternate serious political discourse when we hang out with silly, goofball conversation. When the conversation went to politics, we talked about gun control. We questioned what the 2nd amendment meant to us and how it was interpreted by the supreme court. We questioned the place guns had in the society. I questioned guns in general. Was there really such a need to protect a hunting culture I don't understand or have a relationship to? Is there really a need for home protection? Do police need guns? We questioned to the core, and though, in typical political terms, the 4 of us have similar views on things, we argued detailed and subtleties and questioned ourselves. I think this one hit differently for me because I have 2 kids now. And the idea that they will go to elementary school and have to sorry about something like that terrified me. Adam was in a new relationship as well and had a step son that was in elementary school and they were having drills to learn what to do in the case of a mass shooting. The mass shootings of the past were more abstract to me and now I was relating in a different way. In that way, this sparked something different.

When we first decided to explore doing a piece on Guns, I remember we were in Montgomery AL and met Morris Dees, the head of the Southern Poverty Law Center. He was on the board of the concert series we played and I remember that we were told he was going to come to a show, but couldn't tell us which night because he had to be careful where he went because there were multiple death threats on his life from his work calling out extreme groups. That night, we were playing Steve Reich's Drumming and he and his wife were in the front row, and I remember having that feeling of "What am





I doing with my life.” I felt like I was so dedicated to this music I loved and wanted to share it with people, but what good did it actually play in a practical way when the world had so many problems. There were layers there that are so cliché for an artist to deal with, but I was dealing with them mid-performance and then afterwards and then over lunch the next day with Morris. He was of course more interested in what we did than in talking about what he did. And when I questioned the importance of our art, he came to the defense of art in a global way and I agree, of course. Societies without these free flowing ideas that come through art are not societies I want to live in or raise my kids in. But still, we left that meeting wondering if we could make art about something (something we had never really done) and if our thoughts about gun issues boiled down to an idea that they are way more complex than the national conversation is able to handle, then maybe art could be a good way to explore. Afterall, art sucks at talking about things in black and white, but maybe art can deal with the grey area well.

In terms of development, in the fall of 2013, I began a fellowship at Princeton’s Lewis Center of the Arts (now called Princeton Arts Fellows). As part of the fellowship, I got devote some more time to writing music. And at the same time, So was asked to write some music for a visit we were going to do in the spring of 2014 to TN Tech University where we could perform with a group of student percussionists. That fall, I began to write a bunch of music that focused on 4 snare drums and I explored 3 pieces that used the top, bottom, and sides of the drum. The snare drum is the quintessential military instrument and the instrument I love to play most, the drum set, really has these military instruments, snare drum, bass drum and cymbals at the core. I set out to explore the snare drum and wrote these 3 pieces for So to come play at Princeton. That was the first music I wrote. We made a suite out of it for a show at the Lewis Center in December and for the Princeton Sound Kitchen in the spring and added 2 other pieces that were slightly less abstract. Both pieces took words from the 2nd Amendment and repeated them over and over. A piece called “Right,” that was a bit of an homage to a piece Andy Warhol did that used different ways to inflect Yes and No. Adam would say right over and over in a pattern that inflected up or down. Me and Josh and Eric played snare drums and cymbals and hummed. We built up a blues form, which became a way to get to the sadness and mourning. We also used the number 31513, which was the number of gun deaths in 2010, (the most recent numbers we could get at the time). We actually used that number in all of the snare drum music to form the core structures. And the last piece we did in this suite was “Well Regulated.” It was more of an homage to Steve Reich’s early tape music. Adam spoke the word well-regulated over and over and they were looped up and layered on top of each other until they became noise. Eric and Josh added more layers of his voice that became noisier. That was the finally of the suite. We did these pieces again in the spring with added parts for a chorus to play with 8 players from TN

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Tech university. The 8 players became a Greek Chorus of sorts and added to the climactic moments of the pieces. And in addition to these 5 pieces, Josh had written music to be played with pencils on found objects and Eric had written a huge piece for mostly the chorus to play and So to add in for the climax. We did all this music at TN Tech and it really became the core of the music we have drawn on for the show. All of those pieces are still in the show in some way or another. Many of them still resembling the originals, and 2 of the pieces I wrote becoming more disembodied once we began more serious work with our collaborators. Emily took one of the snare drum pieces and asked us to play it in the air without the drums. That choreography became the beginning of *A GUN SHOW*. Right is almost all gone, but the blues idea we used with the words has stuck around. And of course we added more music along the way.

Of what I contributed, I can think of 3 moments that the rest of the music came together. Josh and Emily wrote some text in the early parts of the project. Josh's about an experience becoming an Eagle Scout and Emily about an intense personal experience. We were interested in filtering and I took those texts and ran them through a 31513 filter and gave them back to Josh. We went back and forth a few times and he did his own thing to the words. In the end, he took some version of the filter and some version of the unfiltered and made a story that was really 2 stories intertwined and is now called Squaw Wood. Eric had made an awesome piece of music that was finding its way into something and layers those two worked well. I did some work filtering another story of Emily's in a different way. I listened to it and wrote down as much as I could. That impossible task left us with a filtered version of her story which was interspersed with blues humming and breathing. Since then, the words have been taken out altogether and only the breathing and humming remain. The last piece I worked on with text was called Keisha, and came from searching around for a song about Sandyhook to pay homage to. I was really looking for a school song or something, but the only things I could find were sweet singer-songwriter songs about the tragedy and then lots of links to this crazy conspiracy theory that Keisha new of the plot before hand because of her song "too young to die" and some really wild ideas that link her to the Illuminati. Me and Josh worked on a piece together where he sang some of these words about the conspiracy over the backwards chords of the Keisha song and I looped up bits of the singing. It was beautiful, but very dark and didn't do what it needed to in the show. That piece has been replaced almost wholly by a new piece Josh wrote. The only thing that remains is a story about that conspiracy theory that Josh tells during the new song and a lyric from that conspiracy, "The Truth will set you free."

We had a couple other moments of workshoping that are memorable. The 4 of us spent time in Maine at the Acadia Summer Arts Program in 2014 and





invited Emily J out to hang and work too. We worked on several things while we were out there. I had wanted to work with an idea about contact mic'ing a large Tam Tam and only hearing the sounds when the mics were turned on. You could make a rhythm out of the turning on and off of the tam tam mics. When I was driving to Maine, the after math of the Michael Brown shooting was in full swing and protests were happening in Missouri and the police chief was speaking live on the news to a congregation and everyone was trying to sort out what happened and why. The image of Black men in the streets protesting with their hands above their heads was a potent image. And the fact that so many Black fathers were talking about what they had to teach their sons and daughters: when you go into a convenience store late at night, make sure you have your wallet out of your pocket before you walk in and keep your hands in site at all times so you aren't mistaken for a black man with a gun. Questlove was writing about it and Mayor DeBlasio was speaking about it and President Obama was speaking about it. As a father, I didn't have to tell my white daughters to fear the police. The police had always been a symbol of good, and though I knew and still know it is more complicated, I know it is really more complicated for people that don't look like my fair-skinned, light haired daughters. That sucks.

When we worked on the Tam tam piece, Josh wondered what it would be like for him to hold that heavy tam tam for a long time. He had been on a strong man workout and did some competitions and he was interested in that challenge. At first, we made a 30 minute long piece that was epic for him to try to tackle from a physical standpoint. Something about that hard work spoke to the issues at hand. And when he raised the tam tam above his head, the image of Michael Brown was strong for me. And at the end, when he was huffing and puffing and his arms were twitching, I always had the question of whether I should help him or not. Usually the answer was informed by what we were playing next, but I always felt terrible not helping. How could you not help someone that obviously needed it?

In the following year, Emily Johnson was in NYC more and more. In Maine, she had started to teach us some movement that was really interesting. The four of us had never really moved before like that. She taught us a series of moves to loop and we explored how to get those movements in the mix. We had been exploring ways to get her to play music as well. Get out of our comfort zones. I think we each had moments where we got together with Emily in smaller groups to work on ideas. There were 2 times that me and Emily got together to work. One time, we were exploring a piece where she would play a snare drum roll on a drum and I would detune it. It was an interesting sound and we explored it for a while and she added some text ideas. We would say names we remembered from our past and sometimes add stories. Those two things layered on top of each other became interesting and something we continued to explore. (and still do now in the show)

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We also made time on a few days to explore movement together. I remember she was very excited to work, but said we needed to rent time at a dance studio. I remember that feeling like a big deal, because SO usually did everything in our rehearsal space so we never needed to pay rent. But Emily new we needed a bigger/uninhibited space. We got together for 3 or so days to work and it was really life changing for me. For the first hour we just stretched, mostly in silence. And then we improvised together, but not really together, more on our own in the room together and then shared what we did. It was awesome. By the 3rd day, Emily had taken some of the things we shared with each other- some jumping and finger patterns I was messing around with, some arm motions and walking ideas she had- and organized them. Some of them went with pieces of music and some of them existed on their own. It was super exciting to start a vocabulary of movement. I had never done that before. Many of these movements have remained in the show. Some, very tied to pieces. Like our jumping duet with Josh's Gun Parts piece. And other movements that have lived a bit more freely and are finding their way into concrete places. I think the tip toe/walking movement has a new place as of our last work session. But they are a bit more modular.

OK.... I know there is more, but that is what I can remember.

Oh no, one more bit that has stuck around and found a new place, actually the ending. Adam wrote some prose a while back in response to his wrestling with the topic. I had set the prose to a song that we all sang together. That was exciting because it was the first time Adam wrote text to be used in a piece and it was the first time I had set text. Most of that has been cut from the show. But one line "Sing when your voice feels faintest" has always hung with us. The melody has morphed a bit, but I now sing that in two moments of the show. As I wrestle with the darkness, sadness and anger that the subject brings out in me, these words give me a bit of optimism.

LDJ: There's certainly a good deal of interplay between influences, story, and reflection on personal experience - talk a little about how you all, as collaborators, brought your history / reflections / emotions into framing the piece - and in particular your role in that collaboration.

JT- Between the 6 of us, we have varied experiences. For SO, Josh probably grew up with the closest relationship to guns, in that he had shot one. But none of us really grew up with many direct experiences. Emily's experience, both in her native Alaska with Native American roots and as a female with some experience on how gun violence often time spills over into other types of violence, is more personal.

For me, I grew up in the suburbs of LA and had never touched a gun until





we started researching for the project. No one in my immediate family hunted or went shooting. My extended family of Aunts and Uncles in Louisiana and Mississippi have more direct experiences, but I didn't grow up so close to them hearing stories or anything. My ideas about the subject are fairly abstracted from any hard reality. I never knew anyone who was shot or that shot anyone, until the last few years. I now have a closer relationship to an older woman who committed suicide by gun and have had many more conversations with people touched by the issue. For me, guns are scary. I went to a hand gun shooting range in North New Jersey to research the subject. I was scared to be there. I didn't like holding something that powerful in my hands and I didn't like how easy it was to pull the trigger and exert deadly force with such a small physical effort. In some ways, maybe that makes me less qualified to speak on the subject? I am also a white male living in a world that is still dominated by people that look like me. I feel guilty for that. I think the thing I can offer is the view of a white, male who is scared of guns and feels like they have an outsized place in our national conversation. American history gives the 2nd Amendment an outsized place in our bill of rights. I understand why this happened, but I am saddened by the consequences. I feel like it is obvious that we all agree the weapons need to be regulated and so I want to speak up with others that feel like more regulation could help us live in a place we will all be prouder of.

I would say in the collaboration, most of the music I have written has been abstracted reactions to the subject. Anger through noise. Power through sound. Sadness through contemplation. Protest through stillness. Abstract reactions in mood and structure to real feelings. I want to have catharsis in reacting to these real issues but I want to have a distance to think through these issues in more objective terms as well. I think others have added more narrative responses through story and song. It is often the way we work, by combining these different ways of reacting into one show or one piece.

LDJ: I think what may be difficult to parse for the general public is the ways in which each of you brings these elements not only to the concept of the show and its staging, and then to visual and textual factors within the production and its framework, but also to the composition of the percussion arrangement, itself.

JT- The way we worked on this show is actually really similar to the way the 4 of us work in general, in that once an idea is brought to the table it is really communal. Some pieces may have been more thought through than others when they were first thrown in the pool, but once it is in the pool, we can all give ideas for what happens next. Everyone suggests ideas for instrumentation or for larger scale structures. Emily and Ain can suggest drastic things as well. Emily took away the snare drums for my piece. Ain wondered about starting Eric's piece extremely soft and building up over the course of the





piece instead of being huge the whole time. And layering becomes a real good way to way as well. Let's try the humming and breathing parts from that piece over this piece or take the movement from that piece and try it here. That is the way the 4 of us work, and now that we have worked with Ain and Emily over the course of 5 or so years, we all have that relationship too.

LDJ: Are all members of the ensemble equally involved in the composition process? Talk a little more about the development of the piece itself -- especially when it has conceptual elements, like this one -- how much do (and, in compositional, instrumental, musical terms how do) these influences come to bear on this process, collaboratively or for you in particular? How has the influence of other, non-percussion based collaborators changed or directly influenced the evolution of the piece and your relationship to it?

JT- I think I may have gone into some detail above on this, but I probably have more thoughts! I would say that the show is composed by the 6 of us. Everyone has contributed material to the show creatively. Within So, I think we all have a different relationship to composing. I love to compose and try to spend as much time as I can on it. I don't think Adam considers himself a composer and his creative contributions come more through his skills as an interpreter and of course as a writer. Eric has worked on the video for the piece as well as composed musical material for the piece and Josh has composed pieces and written text that's used. Most all of the pieces could be talked about as co-composed or collaboratively composed in some way, either within SO or with input from Emily and Ain.

LDJ: You're performing together but in some ways all maintain individual identities within the piece - there are solo elements, movement elements, and other aspects that are performed or led by individuals. Can you talk about this and how it does or does not represent or correspond with your voices / input into the piece?

JT- I think over the last 10 years, each of us have really developed some individual interests. I think Josh's interest in monologue and text is a clear example of this. In our last show, he had this role and he has developed it more in *A GUN SHOW* with monologue and also in his duet with Emily.

I have become very interested in movement. Concurrently with this project, I have been working with the choreographer Susan Marshall on a new show that premiered last June. In that show, I am on stage as a mover/dancer and I have loved exploring that side of myself. It's a side I didn't know I had. With Emily, it has been interesting to work on that. In the first part of the show, it feels like we have several duo moments that have taken shape. Some of that feels like a natural extension of this interest in movement, but some of it has





developed outside of that. I am not usually someone who would speak in a show and I have a moment of storytelling with her that is very new for me. I would also not be a performer that sings in a show, and I have this line I sing at two different moments in the show. Those moments are very vulnerable for me and I am trying to give in to them and enjoy them. It feels like the subject matter needs that.

I think there are many more examples of that, but those are a few that come to mind.

LDJ: What are elements that you are performing solo or that you “lead” in the *piece* - *how did these evolve and what do they represent, personally, thematically, or otherwise?*

JT- The beginning of the piece is a piece I wrote for snare drum quartet, kinda called 3:2, that has become a piece for movement. I think I lead in that portion and the new version kinda becomes divided as 1 and 3. And this leads into a new solo movement part when Eric’s big chorus piece starts.

After that, the next moments that I feel like I lead are really the duet’s with Emily. She actually leads I would say. But they feel like highlighted moments when we tell short stories and list names along with our snare drum duet and then when we have our jumping duet layered over Josh’s gun parts piece with Yumi and Carime humming/breathing duet. I guess that is a moment where 3 things are happening.

After the trio plays the gun parts, I have an interlude/meditation of sorts that I have a solo looping up different feedback tones I get from placing a microphone inside a tin can getting close to the speaker.

The next long piece is a snare drum quartet we call cym/rim shot. I sing a line of text solo over the beginning of that piece. In that piece, I sit in the front and so become a default leader in the snare drum music.

Tam Tam piece is definitely a moment that highlights Josh and Emily up at the Tam Tam. For the group parts that we play, I lead the chorus entrances. This seems less important though.

I think I have more solo/leadership moments early in the show. The last time I have a solo is the ending of the piece where I sing Adam’s line “sing when your voice feels faintest” by myself to end the show.

LDJ: *How literally has the concept of creating a piece around the loaded question of the GUN influenced the music/composition? Can you paint a more detailed picture for us of the soundscape you’ve created, and what*





might differentiate the experience of A GUN SHOW in performance vs. other S Percussion pieces? There's vocal elements, both sung and spoken, marching, and drumming on gun parts, but not exclusively and not throughout the performance -- nonetheless in attending rehearsal recently I felt like there were elements of dirge/funereal music, perhaps fife and drum or early military marches, and other nods. Can you talk a little more about this interplay, and your intentions around literal inclusion / allusion / etc?

JT- For me, I feel like when I started creates pieces and bits and thoughts for the piece I gave myself a box of things to draw on. Originally that was instrument stuff, with the military instruments forming the backbone. We knew this wasn't going to be a show where I would sit down at a drum set, Josh at the steel pans, etc and make music that way informed by the subject. The instruments were going to inform the music. And the military idea as well. Making some music that was very regimented and uniform.

Another idea was the blues. That felt like a formal and structural way for me to converse with the sadness and devastation of the issue. That form was made in response to hardship and oppression. And it was an African American response. This issue isn't as one sided as the blues response to slavery, but the fact that guns are a different issue in urban environments that affect the black community differently and the more commonplace occurrence of unarmed black men being shot by law enforcement in routine traffic stops, etc etc. Using the blues early on was a way to speak to that.

Using the 31513 statistic as a musical structure was another thing I put in the box. Using numbers for large scale structures and rhythmic ideas has been something I and we have done lots of in the past. That was something in the box.

The idea of using noise more than melody was something I wanted to mess around with as well. Noise was a good way to get to the anger of the issue for me.

And experimenting with text directly from the 2nd amendment was something in that box.

That could've been it early on. I jumped in with that and once pieces came together and were put next to other pieces new things popped out. The marching idea began to be a theme used a few times. The uniform approach was something we used early on in a few pieces. Josh's piece that is now played on gun parts, was originally more of an experiment with extreme regimentation between the 4 parts that he was jumping off of words used in the media to describe the issue. This is how we work often. Have things to make pieces with and then see what we got and evaluate and then tweak





and make more.

The more melodic music in the show came later when we felt we needed some relief and some more emotional responses.

LDJ: I've spoken a little bit with Adam about the history of percussion vis-a-vis its social and cultural role from its origins to the invention of the Drum Kit itself being a byproduct of military/regional bands - propogating in the US after the civil war, if I'm not mistaken. Has (and how has) awareness of the role of percussion as a social tool influenced this piece, in particular? Has that come to bear at all on your role / your influence on the music or concept? How and why?

JT- For me, I think it is more that I have felt that my everyday life has very few direct connections to gun culture and then when it dawned on me that the root of what I do, not just as a percussionist, but the types of instruments I love to play and began playing, is connected so directly to the Military and the use was very practical- to keep folks in line and make killing other folks easier and more orderly. That was a hard realization. Trying to use those instruments to tell a different story was nice for me. But they also are used to symbolize some of the destruction and horror as well.

LDJ: Now we get perhaps to the stickier stuff - let's talk about the social and community potential / intentions of this piece.

For a little background - you're all educators, directly, running the institute and doing substantial work in schools - am I missing anything? Has their always been a didactic element of what you do as musicians? How has that part of your work evolved individually and/or as an ensemble?

JT- I feel like in many ways we have kept the two things separate, or I have at least. I have had my artistic and creative life a bit outside of my teaching. Teaching has been about inspiring openness and giving students tools to say what they want to say and these large scale creative pieces that speak to larger social issues hasn't been something that I've taught about or tackled so much in school. Maybe that will change for me, but it seems to be two separate lines at the moment.

LDJ: What's SP's general position on public education and community engagement via the creative arts? Do social issues inform your work with any frequency? Beyond the sort of standard post-show talk-back or Q&A, either individually or as an ensemble have you sought to engage in public dialogue about particular issues or conflicts via particular compositions or performances in the past?

JT- I feel like I have tried to be open to the conversations when they arise,





but I think we have also usually shied away from bringing politics into our world of art making. I'm not sure that is sustainable or healthy, but usually the art making speaks to a more root feeling of wanting the world to work in a more open and cooperative way. That is the way we approach making music together and we want to have that openness with the audience as well. When we have delved into evening length works that go deep into a subject, the show is lots different than a usual SO show and I think it feels different for the audience as well. I want to find a way to share with the audience in these shows as well and I think that will need to be through discussions afterwards or before or around the show.

LDJ: Though the initial impetus was gun violence and gun control, in the US specifically, does this mean that questions as to militarization and war, import and export of weapons, etc, beyond the US borders, whether in relationship to the US as a major exporter of weapons (and of wars), is also part of the story? Since its non-us military weapon pieces that are being used as percussive elements, there is already a nod to that. Would you say that, in general, the main topic is the role of the GUN in contemporary US life? Human life? Media? History?

JT- I feel like I think about the content of the show mostly in terms of the problem of guns in the US right now. What about our culture and society distinguishes us from the rest of the western civilized world that makes guns such a subject of desire, infatuation and leads to such different problems. No where else in comparable democracies are gun deaths equivalent for homicides, accidents or suicides. What is it about our culture that feeds this and what can we do to change some of that? I feel like the exportation of war is not just another chapter in the book but maybe a whole different book or series. Maybe some of the impulses are similar, but ...

LDJ: Whose voices have been considered in the process of putting together the piece so far? (ie, whether specific people or specific groups of people / interest groups / books, etc). What has the research process consisted of to date?

JT- I feel like some of the research has been universal- as a group we decided to shoot a gun at the shooting range to have that experience or Vermont Performance Lab supported some research when Eric, Josh and Ain went hunting in VT, interviewed gun owners and law enforcement up there and went to a gun show in CT. But much of the research has been individual. I have searched out discussions online mediated by folks I respect, like Brian Lehrer and I have searched out more information through moderate advocacy groups like Americans for Responsible Solutions and Gun Violence Archive.org. But truthfully, much of the process has been personal reflection and finding a





LDJ: Adam and I have also spoken at some length about A GUN SHOW's desire to not be a singular statement on gun control or gun violence, so perhaps it's most accurate to describe it as more of a meditation around the role of the gun in our lives both actively and in our imaginary. If A GUN SHOW needn't have an agenda, or an answer, where is the line drawn in terms of ENOUGH? Ie: how does one determine what is essential to include, or ok to leave out?

JT- I'll say that the idea of a meditation on gun control and violence and culture and ... may be right, especially at the beginning, but it becomes harder not to have a position.

I believe guns are too easy to access in America. They are a tool of death and should be harder to obtain. For this to happen, we need federal regulation instead of the hodgepodge state regulations we currently have.

I refuse to accept that guns are necessary in our society, but I also understand the importance of pragmatic solutions that will save lives and make things a little better.

I also believe that the majority of thoughtful citizens agree on many of these pragmatic solutions and we need to find a way to make our voices heard for change.

I believe that the issue at hand is very complicated and that thinking you have all the answers is as big a problem as any. I have learned that people do hunt to live and hunt for tradition and I am learning to respect those needs in my quest for answers.

Buying and using a gun should be more like buying and driving a car. This is the best analogue I can see in our society and I think if you have to learn to drive and take a test to drive and renew the ability to drive and obtain insurance for the car you drive and have your car tested to make sure it runs safely for the environment and for others, then I think the same things could and should apply to buying a gun and learning to shoot a gun and maintaining your skills and safely using and storing a gun, etc.

That said, all our decisions for when we were done were made through the art lens. We want to, more than anything, make a good work of art that explores the subject and it will never be done, but we will make the calls like we do in our other art making.

LDJ: When I work with performers or visual artists on documenting their work, they often find that the act of considering writing in tandem to the





performance or art itself shifts the burden somewhat away from the work vis-a-vis its responsibility in concretely carrying the social message. Adam is already approaching this work as a writer who considers his projects via language as a personal practice. Have you found that this is the case for you with A GUN SHOW? Tell us more about where and how you've decided to speak directly to the issues and where you've allowed it to be more sensory / experiential, and how you found (or are continuing to find) this balance.

JT- I do feel like there is a different head space to talking about the art making and the social message. In many ways, I feel like Adam has a wonderful place in the group as an interpreter first and foremost. His creative role often jumps off of this expertise and he maintains a more objective state of mind in judging our group work as creators. I feel like it is difficult to distance myself from the art making in any kind of objective way and it isn't a strength of mine.

LDJ: What are your hopes for this piece, both in its upcoming performances and beyond? What sort of impact or potential positive conversations might it generate? Would it be something you'd like to see other professional or school ensembles performing and using to encourage dialogue in their own communities?

JT- I always hope that our work sparks a dialogue with the listener/audience. Many times, that dialogue would seem to be a more abstract conversation about arts place in ones life or what the music means to the listener or what it means to make music from ordinary objects or how our work converses with the 20th century experimental lineage of Cage and Harrison and Reich and Glass. In some cases, when we make multi-disciplinary work, I imagine the conversations after a concert being more about how the visual interacted with the sonic images, etc. But in this case, I do hope that a dialogue with the audience and between members of the audience will be twofold. I hope they will talk about the art itself and also the subject matter. Maybe this will give us all an excuse to approach the subject matter in a fresh way. Maybe the show will remind the audience how murky this subject is and how confused we should all be about it and maybe in this revived confusion, we can put aside assumptions and try to find some simple truths that every death by gun should be saddening and that each time it happens we should be resolved to make it happen less. It seems like our national dialogue is at a place where we can't even agree on that and any chance we have to shake us all back to that simple truth is an important one.

LDJ: Could and should this piece continue to evolve and change in response to the continuously fraught story of guns in this country and worldwide? If others wanted to perform this piece but customize it in some way, including their own stories and images, would you be open to that? Is there flexibility in the piece for continued growth and adaptation?





JT- I imagine there is flexibility in this piece as there is with any art. And our approach to our own work is much more flexible in general than many creators. I don't think any work needs to become calcified in its original form. That said, the response is/will also be complete in what it is. We are responding to what we know in this moment and that is OK.

LDJ: Do you feel that this piece can help us begin to heal and work together? What audiences do you feel would most benefit from this piece and discussion around it? Is it possible that by including music in the conversation, we are accessing subconscious emotional spaces of connection around our human experiences of fear and anxiety, care for loved ones, a desire for safety, etc? Have you intentionally worked with the emotional landscape of the piece in considering audience reaction and potential affect?

JT- I do think that art can access a subconscious and help work out ideas in a different place in ones mind. I think that any time we can learn of others experiences we can begin to sympathize or, in the best case, empathize with people coming from different points of view. I would love for people to view this work that think they are coming from a different place than us and chew on our idea. But I imagine that the most it will shake up an audience would be when people with more progressive politics, like ourselves, come in thinking they have it pegged and maybe can come out realizing that there is complexity that they didn't go in with as well. That has been my road and I think that has been a good growing experience for me.

LDJ: What are your next steps, for future projects? Do you feel a growing commitment to create work that speaks to major subjects in the social imaginary? Has (and how has) working on this project shifted your consciousness about the role of performers / composers in community dialogue and healing?

JT- I think that we are trying to find a balance between being socially conscious artists that can try to add to a dialogue in our scene, but I also think that making art in a less blatant social context is still really rewarding for me. And sometimes, the consciousness of a work is covered by layers but is still there and possible to access. I think this is an important step for us but I am not sure it is a fork in the road. Rather it is maybe another branch among many we have in S□ Percussion and an important one to keep considering.

LDJ: Do you feel in general, as a performer and therefore someone commanding public attention, that you have a responsibility to the public to at least engage with and/or to take clear political and social stances on issues? Is it enough to just perform and teach the arts without clear relationship to / engagement with art and creativity's (historic and potential, continued) role





in activism and social justice/change?

JT- I struggle with this. In the presidential election of 2008, I remember feeling that I should use the mouthpiece that we have at shows to speak out for the candidate we believe in. And the stakes are equally high this election and probably always. But we rarely use the stage in that way. That said, I do think that every citizen has a responsibility to be true to their views and we are getting better at speaking our minds through our work.

JOSH QUILLEN

LDJ: It's hard to even begin to describe this piece, in particular in language that feels adequate, in a time like this. That said, can you give us your elevator pitch? IE: what is A GUN SHOW, in a few sentences?

A Gun Show is an attempt, and I stress, 'attempt' at setting, to music, the current gun culture in the United States of America. It expresses our confusion, anger, sadness, complexity, and hope for the future of the gun culture in the United States of America, though, I personally believe we are past the point of no return and headed towards the fall of our society as a whole, with guns leading the charge.

LDJ: What was the impetus that originally drove the development of this piece? Tell me about your role in these early conversations - and in the piece's development in general.

The Sandy Hook shootings. We were all together rehearsing another earlier project about 'home' when the shootings happened. Sandy Hook was a home to young children, parents, and a mass-murderer. Homes are complex. This country is complex, but the complexities shouldn't be ignored or unaddressed, so we decided to address them.

LDJ: There's certainly a good deal of interplay between influences, story, and reflection on personal experience - talk a little about how you all, as collaborators, brought your history / reflections / emotions into framing the piece - and in particular your role in that collaboration.

We just brought them to the table and started mashing things together to see what happened. Many of the stories that are told or text that is used is a combination of stories that Emily Johnson and I wrote separately from each other.

LDJ: I think what may be difficult to parse for the general public is the ways in which each of you brings these elements not only to the concept of the show and its staging, and then to visual and textual factors within the production and its framework, but also to the composition of the percussion





arrangement, itself.

Are all members of the ensemble equally involved in the composition process? Talk a little more about the development of the piece itself -- especially when it has conceptual elements, like this one -- how much do (and, in compositional, instrumental, musical terms how do) these influences come to bear on this process, collaboratively or for you in particular? How has the influence of other, non-percussion based collaborators changed or directly influenced the evolution of the piece and your relationship to it?

We have differing degrees of involvement depending on the piece. The last line of the show that is sung by Jason is from a poem Adam wrote. The text you hear in the latter half of the show was independently written by Emily and me but then with Ain's input along with Jason's processes, we came to something a bit different over time. We do things collaboratively quite often so that type of work is natural for us. We RARELY bring a finished score to the table at first. We arrive at it after a long time.

LDJ: You're performing together but in some ways all maintain individual identities within the piece - there are solo elements, movement elements, and other aspects that are performed or led by individuals. Can you talk about this and how it does or does not represent or correspond with your voices / input into the piece?

We haven't really consciously addressed this aside from the fact that we all come to this gun issue from slightly different vantage points. I think this led to many instances of solos and duos and trios throughout the work, however. Ain, at the end of directing "Where (we) Live" mentioned he would like to hear what we would do in smaller groups, so we kind of liked that challenge.

LDJ: What are elements that you are performing solo or that you "lead" in the piece - how did these evolve and what do they represent, personally, thematically, or otherwise?

I have a solo text I perform that is an intro to a larger duo. Initially it was a transition in the show but it morphed into a moment to introduce text and move us into the second half of the show.

LDJ: How literally has the concept of creating a piece around the loaded question of the GUN influenced the music/composition?

We are playing a piece on actual gun parts, which I think is the most literal part of the show. The use of snare drums comes from the military use of snare drums as a way of advancing an army.





LDJ: Can you paint a more detailed picture for us of the soundscape you've created, and what might differentiate the experience of A GUN SHOW in performance vs. other S□ Percussion pieces?

We've made a show that is a bit more challenging than our typical show. There's much more "noise" in it than groove. On the other side of the coin, there is a simple song sung by two women against a simple harmonic background, which is also not something we normally do.

There's vocal elements, both sung and spoken, marching, and drumming on gun parts, but not exclusively and not throughout the performance -- nonetheless in attending rehearsal recently I felt like there were elements of dirge/funereal music, perhaps fife and drum or early military marches, and other nods. Can you talk a little more about this interplay, and your intentions around literal inclusion / allusion / etc?

Mourning has been a recurring theme for us. Whether your mourning the loss of life, or the loss of culture, or the loss of legislation, or....it's a thread that runs throughout.

LDJ: I've spoken a little bit with Adam about the history of percussion vis-a-vis its social and cultural role from its origins to the invention of the Drum Kit itself being a byproduct of military/regional bands - propogating in the US after the civil war, if I'm not mistaken. Has (and how has) awareness of the role of percussion as a social tool influenced this piece, in particular? Has that come to bear at all on your role / your influence on the music or concept? How and why?

Now we get perhaps to the stickier stuff - let's talk about the social and community potential / intentions of this piece.

For a little background - you're all educators, directly, running the institute and doing substantial work in schools - am I missing anything? Has their always been a didactic element of what you do as musicians? How has that part of your work evolved individually and/or as an ensemble?

The biggest thing has been trying to talk to the students about the issues we are dealing with. Talking with them about music is easy. Talking about guns is hard.

LDJ: What's SP's general position on public education and community engagement via the creative arts?

We are all products of public school education so we feel it's essential to the furthering of culture in this country.





LDJ: Do social issues inform your work with any frequency? Beyond the sort of standard post-show talk-back or Q&A, either individually or as an ensemble have you sought to engage in public dialogue about particular issues or conflicts via particular compositions or performances in the past?

Social issues and art go hand in hand. Beauty is a social issue. Love is a social issue. War is a social issue. So, yes, we think about it often and dialogue with folks about it/them is crucial.

LDJ: Though the initial impetus was gun violence and gun control, in the US specifically, does this mean that questions as to militarization and war, import and export of weapons, etc, beyond the US borders, whether in relationship to the US as a major exporter of weapons (and of wars), is also part of the story? Since its non-us military weapon pieces that are being used as percussive elements, there is already a nod to that. Would you say that, in general, the main topic is the role of the GUN in contemporary US life? Human life? Media? History?

The gun is a tool for some folks, but it was invented to kill. The military makes specialized versions of certain rifles to kill quicker. And to kill, exclusively, humans. My issue is with those primarily.

LDJ: Whose voices have been considered in the process of putting together the piece so far? (ie, whether specific people or specific groups of people / interest groups / books, etc). What has the research process consisted of to date?

Lots of personal stories from relatives growing up and our personal experiences along with a few from audience members who saw the show in it's infant form early on influenced the work.

LDJ: Adam and I have also spoken at some length about A GUN SHOW's desire to not be a singular statement on gun control or gun violence, so perhaps it's most accurate to describe it as more of a meditation around the role of the gun in our lives both actively and in our imaginary. If A GUN SHOW needn't have an agenda, or an answer, where is the line drawn in terms of ENOUGH? Ie: how does one determine what is essential to include, or ok to leave out?

I think we are coming to a stronger idea of what our "agenda" is. I think that this point, if the agenda could NOT involve insane conspiracy theories about abolishing the second amendment or the Sandy Hook shootings being faked by Obama, that would be huge.

LDJ: When I work with performers or visual artists on documenting their





work, they often find that the act of considering writing in tandem to the performance or art itself shifts the burden somewhat away from the work vis-a-vis its responsibility in concretely carrying the social message. Adam is already approaching this work as a writer who considers his projects via language as a personal practice. Have you found that this is the case for you with A GUN SHOW? Tell us more about where and how you've decided to speak directly to the issues and where you've allowed it to be more sensory / experiential, and how you found (or are continuing to find) this balance.

Im interested in the work having a life outside of the performances and this seems to be a good way for that to happen.

LDJ: What are your hopes for this piece, both in its upcoming performances and beyond? What sort of impact or potential positive conversations might it generate? Would it be something you'd like to see other professional or school ensembles performing and using to encourage dialogue in their own communities?

I highly doubt anyone else would learn the project outside of S Percussion, but if that did happen, that would be great! I really just want people to think about the issues....that's all.

LDJ: Could and should this piece continue to evolve and change in response to the continuously fraught story of guns in this country and worldwide? If others wanted to perform this piece but customize it in some way, including their own stories and images, would you be open to that? Is there flexibility in the piece for continued growth and adaptation?

This is, sadly, the most consistently relevant project we've done to date. It will be relevant twenty years from now because I have come to believe NOTHING will ever change with regards to gun issues. If 20 school kids being slaughtered changes anything, nothing will.

LDJ: Do you feel that this piece can help us begin to heal and work together? What audiences do you feel would most benefit from this piece and discussion around it? Is it possible that by including music in the conversation, we are accessing subconscious emotional spaces of connection around our human experiences of fear and anxiety, care for loved ones, a desire for safety, etc? Have you intentionally worked with the emotional landscape of the piece in considering audience reaction and potential affect?

I hope so. I think all audiences, both liberal and conservative, could benefit from thinking about these issues in a complex way would be helpful to us all. I don't like to work thinking about what an audience will or will not like. What if I don't like it?





LDJ: What are your next steps, for future projects? Do you feel a growing commitment to create work that speaks to major subjects in the social imaginary? Has (and how has) working on this project shifted your consciousness about the role of performers / composers in community dialogue and healing?

No idea just yet.

LDJ: Do you feel in general, as a performer and therefore someone commanding public attention, that you have a responsibility to the public to at least engage with and/or to take clear political and social stances on issues? Is it enough to just perform and teach the arts without clear relationship to / engagement with art and creativity's (historic and potential, continued) role in activism and social justice/change?

No. Art has no responsibility but to be. But I like to do all the things you mentioned.

ERIC CHA-BEACH

I think *A GUN SHOW* is the end result of the six of us (four members of So, Emily, and Ain) living in a space of thinking about / feeling / researching the effects of guns – the ‘little machines’ that make catastrophic violence so available in the world. It’s a bunch of subjective responses stitched together using the tools that we each bring to the table as artists.

The six of us were together in rehearsal for our project ‘Where (we) Live’ on the day the Sandy Hook shootings took place – our phones all started buzzing at the same time with the news alerts – and we shared a sense of outrage that day. During the touring of Where (we) Live, it became a recurring topic of conversation over dinners and long car rides. Eventually, a sense started to develop that we should use our work to try to deal with the things we were all thinking and feeling. I remember an exhibit at the Guggenheim a few years ago that explored artists working between World War I and World War II. Many artists after World War I couldn’t put the horror of the war into their work, and instead turned to ancient Greek forms of ‘pure’ art (neoclassicism). But there was a question that seemed to be asked by that show – do artists have a responsibility to use their work as a way of digesting the troubles in the world around them. I’m not sure I know the answer to that, but I have viewed this project as my first real attempt to do so.

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I had very little direct, personal experience with guns when we started the project. My parents were the types who didn't even want my sisters and me playing with toy guns as kids. I don't think I had ever held a real gun before our trip to the gun range to research this project. But any individual gun is so much more than the bullets it fires – it's a symbol of the availability of deadly force, which inspires fear for some people and a sense of safety for others. That's why we all care about guns so much even if they aren't a part of our lives.

I came to this project feeling overwhelmed by the feedback loop of our arguments over what to do about gun violence – drowning in talking points and statistics from all sides. Several of my contributions to the project were reactions to that feeling. The longest piece of mine in the show, which is performed mostly by the chorus right at the beginning, was a musical representation of getting stuck and being overwhelmed. The music develops for a long time, but eventually most of the players get 'stuck' on one pattern – repeating one thing as loud as they can over and over and over again but not going anywhere.

As I was working on the videos for the project, I became really interested in the way that we absorb gun violence visually in our culture. The Sandy Hook Report redactions were an important reference point for all of us as we started on the project – page after page of black screens with numbers indicating why images should not be viewed. Obviously we're surrounded by 24-hour news and analysis – even as I'm typing this I see a news flash about two elementary school students being shot in South Carolina. There is the typical coverage we've gotten used to seeing: the footage from a helicopter circling the scene, the police cars with their doors still open from running into the building, a crowd of survivors gathered outside. We all feel a mix of awe, curiosity, and apprehension when we watch this, but we're also held at a distance from really seeing the true depth of the tragedy.

I had several discussions with the artist Luke Dubois that really helped me to think through the ways we distance ourselves from really understanding the effects of gun violence. Both sides use research, data, statistics, and fancy graphics to try to make their arguments. I became interested in the way that a little icon of a gun should represent 100 gun deaths or 1,000 shootings. We feel a brief sense of being appalled looking at these graphs, but I think they actually disconnect us from deeper, more visceral reactions that are natural to feel when we see the effects of violence. Bullets are little pieces of lead that spit out of guns and slam into bodies - piercing organs, shattering bones, spilling blood. It's horrifying stuff. The news website Slate.com did a great project where they tracked every gun death for a year following Sandy Hook and represented every single one with a little icon of a person that you can click on to read more details (this project eventually turned into the Gun





Violence Archive that we use to cite statistics in the show). It's mind-boggling how long it takes to scroll down the page. I wanted to will myself to feel as deeply about each little individual icon as I would seeing a real person, but I just don't think I can.

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/crime/2012/12/gun_death_tally_every_american_gun_death_since_newtown_sandy_hook_shooting.html

The two main videos that appear on the backdrop during the second half of the show are both built out of content from websites. The first is a very long and slow video constructed out of super-enlarged gun icons used on pro- or anti-gun websites. Since both kinds of sites use the same types of graphic design, you can find yourself surprised sometimes, thinking that you're about to read statistics advocating for gun control and then realizing that you're on a pro-gun website (or vice-versa). I was interested in the idea of enlarging the importance of one of these tiny icons (each representing thousands of shootings, homicides, suicides, etc).

The first icon is pulled from a graphic listing the causes of homicide by continent that shows guns being used in 66% of homicides in the Americas (versus 28% in Africa, 28% in Asian, 13% in Europe, 10% in Oceania, and the global average of 41%). The second comes from a website showing that according to a 1998 study, for every time a gun is used in self defense, there are 3 instances of an unintentional shooting, 7 criminal assaults or homicides, and 11 completed suicides. The third comes from a site showing that there were at least 62 mass shootings in the country since 1982 (at least 25 since 2006), and of the 142 guns used in those shootings, 3 out of 4 were obtained legally. The fourth comes from a graphic showing that the number of guns in the United States amounts to one gun per every seven people worldwide. The fifth comes from a website stating that there are 80 times as many instances of guns being used in self defense versus the combined total of homicides, suicides, and accidents every year (listed on the site at 31,672). Quickly re-reading this paragraph, I realize that even now I have to take a moment to remember which side of the argument each of these statistics was involved with. Each statistic itself is interesting, but many of them don't inherently make a political statement until the material around them contextualizes them.

The second long video is the 'data deluge' that comes at the end of the whole show. This video contains content from hundreds of websites that I visited while doing research for the project, each flashing by in a fraction of a second. Occasionally, one of the images will get 'stuck' for just a moment longer than the others – just long enough that we can try to decipher the content. Usually, these images flash away quickly enough that we aren't 100%





sure if we've been able to understand the content. For me, the experience of watching this video feels frustrating in the way that my research felt frustrating – thousands of statistics and data points available, but each one fleeting and unable to break through to the level of real empathy.

This digging into data visualization became my way of exploring the intensely human process of ordering the chaos of the world around us. Especially after moments of tragedy, we all struggle to get things to 'make sense'. The conspiracy theory websites that Josh was finding seemed like the most ridiculous thing in the world when he first started telling us about them. The idea that someone believed the children killed at Sandy Hook were actors, and that the pop star Ke\$ha knew in advance about the shootings – it's all so crazy. But as we were working with the material I started to feel empathy for these conspiracy theorists. What's more crazy - that someone thinks Sandy Hook was a hoax staged by gun control activists, or that Sandy Hook happened at all?

This empathizing with the conspiracy theorists made me start thinking about the human capacity of nonsense or irrationality as it relates to guns. We're all irrational sometimes, and it can be viewed as an essential part of the human condition – maybe even something that can be useful when it helps us to deal with things that are impossible to understand. But part of the tragedy surrounding guns stems from their unique ability to translate moments of irrational behavior into catastrophe more quickly than any other means at our disposal.





ARTIST BIOS

S PERCUSSION



With innovative multi-genre original productions, sensational interpretations of modern classics, and an “exhilarating blend of precision and anarchy, rigor and bedlam,” (The New Yorker), Sō Percussion has redefined the scope and role of the modern percussion ensemble.

Recent and upcoming highlights include an acclaimed Trilogy portrait at the 2016 Lincoln Center Festival; appearances at Bonnaroo, the Eaux Claires Festival, and TED 2016; concerts at Carnegie Hall with Shara Nova, Glenn Kotche, and for Steve Reich’s 80th birthday celebrations; a Bryce Dessner portrait concert in Nantes, France; a return to the Barbican for Sound/Unbound; and much more.

Rooted in the belief that music is an essential facet of human life, a social bond, and an effective tool in creating agency and citizenship, Sō Percussion pursues a growing range of social and community outreach, including their Brooklyn Bound presentations of younger composers; commitments to purchasing offsets to compensate for carbon-heavy activities such as touring travel; and leading their SōSI students in an annual food-packing drive, yielding up to 25,000 meals, for the Crisis Center of Mercer County through the organization EndHungerNE.

Sō Percussion is the Edward T. Cone Ensemble-in-Residence at Princeton University, run the annual Sō Percussion Summer Institute (SōSI), and are Co-Directors of the percussion department at the Bard College-Conservatory of Music.

Sō Percussion is Eric Cha-Beach, Josh Quillen, Adam Sliwinski, and Jason Treuting. (Photo by Janette Beckman) www.sopercussion.com
with So, Jason performs improvised music with Simpl, a group with laptop artist/

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ERIC CHA-BEACH has been a member of Sō Percussion since 2007. In addition to performing with Sō Percussion, Eric plays in the bass/percussion duo Druid Hill with bass player Evan Lipson.

As a composer, Eric's pieces written for Sō Percussion are featured in 'Where (we) Live' (BAM Next Wave 2012); 'Five Songs, Dances, and Meditations' written to accompany Martin Kersels' Five Songs (Whitney Biennial 2010); 'Imaginary City' (BAM Next Wave 2009); and 'Music for Trains' – a site-specific performance on the train and at train stations in Brattleboro and Bellows Falls, VT (2008). With Jason Treuting and Josh Quillen, he co-composed music for Shen Wei Dance's 'Undivided/Divided' (Park Avenue Armory 2011), the twice 'Fifth Wall' app for iPad with dancer Jonah Bokaer, and the sound installation 'On/Off' as part of Bring to Light/Nuit Blanche New York 2011. He has composed the music for the dance film 'Parts Don't Work' (2011) by choreographer KT Niehoff and Lingo Dance, and the transition music for the internet radio station Q2 (2010). His compositions have also been featured in the 'Bell by Bell' parade as part of Make Music Winter in 2011 and 2012. And his electronic music has been featured as ambient pre-show music at each night of the 2012 Look and Listen Festival and on the album 'Amid the Noise Remixes' (2011).

Studying with Robert van Sice, Eric received his Bachelor of Music and Graduate Performance Diploma at the Peabody Conservatory, where he won the Yale Gordon Concerto Competition, and his Master of Music at the Yale School of Music. He also received a Fulbright fellowship and pursued additional study with Bernhard Wulff in Freiburg, Germany.

JOSH QUILLEN has been a member of Sō Percussion since 2006. He has forged a unique identity in the contemporary music world as all-around percussionist, expert steel drum performer (lauded as "softly sophisticated" by the New York Times), and composer. His collaborations with other composers frequently incorporate the steel drums as a core element.

Josh started performing on the steel drums at Dover High School in Ohio, an interest that continued at the University of Akron, where Dr. Larry Snider founded one of the first collegiate steel bands in the United States. He traveled to Trinidad & Tobago in 2002, performing with the "Phase II Pan Groove" ensemble under Len "Boogsie" Sharpe. This interest in the traditional steel drum music of Trinidad ran in parallel with Josh's education in western music, first at Akron, and then at the Yale School of Music with marimba soloist Robert Van Sice, where he received his Masters degree in 2006.

These parallel interests led Josh to break ground in the use of the steel drums in contemporary classical music. To date, he has commissioned over a dozen pieces for steel drums from composers such as Stuart Saunders Smith, Roger Zahab, Dan Trueman, and Paul Lansky. In 2010, Steven Mackey's quartet It Is Time – commissioned for Sō Percussion by Carnegie Hall and Chamber Music America – featured Josh on a new microtonal lead pan in its Carnegie Hall premiere, receiving rave reviews in the New York Times.

Josh's compositions for Sō Percussion are featured in Imaginary City, an evening length work that appeared on the Brooklyn Academy of Music's 2009 Next Wave





Festival, as well as the site-specific Music for Trains in Southern Vermont. Other ensembles to play his pieces and arrangements include Matmos, PLork, The Janus Trio, Adele Meyers and Dancers, The University of Akron Steel Band, and the New York University Steel Band.

An avid educator, Josh is a performer-in-residence at Princeton University with Sō Percussion, as well as co-director of the Sō Percussion Summer Institute, an intensive workshop for college-aged percussionists on the campus of Princeton University. He is also co-director of the percussion program at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, and is the director of the New York University Steel Band.

ADAM SLIWINSKI has been a member of Sō Percussion since 2002. He has built a dynamic career of creative collaboration as percussionist, pianist, conductor, teacher, and writer. He specializes in bringing composers, performers, and other artists together to create exciting new work.

Adam has been praised as a soloist by the New York Times for his “shapely, thoughtfully nuanced account” of David Lang’s marimba piece String of Pearls. He has performed as a percussionist many times with the International Contemporary Ensemble, founded by classmates from Oberlin. Though he trained primarily as a percussionist, Adam’s first major solo album, out on New Amsterdam records in 2015, is a collection of etudes called Nostalgic Synchronic for the Prepared Digital Piano, an invention of Princeton colleague Dan Trueman. In recent years, Adam’s collaborations have grown to include conducting. He has conducted over a dozen world premieres with the International Contemporary Ensemble, including residencies at Harvard, Columbia, and NYU. In 2014, ECM Records released the live recording of the premiere of Vijay Iyer’s Radhe Radhe with Adam conducting.

Adam writes about music on his blog. He has also contributed a series of articles to newmusicbox.org, and the forthcoming Cambridge Companion to Percussion from Cambridge University press will feature his chapter “Lost and Found: Percussion Chamber Music and the Modern Age.”

Adam is co-director of the Sō Percussion Summer Institute, an annual intensive course on the campus of Princeton University for college-aged percussionists. He is also co-director of the percussion program at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, and has taught percussion both in masterclass and privately at more than 80 conservatories and universities in the USA and internationally. Along with his colleagues in Sō Percussion, Adam is Edward T. Cone performer-in-residence at Princeton University. He received his Doctor of Musical Arts and his Masters degrees at Yale with marimba soloist Robert van Sice, and his Bachelors at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music with Michael Rosen.

JASON TREUTING is a founding member of Sō Percussion. He has performed and recorded in venues as diverse as the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Walker Art Center, the Knitting Factory, the Andy Warhol Museum, Zankel Hall, Lincoln Center, DOM (Moscow) and Le National (Montreal). As a member of Sō Percussion, he has collaborated with artists and composers including Steve Reich, David Lang, John Zorn, Dan Trueman, tabla master Zakir Hussain, the electronic music duo Matmos and choreographer Eliot Feld. In addition to his work with Sō, Jason performs improvised music with Simpl, a group with laptop artist/composer Cenk





Ergun; Alligator Eats Fish with guitarist Grey McMurray; Little Farm, with guitarist/composer Steve Mackey; QQQ (a quartet consisting of hardinger fiddle, viola, guitar and drums); and Big Farm (a foursome led by Rinde Eckert and Steve Mackey).

Jason also composes music. His many compositions for S Percussion include So's third album Amid the Noise, and contributions to Imaginary City, an evening length work that appeared on the Brooklyn Academy of Music's 2009 Next Wave Festival. Recent commissions for other ensembles have included Oblique Music for 4 plus (blank), a concerto for S Percussion and string orchestra for the League of Composers Orchestra; Circus of One, music for a video installation in collaboration with Alison Crocetta; and Diorama, an evening length collaboration with the French choreographers in *Projet Situ*.

Jason is co-director of the S Percussion Summer Institute, co-director of a new percussion program at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, and has taught percussion both in masterclass and privately at more than 80 conservatories and universities in the USA and internationally.

Jason received his Bachelors in Music and the Performer's Certificate at the Eastman School of Music where he studied percussion with John Beck and drum set and improvisation with Steve Gadd, Ralph Alessi and Michael Cain. He received his Masters in Music along with an Artist Diploma from Yale University where he studied percussion with Robert Van Sice. Jason has also traveled to Japan to study marimba with Keiko Abe and to Bali to study gamelan with Pac I Nyoman Suadin.



EMILY JOHNSON is an artist who makes body-based work. A Bessie Award winning choreographer and Guggenheim Fellow, she is based in Minneapolis and New York City. Originally from Alaska, she is of Yup'ik descent and since 1998 has created work that considers the experience of sensing and seeing performance. Her dances function as installations, engaging audiences within and through a space and environment—interacting with a place's architecture, history, and role in community. Emily received a 2014 Doris Duke Artist Award and her work is supported by Creative Capital, Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, Map Fund,

a Joyce Award, the McKnight Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts, and The Doris Duke Residency to Build Demand for the Arts. Emily is a current Mellon Choreography Fellow at Williams College and was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota, 2013 - 2015. Her new work, *Then Cunning Voice* and *A Night We Spend Gazing at Stars* is an all night, outdoor performance gathering. It will premiere in 2017 and tour to Williamstown, MA; New York City; San Francisco; Chicago; and Melbourne, Australia. (Photo by Tracy Rector and Melissa Ponder.)

AIN GORDON is a three-time Obie Award-winning writer/director/actor, a two-time NYFA recipient and a Guggenheim Fellow in Playwriting. Gordon's work has been seen at BAM Next Wave Festival, New York Theatre Workshop, Soho Rep.,





The Public Theater, 651 ARTS, Dance Theater Workshop, Performance Space 122, Baryshnikov Arts Center, and HERE Arts Center (all NY); the Mark Taper Forum (CA), the George Street Playhouse (NJ), Vermont Performance Lab, Flynn Center for the Performing Arts (VT), Krannert Center (IL), the Kitchen Theatre (NY), Painted Bride Arts Center (PA), OnStage at Connecticut College, MASS MoCA, the Baltimore Museum of Art (MD), DiverseWorks (TX), Spirit Square (NC), VSA North Fourth Arts Center (NM), Jacob's Pillow (MA), LexArts (KY), and Dance Space (DC), etc. Gordon's 2003 work, "Art Life & Show-Biz: A Non-Fiction Play," is published in Palgrave Macmillan's



"Dramaturgy Of The Real On The World Stage." Collaborations: previously with Sō Percussion presented at the Walker Art Center (MN), BAM Next Wave Festival (NY), River To River (NY), and Philadelphia Fringe, etc; with Samita Sinha at American Dance Institute (MD) and PS122 COIL Festival (NYC); with Emily Johnson/Catalyst Dance at Northrop (MN), NYLA, On The Boards (WA), and ODC (CA), etc; with Bebe Miller at the Wexner Center (OH), Myrna Loy Center/Helena Presents (MT), and Bates Dance Festival (ME), etc; with David Gordon at American Repertory Theatre (MA), American Conservatory Theater (CA) and American Music Theatre Festival (PA). Gordon appeared in the original Off-Broadway cast of Spalding Gray: Stories Left To Tell and toured the production to venues including UCLA, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (OR), ICA Boston (Elliot Norton Award nom), the Walker (MN), and New Territories (UK), etc. Gordon also wrote for NBC's "Will & Grace." Gordon's work has received supported from Jerome, Greenwall, the NEA, NYSCA, AT&T, MAP (four times), ART NY, Mellon, Foundation for Contemporary Performance Art, and NPN among many others. Gordon is a former "Embedded Artist" at the Historic Society of Pennsylvania, former Core Writer of the Playwright's Center (MN), was the inaugural Visiting Artist at the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage (PA), a 2014 Artist-In-Residence at NYU Tisch School of The Arts. Gordon is Co-Founder of the Urban Memory Project and has been Co-Director of the Pick Up Performance Co(s) since 1992. (Photo by Andrew Eccles)

LYNNE DESILVA-JOHNSON

is an interdisciplinary creator currently serving as the Creative Director and Managing Editor of THE OPERATING SYSTEM, as well as Libraries Editor for Boog City. A frequent collaborator across a wide range of disciplines, and a regular curator of events across the boroughs of NYC and beyond, Lynne is a frequent freelance consultant for theatrical and musical performance, visual exhibition, and publication, and in particular on projects integrating digital media. A dedicated educator, she has been an Adjunct Lecturer in the CUNY system for a decade, a facilitator for the Salvadori Institute, a Poetry Outreach in-



/// COLLABORATOR BIOS | 177 ///





structor at The Lorraine Hansberry Academy in the Bronx, and a community teaching artist since 2001. She was formerly assistant editor of 306090 Books, from Princeton Architectural Press. Lynne is the author of *GROUND*, *blood atlas*, and *Overview Effect*, co-author of *A GUN SHOW*, and co-editor of *In Corpore Sano: Creative Practice and the Challenged Body*, with Jay Besemer, forthcoming in 2017. She has been published in *Wave Composition*, *The Conversant*, *Gorgon Poetics*, *Promethean*, *The Mom Egg*, *Coldfront*, and *The Occupy Poetry Anthology*, among others. As a social practice artist and poet, she has performed/been shown at a wide range of venues including: The Dumbo Arts Festival, Naropa University, Bowery Arts and Science, The NYC Poetry Festival, Eyebeam, LaMaMa, Undercurrent Projects, Mellow Pages, The New York Public Library, Launchpad BK, The Poetry Project, Industry City Distillery, Independent Curators International, Happy Lucky No. 1, and the Cooper Union. She lives in Brooklyn, NY, where her family has lived for 4 generations. www.theoperatingsystem.org

BEN HAGEN is more often a Lighting Designer & Facilitator than a Stage Manager but is honored to be here with S_Ō Percussion. Design credits include; a reading of *The Normal Heart* at the Walter Kerr Theatre on Broadway directed by Joel Grey, *Al Pacino-One Night Only* in Sydney, London, Montreal, Las Vegas, and Boston, the original run of *Absinthe* on the Las Vegas Strip, Robert Johnson Tribute Concert at the Apollo. His work has been nominated for two New York Innovative Theatre awards for his work with Project Y Theatre Company. Lighting Direction credits include events such as Lincoln Awards at the Kennedy Center and a Bryant Park Tree Lighting ceremony. Ben serves as the Special Effects Associate for the current Broadway and worldwide productions of Disney's *Aladdin* and the upcoming *Frozen*. He has also worked with Lincoln Center Festival since 2007: most notably as Lighting Supervisor, hosting the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2011 residency at the Park Avenue Armory. www.benhagen.com

LENORE DOXSEE is a lighting designer for theater, opera, and dance. She is the Resident Lighting Designer and Associate Artistic Director for Target Margin Theater and has designed in many New York theaters including New York City Opera, La Mama, HERE Arts Center, New York Live Arts, and The Kitchen. Regionally and abroad she has designed for Lyric Opera of Chicago, Glimmerglass Opera, La Jolla Playhouse, Pittsburgh Opera, Spoleto Festival USA, Centre Pompidou, Singapore Repertory Theatre, and many others. Recent designs include *Porgy & Bess* for Spoleto USA, lighting and visual design for John Jasperse's *Remains and Within Between*, lighting for Miguel Gutierrez' *Age & Beauty Parts 1, 2 & 3*, and set and lighting for Target Margin's *Drunken With What*. Ms. Doxsee has received two Bessie Awards for her designs for dances by Gutierrez. She teaches design at NYU/Tisch School of the Arts Department of Drama. Ms. Doxsee holds a BA from Williams College and an MFA from New York University. www.lenoredoxsee.com

SOUND DESIGN BY NELSON DORADO

S_Ō PERCUSSION PERSONNEL:

MANAGING DIRECTOR - YUMI TAMASHIRO

STUDIO MANAGER - BROOKS FREDERICKSON

OPERATIONS MANAGER - LUZ CARIME SANTA-COLOMA





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WHY PRINT / DOCUMENT?

*The Operating System uses the language “print document” to differentiate from the book-object as part of our mission to distinguish the act of documentation-in-book-FORM from the act of publishing as a backwards facing replication of the book’s agentive *role* as it may have appeared the last several centuries of its history. Ultimately, I approach the book as TECHNOLOGY: one of a variety of printed documents (in this case bound) that humans have invented and in turn used to archive and disseminate ideas, beliefs, stories, and other evidence of production.*

Ownership and use of printing presses and access to (or restriction of) printed materials has long been a site of struggle, related in many ways to revolutionary activity and the fight for civil rights and free speech all over the world. While (in many countries) the contemporary quotidian landscape has indeed drastically shifted in its access to platforms for sharing information and in the widespread ability to “publish” digitally, even with extremely limited resources, the importance of publication on physical media has not diminished. In fact, this may be the most critical time in recent history for activist groups, artists, and others to insist upon learning, establishing, and encouraging personal and community documentation practices. Hear me out.

With The OS’s print endeavors I wanted to open up a conversation about this: the ultimately radical, transgressive act of creating PRINT /DOCUMENTATION in the digital age. It’s a question of the archive, and of history: who gets to tell the story, and what evidence of our life, our behaviors, our experiences are we leaving behind? We can know little to nothing about the future into which we’re leaving an unprecedentedly digital document trail — but we can be assured that publications, government agencies, museums, schools, and other institutional powers that be will continue to leave BOTH a digital and print version of their production for the official record. Will we?

As a (rogue) anthropologist and long time academic, I can easy pull up many accounts about how lives, behaviors, experiences — how THE STORY of a time or place — was pieced together using the deep study of correspondence, notebooks, and other physical documents which are no longer the norm in many lives and practices. As we move our creative behaviors towards digital note taking, and even audio and video, what can we predict about future technology that is in any way assuring that our stories will be accurately told – or told at all?

As a creative practitioner, the stories, journals, and working notes of other creative practitioners have been enormously important to me. And yet so many creative people of this era no longer put together physical documents of their work – no longer have physical archives of their writing or notebooks, typed from the first draft to the last, on computers. Even visual artists often no longer have non-digital slides and portfolios. How will we leave these things for the record?

How will we say WE WERE HERE, WE EXISTED, WE HAVE A DIFFERENT STORY?

*- Lynne DeSilva-Johnson, Founder/Managing Editor,
THE OPERATING SYSTEM, Brooklyn NY 2016*





TITLES IN THE PRINT: DOCUMENT COLLECTION

- Return Trip / Viaje Al Regreso ; Spanish-English Dual Language Edition - Israel Dominguez,
(trans. Margaret Randall) [2018]
Fugue State Beach - Filip Marinovich [2017]
The Book of Everyday Instruction - Chloe Bass [2017]
In Corpore Sano : Creative Practice and the Challenged Body [Anthology, 2017]
Lynne DeSilva-Johnson and Jay Besemer, co-editors
Nothing Is Wasted - Shabnam Piryaei [2017]
To Have Been There Then / Estar Alli Entonces - Gregory Randall (trans. Margaret Randall) [2017]
The Color She Gave Gravity - Stephanie Heit [2017]
The Science of Things Familiar - Johnny Damm [Graphic/Poetry Hybrid, 2017]
You Look Something - Jessica Tyner Mehta [2017]
One More Revolution - Andrea Mazzariello [2017]
Flower World Variations, Expanded Edition/Reissue - Jerome Rothenberg and Harold Cohen [2017]
What the Werewolf Told Them / Lo Que Les Dijo El Licantropo - Chely Lima
(trans. Margaret Randall) [2017]
Instructions Within - Ashraf Fayadh [2016]
Arabic-English dual language edition; Mona Kareem, translator
Let it Die Hungry [2016] - Caitis Meissner
A GUN SHOW [2016] - Sô Percussion in Collaboration with Ain Gordon and Emily Johnson
agon [2016] - Judith Goldman
Everybody's Automat [2016] - Mark Gurarie
How to Survive the Coming Collapse of Civilization [2016] - Sparrow
CHAPBOOK SERIES 2016: OF SOUND MIND
**featuring the quilt drawings of Daphne Taylor*
Improper Maps - Alex Crowley; While Listening - Alaina Ferris;
Chords - Peter Longofono; Any Seam or Needlework - Stanford Cheung
TEN FOUR - Poems, Translations, Variations [2015]- Jerome Rothenberg, Ariel Resnikoff, Mikhl Likht
MARILYN [2015] - Amanda Ngoho Reavey
CHAPBOOK SERIES 2015: OF SYSTEMS OF
**featuring original cover art by Emma Steinkraus*
Cyclorama - Davy Knittle; The Sensitive Boy Slumber Party Manifesto - Joseph Cuillier;
Neptune Court - Anton Yakovlev; Schema - Anurak Saelow
SAY/MIRROR [2015; 2nd edition 2016] - JP HOWARD
Moons Of Jupiter/Tales From The Schminke Tub [plays, 2014] - Steve Danziger
CHAPBOOK SERIES 2014: BY HAND
Pull, A Ballad - Maryam Parhizkar; Executive Producer Chris Carter - Peter Milne Grenier;
Spooky Action at a Distance - Gregory Crosby; Can You See that Sound - Jeff Musillo
CHAPBOOK SERIES 2013: WOODBLOCK
**featuring original prints from Kevin William Reed*
Strange Coherence - Bill Considine;; The Sword of Things - Tony Hoffman;
Talk About Man Proof - Lancelot Runge / John Kropa;
An Admission as a Warning Against the Value of Our Conclusions - Alexis Quinlan

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DOC U MENT

/däkʏəmənt/

First meant “instruction” or “evidence,” whether written or not.

noun - a piece of written, printed, or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record
verb - record (something) in written, photographic, or other form
synonyms - paper - deed - record - writing - act - instrument

[Middle English, precept, from Old French, from Latin *documentum*, example, proof, from *docere*, to teach; see *dek-* in Indo-European roots.]

Who is responsible for the manufacture of value?

Based on what supercilious ontology have we landed in a space where we vie against other creative people in vain pursuit of the fleeting credibilities of the scarcity economy, rather than freely collaborating and sharing openly with each other in ecstatic celebration of MAKING?

While we understand and acknowledge the economic pressures and fear-mongering that threatens to dominate and crush the creative impulse, we also believe that now more than ever we have the tools to relinquish agency via cooperative means, fueled by the fires of the Open Source Movement.

Looking out across the invisible vistas of that rhizomatic parallel country
we can begin to see our community beyond constraints,
in the place where intention meets resilient, proactive, collaborative organization.

Here is a document born of that belief, sown purely of imagination and will.
When we document we assert. We print to make real, to reify our being there.
When we do so with mindful intention to address our process,
to open our work to others, to create beauty in words in space, to respect and acknowledge the strength of the page we now hold physical, a thing in our hand...
we remind ourselves that, like Dorothy: *we had the power all along, my dears.*

THE PRINT! DOCUMENT SERIES

is a project of

the trouble with bartleby

in collaboration with

the operating system

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