

# (Be)LONGING

A new work by Byron Au Yong and Aaron Jafferis  
directed by Charlotte Brathwaite



ARKTYPE

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# AN OVERVIEW

April 16, 2017 will mark the 10-year anniversary of the mass shooting at Virginia Tech - among the deadliest shooting incidents by a gunman in U.S. history and one of the deadliest by a single gunman worldwide.

*(Be)Longing* is a community-driven performance event featuring a choir of locally based performers, that reflects on our society's collective emergence from large-scale tragedies. The project is realized in collaboration with Byron Au Yong, Aaron Jafferis and a stellar core of musical, movement-based and theatrical collaborators. Prompted by our collective understanding and judgments around Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, and other similar events, *(Be)Longing* focuses on mental health, violence, isolation, healing and understanding through a series of events that serve as a process for community conversation, and culminating with the locally cast performance as a central hub.

Local professionals, college students, faculty, staff and community leaders form the backbone of this theatrical oratorio performance where music, neuroscience, sociology and theatre intersect in an attempt to ask and answer the crucial questions that linger.

*(Be)Longing* is the second in a trilogy of music theatre works from Au Yong and Jafferis about what Americans fear. Asian men who are the subject of media blitzes in America prompt the circumstances for each show. The trilogy includes *Stuck Elevator* (fear of being trapped) which premiered at American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco to glowing reviews and is now in development with New York Theater Workshop, *(Be)Longing* aka *Trigger* (fear of being shot) and a third show yet to be determined by future events and the media's response.





# NOTES FROM THE CREATORS

## Why (Be)Longing?

In April 2007, Seung-Hui Cho shot 49 people, killing 32, then himself. He was an Engineering turned English Major who wrote disturbing plays, menacing poetry, and a lovesick novella. His shooting rampage is more commonly known as the Virginia Tech Tragedy.

On the morning of the shooting, Cho mailed a “multimedia manifesto” to NBC News. The materials included angry writing, drawings, photographs, and videos of himself as a hyper masculine savior. His violent act became an icon of school shootings in America; a declaration of injustice as a single voice dominant over multiple, silenced voices.

\* \* \*

In April 2007, Byron Au Yong was invited to perform a percussion solo in the grand stairway at the Seattle Art Museum. The sound of his drumming ricocheted throughout the marble space. Families were scared away. He had a shaved head and looked like Cho firing a gun. His only audience was the security guard.

As a contemporary composer, Byron often confronts the trope of going to the place of no return. He has been rewarded for pushing his music beyond acceptable parameters. Yet as an Asian American male, he feels implicated by the tragedy at Virginia Tech. How could Byron’s rage, which had often served his craft, work for peace?

Writer Aaron Jafferis came of age in the 1980s, when gun violence scarred New Haven. He and his friends witnessed the deaths of classmates killed. Aaron knew the collective under-the-skin bruises of these shootings, yet when Byron asked Aaron to collaborate on a work prompted by the Virginia Tech Tragedy, Aaron said no. A mass school shooting was too evil and foreign. “Why,” Aaron asked, “would we want to climb inside Cho’s mind?”

Then children were shot in Newtown.

The kids in those classrooms were the siblings of students at the arts school where Aaron teaches. His mind buzzed, “What connects the young man who kills 32 people at Virginia Tech with the one who shoots children at Sandy Hook Elementary or a teenager in New Haven? What separates them? What connects me to these young men? What separates us? Why do these shootings simultaneously connect and distance us? How can we bring people together without anyone getting shot?”

\* \* \*

Aaron and Byron ask: “What if a trigger builds, rather than destroys, communities?”

*(Be)Longing* and *(Be)Longing Community* will engage courageous learning communities as “spect-actors,” influenced by Augusto Boal’s work in forum theatre. Considering this project as a process, (Be)Longing performances are influenced by each locations’ passions and debates. To focus the project, Aaron and Byron contribute the anchor oratorio *(Be)Longing*, heartened by the most primary human instrument—the voice.

This musical work combines choral music with hip-hop, a contested musical genre for young adults in America. U.S. Senators often relate gun violence and hip-hop. Choirs and hip-hop are two of the most powerful gathering places for social identity and resistance. According to Chorus America, 42.6 million Americans sing in a choir. Combining rhythmic raps with choral voices, *(Be)Longing* will soar with multiple voices to connect through a touchstone performance and process of going beyond.

—Byron Au Yong and Aaron Jafferis

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# THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

*(Be)Longing* is an immersive community experience culminating in the performance of a theatrical oratorio about belonging and isolation prompted by and in recognition of the 10-year anniversary of the Virginia Tech tragedy, in which 32 people were killed.

College students, faculty, staff, and community leaders inform this responsive choral work designed to adapt to the unique, collective healing process of each community.

The core performance of *(Be)Longing* includes 32 songs written by the creative team performed by a cast chosen from the local community. The creative team also partners with a local coordinator to organize *(Be)Longing* Community, in which a larger group of participants collaborate to create a series of artistic events related to themes in *(Be)Longing* and specific to the host venue. These satellite events lead up to the *(Be)Longing* oratorio, which further connects to local concerns and audiences with an Act II dialogue led by *(Be)Longing* Community participants.

School shootings are among the most challenging subjects in our culture, involving a wellspring of deeply personal feelings from each of us. Debates ping pong around gun control,

mental health, security, the second amendment and civil liberties. *(Be)Longing* broadens the issues surrounding the Virginia Tech tragedy to incorporate the perspectives of community members, including those who work in local towns and/or study in university settings within a choral and theatrical context. During *(Be)Longing*, nobody will relive or live through gun violence. Rather, it will work through mechanisms for understanding why people commit violence against a community and where and how the community responds.

The work will embrace the way academic and non-academic communities offer educational as well as social environments where identities and ideals are navigated. According to the National Institute for Mental Health, 1 in 4 adults have a diagnosable mental disorder in America. The creative team is curious why some people go to the place of no return and how we might deepen our understanding of these community members without prejudice, thereby healing both ourselves and those in danger of crossing the line of no return. With listening and empathy as core experiences of the process, *(Be)Longing* strives to encourage, rather than silence, numerous voices.

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# NATIONAL CREATIVE TEAM

**Byron Au Yong**

*Co-creator and composer*

**Aaron Jafferis**

*Co-creator and playwright*

**Charlotte Brathwaite**

*Director*

**Ni'Ja Whitson**

*Choreographer*

**Ben Zamora**

*Production Designer*

**TBD**

*Beatboxer*

## PRODUCING PARTNERS

**Moss Arts Center, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA**

*(World Premiere)*

**International Festival of Arts & Ideas, New Haven, CT**

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# THE VENUE: ALIGNING A CREATIVE COMMUNITY

To honor the people killed during the Virginia Tech shooting, the creative team plans to research and develop *(Be)Longing* within courageous environments. The work requires a presenter partner with unique ties to its community and the ability to coordinate community efforts effectively with their team. The creative team will guide local participants (24 singers\*, 4 rappers, 4 beat boxers) to collaborate on a performance specific to the host venue over a period of six months.

In academic environments, the work may also lend itself to the creation of a semester-long course dedicated to Arts & Social Justice practice, wherein registered students and community auditors can work toward *(Be)*

*Longing* Community events while immersed in study of creative, activist traditions worldwide designed to spawn understanding, healing and transformation.

The core performance is organized into an Act I and Act III written by the creative team and an Act II dialogue led by local participants. *(Be)Longing* Community presents satellite works related to the themes in *(Be)Longing* created by local groups and performers – such as those in the aforementioned Arts & Social Justice course.

*\*In the spirit of openness with casting possibilities on a non-exclusive basis, the collaborators are open to a larger or smaller group being involved in the project.*

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# THE COMMUNITY ENSEMBLE: THE COURAGE TO SPEAK

Community members, students, faculty and staff form the backbone of this performance.

**(BE)LONGING CHOIR: 24+ SINGERS\* / 4+ RAPPERS\* / 4+ BEATBOXERS\***

The *(Be)Longing* Choir will be made up of community members of all ages. They will be auditioned and chosen from each presenter's local community members. The commitment of most participants will demand a span of six months.

**(BE)LONGING COMMUNITY CAST: 25-100 Community Volunteers**

The *(Be)Longing* Community Cast will volunteer their time toward the final event, creating immersive performances in all genres, community art projects and initiatives, and planning gathering events to include community dinners and rituals.



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# PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

**RESIDENCY 1** (One Year Prior) Site Visit / Introduction to Key Partners / Local Research / Community Partner Development / Interviews

**RESIDENCY 2** (One Year Prior) *(Be)Longing* Community Director Convening w/ Community Coordinator + Choir Conductor for Introduction / Reflection / Local Research / Community Partner Development / Interviews

**RESIDENCY 3** (6 Months Prior) Community Coordinator identifies local arts and interest groups to lead Act II guided response, and other *(Be)Longing* Community events for Reflection / Growth / Coalesce Research

**RESIDENCY 4** (3-4 Months) Community Auditions and Ensemble Casting, Course on Arts & Social Justice begins including visits from core collaborators and community partners

**RESIDENCY 5** (3-5 Weeks Prior) Staging / Final Tech / Performance

## ONLINE PLATFORM

Between residencies, digital storytelling or other easily shareable exercises will be pursued through an online module to keep the ensemble active and reflective of current events, the focus of their work, and their evolving

viewpoints. Ideally, the communities in separate cities creating their own versions of *(Be)Longing* will interact within this platform, forming a nationwide awareness of each other's activities and journey.

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# THE PRESENTER PARTNERSHIP: LEADING THE WAY TO THE HEART OF A COMMUNITY

*(Be)Longing* requires the highest level of presenter / artist collaboration. Presenter partners will be asked to assemble the local team responsible for achieving the following:

- Identify Line Producer to arrange all local logistical support, community wrangling and online contributions
- Identify Community Coordinator, Choir Director and enlist local guides: community members who will take an active role in supporting the evolution and design of the project, including but not limited to Departments, Special Programs / Initiatives, Professors, Psychologists, Law Enforcement members, Spiritual Leaders, Student Groups, etc.
- Establish forum for the gathering and development of Community volunteers toward the creation of *(Be)Longing* Community
- Identify gun and violence community activism and organizations concerned with arms legislation. Assist in shaping community need and guiding artists toward articulate sources reflective of local history.
- Audition and cast local ensemble in collaboration with artists, and maintain clear communication of requirements over the creation period toward the *(Be)Longing* oratorio.
- Presenting final works – *(Be)Longing* Community & *(Be)Longing* - following unique tech period.

# (Be)LONGING PERFORMANCE STRUCTURE

The goal of the *(Be)Longing* Oratorio is to connect the audience and performers so they will continue to engage with the themes in *(Be)Longing* through civic engagement that includes using their voices in powerful ways. This gathering can be in larger halls or more intimate performance settings to ensure that the anonymous faces of the choir become familiar during the performance.

Act I sets up the choir of individuals who are broken. They rap and sing about the challenges they face as Americans confronted with a shooting.

Act II breaks the fourth wall and includes the audience in a guided response.

Act III reverses the structure of firing a gun.

An optional Coda allows for continued discussion, reflection and networking in an informal way with a shared meal.

The *(Be)Longing Oratorio* is loosely based on the mechanisms involved in the firing of a Glock

## ACT I

1. Load Bullets ► **INTRODUCTION OF CHOIR COMMUNITY**
2. Squeeze Trigger ► **ISOLATION**
3. Remove Safety ► **BROKENNESS REVEALED**
4. Pull Striker Back ► **TENSION BUILDS**
5. Release Striker ► **CONFLICT**
6. Bullets Explode ► **STONING**

## ACT II

Audience, creative team, performers and representatives of community groups respond in a guided 45-minute session

### **LARGE AUDIENCES** (350 or more):

Audience members will turn to each other and ask specific questions in dialogue with 2-4 people near them.

### **SMALL AUDIENCES** (350 or less):

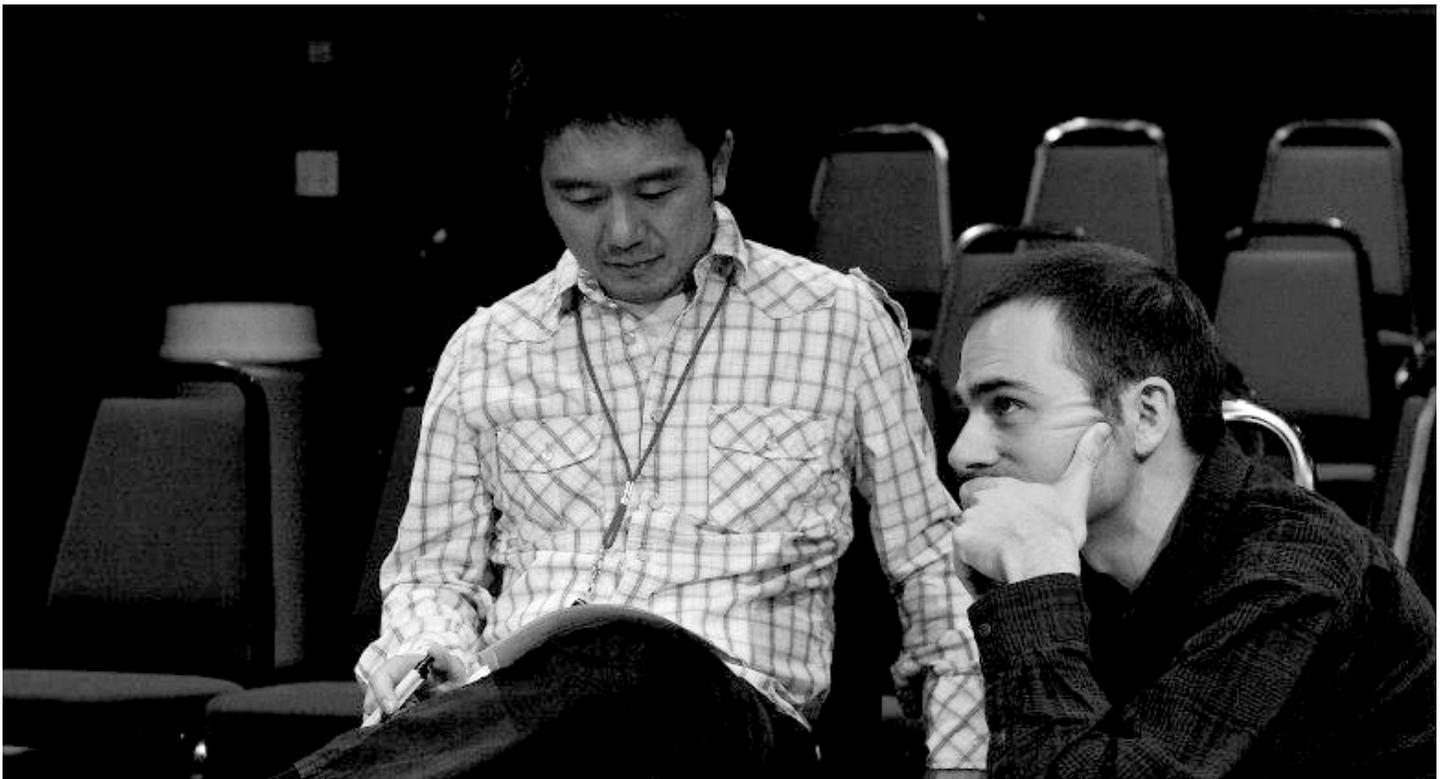
Audience members will separate into groups led by *(Be)Longing* Community participants and gather in separate spaces, returning to the performance following reflection and dialogue.

## ACT III

7. Retreat/Disarm ► **RECONFIGURE CHOIR**
8. Exploded Bullets become Whole ► **ASSESS**
9. Bullets Reverse ► **TENSION AND BLAME BUILDS**
10. Reset Striker ► **TENSION EASES**
11. Restore Safety ► **CALM RETURNS**
12. Release Trigger ► **HONOR**
13. Unload Bullets ► **INDIVIDUAL CHOICE**

### \* CODA

A Shared Meal can be provided at the performance's end



# BIOGRAPHIES & MATERIALS



## **Byron Au Yong** *Composer / Creator*

Composer Byron Au Yong (歐陽良仁) creates events the Seattle Weekly calls “as exquisite and imaginative as they are unclassifiable.” Dedicated to intercultural, cross-disciplinary collaboration, his music combines western classical music, Chinese folk elements and American musical theatre with a penchant for the avant-garde. Au Yong has created over 60 musical projects scored for voices with Asian, European and handmade instruments that have been performed in concert halls, festivals, theaters, museums, and site-specific locations. Highlights of the 2013-2014 season include *Stuck Elevator*, libretto by Aaron Jafferis (American Conservatory Theatre, International Festival of Arts & Ideas), *Occupy Orchestra 無量園 Infinity Garden* (Chicago Composers Orchestra), *The Orphan of Zhao*, directed by Carey Perloff (American Conservatory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse), *Piano Concerto – Houston*, media sculpture by Susie J. Lee (University of Houston Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts), and *Welladay! Welladay! Wayward Love Songs* (Nonsequitor). Commissions include *Farewell: A Fantastical Contemplation on America’s Relationship with China*, choreography by Donald Byrd (Spectrum Dance Theater), *Ji Mo 寂寞: The Stillness of Solitude* (Portland Taiko), *Surrender: A T’ai Qi Cantata* (The Esoterics), and *Tzu Lho: Simmering Songs* (The Esoterics, Stanford Chorale). International works include *BreathPlay* (Tokyo Art Museum), *Edge* (Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg), *Forbidden Circles* (Fukuoka Gendai Hogaku Festival, International House of Japan), and *Salt Lips Touching* (Jeonju Sanjo Festival). Honors include a Creative Capital Award, Ford Foundation Fellowship and Meet the Composer Commission. Internationally, Au Yong has received support from Aldeburgh Music in the UK, the Dragon Foundation in Hong Kong, the Darmstadt Institute in Germany, and Foundation Gaudeamus in Holland. Au Yong has taught courses such as Art and Social Justice, Arts in the Community, Introduction to World Arts & Cultures, and Listening to Music. He

was adjunct faculty at Cornish College of the Arts from 2007-2013, and a graduate teaching fellow at UCLA from 2001-2003. He holds an MFA from the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, an MA in dance studies from UCLA and a BA/BM from the School of Music at the University of Washington. Recordings of his music are available on New World Records, Periplus, Present Sounds Recordings, and other indie labels.

## **Aaron Jafferis** *Lyricist / Creator*

Aaron Jafferis is a hip-hop poet and playwright whose honors include a Creative Capital Award, Richard Rodgers Award, Sundance Institute / Time Warner Fellowship, NEFA National Theatre Pilot Grant, Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award, Barbour Playwright’s Award, NYMF Most Promising New Musical Award, and The Dramatist’s “50 To Watch.” His hip-hop musicals *Kingdom*, *Stuck Elevator*, *How to Break*, *Blood Magic*, *Shakespeare: The Remix*, and *No Lie* have been produced, presented, or developed by American Conservatory Theatre, The Old Globe, Public Theater, Long Wharf Theatre, Sundance Theatre Lab, Atlantic Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, HERE, Hip Hop Theater Festival, TheatreWorks/Silicon Valley, On the Boards, St. Louis Black Rep, Capital Rep, Zachary Scott Theatre, International Festival of Arts & Ideas, Yale Institute for Music Theatre, Nuyorican Poets Café, Passage Theatre, ReVision Theatre, Queens Theatre in the Park, National Alliance for Musical Theatre, New York Musical Theatre Festival, International Community Arts Festival in The Netherlands, John Jay College, Collective Consciousness, and Bregamos. In the last year, *Stuck Elevator* (music by Byron Au Yong, direction by Chay Yew) premiered at the American Conservatory Theatre (SF), then moved to Long Wharf Theatre at the International Festival of Arts & Ideas; *How to Break* (a collaboration with breaking pioneers Kwikstep and Rokafella, graffiti legend Part One, and beatboxer Yako 440) was produced by Collective Consciousness Theater in associ-

ation with Hi-ARTS (the NYC Hip-Hop Theatre Festival) at the National Theatre of Norway as part of the inaugural SPKRBOX Festival; Capital Repertory Theatre (Albany) produced *Shakespeare: The Remix* for the second time. Artist residencies include three Sundance Theatre Institute Labs, two MacDowell Colony Fellowships, NYU's Asian / Pacific / American Institute, TheatreWorks/Silicon Valley, Weston Playhouse, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Aaron has written poetry for the Urban Bush Women and The Nation, and performed at the Kennedy Center and the National Poetry Slam Championships, where he is a former Open Rap Slam champion. He received his BA in Arts & Social Change from the University of California at Berkeley, studied at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and received his MFA in Musical Theatre Writing from NYU, where he was an Alberto Vilar Global Fellow in the Performing Arts. He teaches poetry and hip-hop theatre in schools, hospitals, health centers, community organizations, and detention centers in his hometown of New Haven, CT.

### **Charlotte Brathwaite** *Director*

A native of Toronto, Canada, Charlotte Brathwaite joined the internationally renowned La MaMa E.T.C.'s Great Jones Repertory as an actor at the age of 16 and performed in New York and in over 12 countries with the company. An independent director, her works presented in the Americas, Europe, the Caribbean and Asia, range in subject matter from the historical past to the distant future illuminating issues of race, sex, power and the complexities of the human condition without adhering to limitation of genre. A director of classical and unconventional texts, operas, dance, multi-media, site-specific, installations and concerts her work has been commissioned and presented by Central Park SummerStage, DC Arts Commission, 651 Arts, the International Festival of Arts and Ideas, Aarshi Theater Company Kolkata, Test! Festival Zagreb, Het Veem Theater Amsterdam, Scarlett Project Trinidad, The Living Theater, Joe's Pub, La MaMa E.T.C, JACK Brooklyn, Studio Museum Harlem and HAU Berlin among others. Upcoming: *Portrait of myself as my Father* with choreographer Nora Chipaumire; *Prophetika*: an oratorio with composer Courtney Bryan and artist Abigail DeVille; *La Paloma Prisoner* with writer Raquel Almazan and *Woman in the Dunes* with artist Simone Leigh. Brathwaite has been dramaturge for Kyle Abraham/A.I.M., is co-founder of *Naturaleza Humana* performance group Berlin, and has assistant directed for Yale Repertory, Lincoln Center, Yale Opera, The Public Theater, Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, Francesca Zambello and Peter Sellars. Awards/Honors: Princess Grace Foundation Award; Julian Milton Kaufman Prize for Directing; Rockefeller Residency (A.I.M); National Performing Network Creation Fund; Glimmerglass Festival Young Artist Program (2013/14, 2014/15); Princess Grace Foundation New Works grant; Visiting Artist Williams College; Visiting Professor Amherst College. BA, Amsterdam School for the Arts, the Netherlands; MFA, Yale School of Drama. Brathwaite is currently Assistant Professor of Theater Arts at MIT.

### **Ni'Ja Whitson** *Choreographer*

Ni'Ja Whitson is an interdisciplinary artist and writer whose work engages a nexus of postmodern and African diasporic performance practices. She is the recipient of a 2013 Movement Research Artist in Residency Award, commissioned to create a new interdisciplinary performance work, and a member of the Hemispheric Institute's Working Group in Dance. She has served as assistant choreographer to Dianne McIntyre for the Goodman Theater's production of *Crowns*, directed and written by Regina Taylor, and recently completed an international tour of her interdisciplinary solo work *root shock* including invitations in New York, Canada, and Chicago. She is noted as an innovating practitioner of the Theatrical Jazz Aesthetic and has also co-facilitated training internationally as well as in collaboration with Sharon Bridgforth hosted by Links Hall and the Theatre School at DePaul University. Whitson has worked with a range of artists including Guillermo Gomez Peña / La Pocha Nostra, April Berry, Allison Knowles, Darrell Jones, Dee Alexander, and Douglas Ewart. As a performer, Whitson has been commissioned across genres for her rich diversity of skills. Whitson has been awarded residencies, grants, and recognition across artistic disciplines, including: an Illinois Arts Council grant; LinkUI residency award; Lisa Dershin residency award; Chicago DanceBridge residency; John G. Curtis Jr. Visual Art Prize; two Archibald Motley Visual Art Grants; a 3Arts Visual Artist Award nomination; Mellon Research Fellowship; and a Fellowship Award from the school of the Art Institute where she received her MFA. She is featured in *Living Thinkers: Black Women and the Ivory Tower*, and is currently an adjunct assistant professor at Hunter College and a full-time lecturer at Lehman College.

### **Thomas O. Kriegsmann / ArKtype** *Producer*

A producer of acclaimed international projects and tours, ArKtype's work has been seen worldwide, including projects with Mikhail Baryshnikov, Yael Farber, Peter Brook, Jay Scheib, Julie Taymor, Yaron Lifschitz, Dmitry Krymov, Tony Taccone, and Victoria Thiérrée-Chaplin. Recent premieres include Big Dance Theater & Baryshnikov Productions' *MAN IN A CASE*, Andrew Ondrejcek & Shara Worden's *YOU US WE ALL*, and the off-Broadway and Australian premieres of Nalaga'at Deaf-Blind Theater's *NOT BY BREAD ALONE*. Additional projects include *Theatre for a New Audience*; Big Dance Theater; *Circa* (Brisbane); *600 Highwaymen*; Jessica Blank & Erik Jensen; Geoff Sobelle/Nichole Canuso/Lars Jan; Lisa Peterson & Denis O'Hare; *Compagnia T.P.O.* (Italy); Sam Green w/ yMusic & Yo La Tengo; Ethan Lipton; Aaron Landsman and many more. Upcoming premieres include Jessica Blank & Erik Jensen's *HOW TO BE A ROCK CRITIC* and Byron Au Yong & Aaron Jafferis' *TRIGGER*. He formerly served as Director of Programs at New York Live Arts for three seasons. More information at [www.arktype.org](http://www.arktype.org)



# ARTIST MATERIALS



Hear and read samples from Aaron & Byron's acclaimed collaboration *Stuck Elevator* and additional individual works and publications at the following sites:

Byron Au Yong: [hearbyron.com](http://hearbyron.com)

Charlotte Brathwaite: [charlottebrathwaite.com](http://charlottebrathwaite.com)

Aaron Jafferis: [aaronjafferis.com](http://aaronjafferis.com)

Ban Zamora: [benzamora.com](http://benzamora.com)

# CRITICAL PRAISE

**Byron Au Yong and Aaron Jafferis**

*Stuck Elevator*

“For opera and musical theatre enthusiasts, this was a rare artistic triumph.”

– *Huffington Post*

“Stuck Elevator: Audacious, compelling and hugely imaginative.”

– *Huffington Post*

“[Stuck Elevator] is a fascinating and compelling work that proves strong ideas can’t be contained in simple boxes... claustrophobic and expansive, intimate and existential, personal and political all at once.”

– *Variety*

“Creative riches explode from one small, claustrophobic space in ‘Stuck Elevator,’ the extraordinary musical that... pack[s] an epic’s worth of inspired music and inspirational content, performances and design... A vibrant opera-musical theater hybrid with a story both personally compelling and eye-opening.”

– *San Francisco Chronicle*

**Byron Au Yong**

*Flashes of Brilliance*

“... the musicians’ performance was outstanding, with both playing toy pianos, shifting about the stage, banging on the sides of their instruments, and finally picking up a kazoo and slide whistle at the end of the work. A violin player also joined in from the audience...”

– *Seattle Dances*

*The Mother of Us All*

“The kora is an old, old instrument, and An Yong has it almost vanish within a river of electronic, industrial sonic artifact, only to reappear here and there, never completely overwhelmed.”

– *The SunBreak*

*Farewell*

“The sound — with its Chinese melodies, radio newscasts, Maoist propaganda and snippets of Beethoven — is all-enveloping.”

– *The Seattle Times*

“... interdisciplinary works are as exquisite and imaginative as they are unclassifiable.”

– *Recommended Arts Events, Seattle Weekly*

“Byron Au Yong, more sensitive to natural sounds and the spiritual resonances of a place than perhaps any other local composer.”

– *Seattle Weekly*

**Aaron Jafferis**

“Critic’s Choice. Raw... hard-hitting... a passionate but sober-minded plea against the kind of self-perpetuating violence that leaves young people in the grave and others to grieve (and feed their grievances). Rap, Latin sounds and razor-edged rock tap into pure blasts of emotion, like a needle dropped straight on the brain. A bold step forward for the Globe.”

– *San Diego Union-Tribune*

“Bracingly taut... witty and intelligent... dramatically denounces street violence even as it demonstrates the ability of rap and hip-hop to make successful musical theatre.”

– *BackStage*

“The invigorating, near-Shakespearean rap drama Kingdom... [is] innovatively intelligent... sobering, unflinching. The score is the first I’ve experienced to make a viable case for rap and hip-hop as theatre music... Jafferis and Williams are worthy musical inheritors of Shakespeare’s legacy.”

– *TalkinBroadway.com*

“Compelling and brutally uncomfortable... complex and poetic... I sat in the theatre wanting to walk on the other side of the street to avoid the ugliness and danger and difference. I wanted to pretend that my life was prettier. But I realize, a day later, that my resistance and arrogance only perpetuates more oppression of these inhabitants of my city, my street, my home.”

– *nytheatre.com*

“A potent new hip-hop musical. If *Rent* captured the hopes, dreams and frustrations of the 20something generation in the ’90s, then *Kingdom* may be well on its way to chronicling the struggles of today’s inner-city youth. Raw, hard-hitting and sometimes funny, *Kingdom* is reaching a young audience with language and music they can connect with viscerally.”

– *North County Times*

# AWARDS & HONORS

## Byron Au Yong and Aaron Jafferis

### *Stuck Elevator*

- NEA Art Works Grant, 2013
- Edgerton Foundation New American Plays Award, 2012
- NEFA National Theatre Pilot, 2012-2013
- Creative Capital Award, 2009
- Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for Best Original Musical, 2013

## Byron Au Yong

- Time Warner Foundation Fellowship (USA) 2012
- MAP Fund Award (USA) 2007
- 4Culture Award for Innovation (Seattle) 2006
- Dragon Foundation Fellowship (Hong Kong & Xi'an China) 2006
- Meet the Composer Grant (USA) 2005
- American Composers Forum Subito Grant (USA) 2003
- Fukuoka Gendai Hogaku Festival Award (Japan) 2002
- Ford Foundation Fellowship (Malaysia and USA) 2000-2002
- Bonderman Travel Fellowship (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) 1995
- Foundation Gaudeamus Invitation and Scholarship (Holland) 1994
- Darmstadt Institute Stipendpreis (Germany) 1994
- New Music USA Project Grant, 2014

# RESIDENCIES

## Byron Au Yong

- International Festival of Arts & Ideas artist-in-residence (New Haven) 2014
- Sundance Institute Theatre Lab composer-in-residence (MASS MoCA) 2013
- Rutgers University Department of Arts, Culture and Media (Newark) 2012
- Sundance Institute Theatre Lab composer-in-residence (White Oak) 2011
- Sundance Institute Theatre Lab composer-in-residence (Banff Arts Centre Canada) 2011
- Yale Institute for Music Theatre composer-in-residence (New Haven) 2010
- NYU Asian/Pacific/American Institute artist-in-residence (New York) 2009-2010
- Jack Straw New Media Gallery composer-in-residence (Seattle) 2004/2008
- Jerwood Foundation Opera Writing Programme composer-in-residence (UK) 2007
- Portland Taiko composer-in-residence (Portland) 2007
- Dragon Foundation Young Chinese Leaders Forum delegate (China) 2006
- Fukuoka Gendai Hogaku Festival composer-in-residence (Japan) 2002
- Jeonju Sanjo Festival composer-in-residence (South Korea) 2002

## Aaron Jafferis

- Sundance Institute / Time Warner Fellowship, 2012
- Barbour Playwright's Award (*How to Break*), 2012
- Quinnipiac University Poetry Slam winner, 2009
- Best Musical, Best Book of 2008-09 (*Kingdom*), *Newark Star-Ledger*
- Richard Rodgers Award (*Kingdom*), American Academy of Arts & Letters, 2008
- 50 Writers to Watch, *The Dramatist*, 2007
- Lincoln Center Director's Lab, 2007
- Most Promising New Musical (*Kingdom*), New York Musical Theatre Festival, 2006
- Outstanding New Musical citation (*Kingdom*), *Talkin' Broadway*, 2006
- Alberto Vilar Global Fellowship in the Performing Arts, NYU, 2002-2004
- New England Artists' Congress Poetry Slam winner, 1999
- Open Rap Slam winner, National Poetry Slam Championships, 1997

## Aaron Jafferis

- The Macdowell Colony artist-in-residence (New Hampshire) 2014
- International Festival of Arts & Ideas artist-in-residence (New Haven) 2014
- Sundance Institute Theatre Lab writer-in-residence (MASS MoCA) 2013
- Sundance Institute Theatre Lab writer-in-residence (White Oak) 2011
- Sundance Institute Theatre Lab writer-in-residence (Banff Arts Centre Canada) 2011
- Yale Institute for Music Theatre writer-in-residence (New Haven) 2010
- NYC Asian/Pacific/American Institute artist-in-residence (New York) 2009-2010
- TheatreWorks writer-in-residence (Silicon Valley) 2003
- Weston Playhouse writer-in-residence (VT) 2008
- Oregon Shakespeare Festival Mixing Texts Convening (Ashland) 2009, 2010 & 2011

# PERFORMANCE & TOURING HISTORY

## Byron Au Yong and Aaron Jafferis

### Stuck Elevator

- Premiered at American Conservatory Theatre (San Francisco) 2013
- Presented at the International Festival of Arts & Ideas (New Haven) 2013

### Kidnapping Water: Bottled Operas, for hiking singers, water percussionists

*64 bottled operas created with support from Jack Straw Foundation, MAP Fund, Site-Specific Arts*

- Seattle Symphony Benaroya Hall Garden of Remembrance (Seattle) 2011
- Town Hall (Seattle) 2010
- Bumbershoot Festival of the Arts (Seattle) 2008
- Performed in 64 outdoor waterways throughout the Pacific Northwest (various) 2008
- Installation created with Randy Moss, Jack Straw New Media Gallery (Seattle) 2008
- Richard Rodgers Award Finalist (USA) 2008

### Surrender: A T'ai Qi Cantata, for 24 moving voices

*Choral music commissioned by The Esoterics with support from Meet the Composer*

- Performed at St. Thomas (Medina), Holy Rosary and St. Joseph's (Seattle) 2005
- Premiered at Christ Episcopal (Tacoma) 2005

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## Byron Au Yong

### The Orphan of Zhao, for voices, violin, cello, percussion, water, soundtrack

*Music for theatre based on an adaptation by James Fenton, directed by Carey Perloff*

- Premiered at the American Conservatory Theatre (San Francisco) 2014
- Performed at La Jolla Playhouse (San Diego) 2014

### Piano Concerto – Houston, for 11 pianists, one piano

*Audio/video installation created with media sculptor Susie J. Lee, commissioned by the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts at the University of Houston*

- Presented at the Bermac Arts Building during Counter-Current Festival (Houston) 2014

### Welladay! Welladay! Wayward Love Songs, for soprano, violin, cello, piano

*Song cycle inspired by James Joyce, orphans and unwed mothers, commissioned by Nonsequitur*

- Performed at the Chapel Performance Space (Seattle) 2013

### Occupy Orchestra 無量園 Infinity Garden (fl, ob, cl, bsn, hrn, trp, trb, tb, perc, hrp, strings)

*Site-responsive work written for the Chicago Composers Orchestra and audience*

- Performed at Garfield Park Conservatory (Chicago) 2013

### O(pa)pera, for voices, er-hu, vln, vlc, trb, toy pno, type-writer, perc, paper

*Live music installation created with installation artist/director Roger Benington*

- Phase One performed at the Seattle Art Museum (Seattle) 2012

### The Mother of Us All, for kora, laptop, soundtrack

*Music for dance commissioned by Spectrum Dance Theater, choreography by Donald Byrd*

- Premiered at The Moore Theatre (Seattle) 2011

### Fifteen, for violin, taiko

*Chamber music commissioned by Portland Taiko, choreography by Michelle Fujii*

- Premiered as part of Ten Tiny Taiko Dances at the Winningstad Theatre (Portland) 2010

### Farewell: A Fantastical Contemplation on America's Relationship with China, for voice, er-hu, vlc, perc, bicycle wheels, cassette players, soundtrack

*Music for dance commissioned by Spectrum Dance Theater, choreography by Donald Byrd*

- Premiered at The Moore Theatre (Seattle) 2010

### 3Seasons, for vln, toy pno, perc, electronics; version 2.0 for violin, soundtrack

*Music for dance commissioned by Whim W'him, choreography by Olivier Wevers*

- Performed at Intiman Theatre (Seattle) 2011
- Premiered at On the Boards (Seattle) 2010

### News, for bamboo, paper, taiko

*• Premiered at the Portland Center for the Performing Arts Newmark Theatre (Portland) 2007*

- Toured as part of Portland Taiko's The Way Home (USA) 2008-2012

### Island: Theme and Migrations, for two pianos

- Premiered at Brechemin Auditorium (Seattle) 2007
- Performed at Meany Hall (Seattle) 2007

### Ji Mo 寂寞: The Stillness of Solitude, for voices, xun, er-hu, bamboo, water, rocks, drums

- Premiered at Lincoln Performance Hall (Portland) 2007

### Ishquoh: Where Sounds Meet, for six children's voices, cello soloist, rocks

*Site-responsive performance commissioned by 4Culture and the Issaquah Arts Commission*

- Performed on abandoned railroad tracks as part of Site-Specific Arts (Issaquah) 2006

**Huo Quan** 火圈: **Ring of Fire**, for Chinese drum, opera gong  
*Percussion solo written for David Schotzko*  
• Performed at the Tokyo Art Museum (Japan) 2006  
• Premiered at the Island Music Guild Hall (Bainbridge Island) 2006

**Piao Zhu** 飄竹: **Flying Bamboo**, for voices, flute, mouth harp, harmonica, water, percussion  
*Contemporary Chinese percussion quartet commissioned by the Seattle Asian Art Museum*  
• Included on 4Culture Touring Arts Roster 2008-present  
• Premiered at the Seattle Asian Art Museum Garden Court (Seattle) 2006

**Becoming**, for two bluegrass singers, guitars, sarod, tabla, Chinese percussion  
*Music for dance commissioned by Z.A. Ensemble, choreography by Ying Zhou*  
• Performed at the Asia Meets Asia Festival (Tokyo) 2005  
• Premiered at the Chamber Theater (Seattle) 2005

**YIJU** 移居: **Songs of Dislocation**, for voices, paper, er-hu, drums, mouth harp, water gongs  
*Multimedia installation created with calligrapher Yoko Murao, filmmaker Chishan Lin, landscape architect Lorraine Pai and installation artist John D. Pai*  
• Exhibited at the Jack Straw New Media Gallery (Seattle) 2004

**Home**, for minyo singers, taiko ensemble  
*Chamber music commissioned by TAIKOPROJECT, created with choreographer Michelle Fujii*  
• Currently in the repertoires of Portland Taiko and TAIKOPROJECT National Tour 2003-present  
• Premiered as part of TAIKOPROJECT's 2003-2004 Tour: Gammage Auditorium (Phoenix)  
• Meany Hall for the Performing Arts (Seattle)  
• The Japan America Theatre (Los Angeles)  
• The Mondavi Center (Davis)  
• The Kenneth Ford Theater (Weed CA)

**Two by Four**, for nagauta voice, taiko  
*Chamber music commissioned by Ōn Ensemble for Grand Performances Los Angeles*  
• Premiered at California Plaza (Los Angeles) 2003  
• Performed as part of Ōn Ensemble's 2004-2008 repertoire

**Forbidden Circles**, for soprano, shakuhachi, shamisen, 17-string koto, taiko  
*Chamber music created for the Fukuoka Gendai Hōgaku Festival*  
• Premiered at Acros Hall (Fukuoka) 2002  
• Performed at the International House New Hall (Tokyo) 2006

**Salt Lips Touching**, for haegŭm, jing, kkwaenggwari  
*Chamber music commissioned by intangible cultural asset Kim Yong-Jae*  
• Premiered at the Jeonju Sanjo Festival (South Korea) 2002

**Woman, Monkey & Kabuki Joe**, for soprano, mouth harp, er-hu, harmonium, pno, perc  
*Puppet opera created with choreographer Lee Swee Keong and puppeteer Andrew K. Kim for the Ford Foundation's International Artists Program*  
• Premiered at Nippon Kan (Seattle) 2002

**Turbine**, for moving choir along the water  
• Site-responsive choral work commissioned by Leah Stein Dance Co and Mendelssohn Club  
• Premiered at the Fairmount Water Works (Philadelphia) 2015

**Mo Sheng** 墨声: **Ink Sound**, for string quartet  
• Site-responsive chamber work commissioned in conjunction with Pan Gongkai Exhibition  
• Premiered at the Frye Art Museum (Seattle) 2015

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## Aaron Jafferis

**How to Break**, with Chris Edwards, Kwikstep, Rebecca Hart, Rokafella, Yako 440  
• National Theatre/SPKRBOX Festival, Oslo, Norway, 2014  
• Collective Consciousness Theatre, New Haven, 2013  
• HERE/Hip-Hop Theater Festival, NYC, 2012

**Kingdom**, music by Ian Williams, directed by Ron Daniels  
• The Old Globe, San Diego, 2009 (World Premiere)  
• ReVision Theatre, Asbury Park, NJ, 2009 (Best Musical, Best Book of 2008-09, Newark Star-Ledger)  
• Public Theatre and Queens Theatre in the Park (2008 Richard Rodgers Award Staged Reading)  
• Bregamos Community Theater, New Haven, 2007  
• New York Musical Theatre Festival, 2006 (Most Promising New Musical)

**Shakespeare: The Remix**, music by Gihieh Lee  
• Saratoga Shakespeare Company, NY, 2014  
• Capital Repertory Theatre, Albany, 2008 & 2013  
• Collective Consciousness Theatre, New Haven, 2006-2011  
• Zachary Scott Theatre, Austin, 2008  
• St. Louis Black Rep, 2006  
• TheatreWorks, Palo Alto, 2003-2006

**No Lie**, music by Alex Vitttum & Liam Baum  
• Collective Consciousness Theatre tour to 50+ colleges and high schools, 1997-2012  
• Passage Theatre, Trenton, 2003  
• PS NBC @ HERE, NYC, 2001  
• Nuyorican Poets Café, 1999



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