

Writer/Director's Note

Our process, making a concert/theater work with Steven Schick, starts with an understanding of Steve's virtuosic skills and an appreciation of the heights to which we may be lifted by his playing alone. So we want our audience to experience this ecstasy, the pure music, the uncomplicated love and splendor. But this tonic, to be most satisfying in our context needs the taste of bitter fruit. So we look for a theatrical context that will support and frame a moment of distilled beauty but allow us to ask some complicated questions, challenge the purity of the music on occasion.

Steve, in my view, is not Steve when he inhabits a theatrical world. He may very well be playing himself, but he is not himself here. So I imagine a character very much like Steven Schick with Schick's talents and many of his concerns, his idiosyncrasies. We place him in a room full of Matt Heckert's sound making kinetic sculptures, Paul Dresher's and Dan Schmidt's invented instruments, and a hodgepodge of odd artifacts, most of which make musical sounds or intriguing noise.

My task is to invent (or discover) why this Steven-Schick-like character is there. Should he be seen as the inventor of these instruments? Yes. I think so. This arrangement resembles a factory or warehouse of odd musical instruments, or a museum of oddities. We start with what is given. And what does this character do by profession? Is he a percussionist by trade, avocation, or accident? Is he there to dispose of these odd looking things, to junk them? Is he there to die? Is he there to dream, remember someone, remember someone else's dream? Is he there to recall a childhood memory, a sound? Is there something or someone compelling him to make a decision? Does he have to decide the fate of these artifacts, what to save and what to scrap?

Our first rehearsals revolved around these questions. We ended our first sessions with the notion that our protagonist is both a musician and collector of sounds, that he has been living in this warehouse with these artifacts, these memories, that he is under court order to vacate these premises, that he must decide which instruments (sounds, memories) to take and which to leave.

We talked about sounds we remember from childhood, many of which have become endangered species: the sound of a manual typewriter, the winding of a watch, the run-out of a vinyl record as the needle circles the label.

We talked about habit and innovation, nostalgia and attention. We talked about love and fascination, our fathers and mothers, our fears and infatuations.

The audience should move (figuratively speaking) with the character, identify his concerns, his addictions as their own, succeed with him in losing themselves in the moment, then recover their feet in a world that won't let them remain oblivious or ecstatic, a world that disturbs their sleep, wakes them from the dream.

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Rinde Eckert
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