ZACHARY JAMES WATKINS: “AFFIRMATIVE ACTION”  
(FROM AFFIRMATIVE ACTION) (10:42)

Contact: Zachary James Watkins.  

This piece was commissioned and performed by The Living Earth Show.

Zachary writes: “Affirmative Action. Affirmative in power and Action in movement. When invited to compose for The Living Earth Show, my confident response was to curate short pieces by composers of color whose work I am inspired by and feel deserve action.

I immediately knew who I wanted to invite due to past collaborations brought about by an interest in connecting with a community of diverse artists. I titled my composition and program ‘AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.’

My piece ‘AFFIRMATIVE ACTION’ is written for electric guitar in my own unique just intonation tuning and percussion consisting of vibraphone, floor tom, metal and a struck-mounted electric guitar.

My initial interest was to set my just intonation in fuzzy harmony with equal tempered guitar fretboard and vibraphone with the intent to explore rich timbre and play with the beautiful potential of shared harmonic/cultural space.

In college we learned Western harmony and I always felt outside. This feeling will need more context in later writing. However, I recognized the genius and invention. Early on in my artistic learning and experimentation, I was drawn to synthesis, black music and noise! As I began to research music of the world, I found an inviting and challenging space that deeply moved me and will always. I was especially influenced by my Gamelan studies and by Persian-tuned pianist Ramin Zoufonoun.

Percussion is powerfully complex and infinite in instrumentation.

This opportunity to compose for the excellent Living Earth Show gave me a platform to continue exploring my interests in sound, composition, culture, healing and radical diversity.”

As a composer and founding member of experimental music ensemble Black Spirituals, Oakland-based ZACHARY WATKINS crafts work in pursuit of psychedelic experience, where sonic and compositional focal points are self-guided by the listener and acoustic phenomenon is at the center of the narrative. Zachary has received commissions from Kronos Quartet, Cornish College of The Arts, The Microscores Project, the Beam Foundation, Somnubutone Radio Series frees10point9.org, sf sound and the Seattle Chamber Players. Zachary releases music on the labels Sige, Cassauna, Confront (U.K.), The Tapeworm and Touch (U.K.), Novembre Magazine (Germany), ITCH (South Africa), Walrus Press and The New York Miniature Ensemble have published his writings and scores. Zachary has been an artist in residence at the Esby Foundation, Djerassi Resident Artists Program and the Headlands Center for the Arts.

DAVIA SPAIN: “HELLO” (3:59)

Contact: Davia Spain.  

Performers: Davia Spain and Peekaboo (cello).  
Production: Amanda Yamate.

On a foundation of ambient textures and cello, the electronically manipulated voice of Davia Spain is looped on itself. Drawing from the classical art song and pop traditions in equal measure, “Hello” sets Spain’s text to craft a beautiful and haunting sonic meditation on rebirth and renewal.

DAVIA SPAIN is an electronic, free jazz and blues artist. Greatly influenced by her background in chamber music, Spain strives to blend the new with the old. Steeped in Afro-futurist traditions of nonlinear time, Spain seeks to reimagine the past, make predictions of the future and pull possible outcomes into the present through her music. While she is grateful for a traditional foundation in classical voice, dance and acting training she also values the room for experimentation afforded her in California’s underground performance art and club scene. Recently she has shown work at Berkeley Art Museum, REDCAT, The Regent (LA) and The Broad Museum, where she played music from her debut album, Dawning. A forthcoming visual work that accompanies her music will be available soon.
RAVEN CHACON: “TRIBUTARY” (FROM AFFIRMATIVE ACTION) (4:43)

Contact: Raven Chacon.

This piece was commissioned and performed by The Living Earth Show.

“Tributary” is the foundational section of a larger work, Tremble Staves, connecting narratives of the San Francisco Bay Area’s complicated relationship with water—usage, access, rights—to overlapping Navajo creation stories in which water figures prominently. Both a concert performance and an installation, the entirety of Tremble Staves is performed from memory by The Living Earth Show. Instruments include quarter-tone guitar, bathroom sink, amplified tile, stirred broken mirrors, tin pans, amplified matches and shattered glass. Not a work to bring awareness, but a proposition for imagining when we are already gone.

Originally from the Navajo Nation, RAVEN CHACON is a composer of chamber music, a performer of experimental noise music and an installation artist. Chacon’s work explores sounds of acoustic handmade instruments overdriven through electric systems. As an educator, Chacon has served as composer-in-residence for the Native American Composer Apprentice Project, teaching string quartet composition to hundreds of American Indian high school students living on reservations in the Southwest U.S. His work has been presented at the Whitney Biennial, documenta 14, REDCAT, the Kennedy Center and the San Francisco Electronic Music Festival.

JKLM: “FILL A STRANGER’S SHOES” (4:29)

Contact: Juba Kalamka.

Performers: Juba Kalamka and Leroy F. Moore, Jr.

“Fill A Stranger’s Shoes,” like the rest of the JKLM’s Invalidations Volume IIToo, was composed as a result of Kalamka’s utilization of Moore’s vocal performances as both the text to be set and the foundations of percussive and instrumental layers. Kalamka built an “instrumental” track around samples of Walter Jackson and other Black disabled artists (particularly those dealing with physical disabilities), pitched to work in tandem with Moore’s spoken bass/baritone. Digitally slowed instruments serve as a metaphorical call to slow down, listen and pay attention. Moore’s text represents a direct conversation about ableism from his own perspective, placing the concepts of sympathy and empathy in direct conflict.

JKLM is a collaborative poetry/hip hop/electronic music project with words by Leroy F. Moore Jr. aka The Black Kripple and music by Juba Kalamka aka Joe Louis Milk.

Born in 1967 with cerebral palsy in New York City, LEROY F. MOORE JR. was blessed to have a conscious, activist father and mother who instilled a strong sense of identity as a Black and disabled youngster. Moore is founder of the Krip-Hop Nation (a movement that addresses ableism, or discrimination against disabled artists, especially Black musicians marginalized because of racism AND ableism internationally) and the cofounder of Sins Invalid. Moore is an activist, writer, poet, rapper, feminist and radio programmer. Moore wrote for I.D.E.A.L. Magazine, and since the 1990s, has written the column “Illin-N-Chillin” for POOR Magazine.

Although his recording career began in 1988, bisexual artist/activist JUBA KALAMKA is most recognized for his more recent work with queer POC performance troupes Sins Invalid and Mangos with Chili, as a member of “homohop” group Rainbow Flava, cofounderproducer of Deep Dickollective (D/DC) and his development of the microlabel Sugartruck Recordings. Kalamka’s personal work centers on intersectional dialogues on race, identity, gender, disability, sexuality and class in popular media. He received a 2005 Creating Change Award from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) for his activist work in the queer music community.

AVA MENDOZA: “ATTEMPTED DICTATOR III” (FROM AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, PERFORMED BY TLES) (4:46)

Contact: Ava Mendoza.

This piece was commissioned and performed by The Living Earth Show.

Ava writes: "This is the third in a three-movement piece written for The Living Earth Show. It is rooted in indeterminate repetition of short notated figures, 2–4 measures long. The concept is of a dictator attempting to completely control a population. Over and over again, they exert power. The population has a will of its own, and a complicated and absurd struggle for authority follows. It becomes convoluted and difficult to tell who controls who. The dictator is forced to react to their population’s every unruly move, becoming a kind of puppet themselves. They jump and dance on command, to command obedience, fear and attention. This piece was inspired by social life, politics and Western classical music."

AVA MENDOZA is a Brooklyn-based guitarist, singer, songwriter and composer. Born in 1983, she started performing her own music, and as a sideman and collaborator in many different projects, as soon as she was legally allowed into venues. As a guitarist, Mendoza has received acclaim for her technique and viscerality. Her most ongoing work is as leader of art rock band Unnatural Ways and as a solo performer of her own music and works by contemporary composers. In any context she is committed to bringing expressivity, energy and a wide sonic range to the music. Mendoza has toured throughout the U.S. and Europe and has recorded/performend with musicians including Carla Bozulich, Malcolm Mooney (CAN), Steve Shel-
ley, Mike Watt, Adele Bertei, Mick Barr, William Hooker, Nels Cline, Matana Roberts, John Zorn, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Fred Frith, William Parker, Hamid Drake, Object Collection (Travis Just), ROVA, Negativland, the Violent Femmes and members of Caroliner. She has received composition commissions from film distributor Kino Lorber, new music duo The Living Earth Show and John Zorn's Stone Commissioning Series at National Sawdust. Recordings are available on labels Tzadik, Astral Spirits, Weird Forest, Clean Feed, Resipiscent and New Atlantis.

**AH-ME-R-AH-SU: “MEG RYAN” (3:54)**

Contact: Star Amerasu.

Performer: Star Amerasu.

With a looped vocal incantations, synthesizers and Star's virtuosic vocal performance, "Meg Ryan" serves as a tongue-in-cheek examination of the ways in which whiteness and white supremacy frequently impact feminist thinking. The text specifically dialogues with the manner in which feminism is often applied without intersectionality, working in fact to further to marginalize—rather than support—Black trans women.

**AH-ME-R-AH-SU** is the music project of interdisciplinary artist Star Amerasu, whose music and art are based upon her experiences living loud and proud as a queer, Black, trans woman. Her early work was influenced primarily by folk and choral music, and she effortlessly blends her voice with synths, looped vocals and intricate live electronic percussion. She has performed in Europe, Australia and North America and her recordings—2016’s Eclipsing, 2017’s Rebecca and 2018’s Star—have garnered widespread critical acclaim.

**Reference**


**SHARMI BASU: “FREELANCER’S JEST OR SORRY I’M A FUCKUP” (FROM AFFIRMATIVE ACTION) (18:51)**

Contact: Sharmi Basu. Web: www.sharmi.info.

This piece was commissioned and performed by The Living Earth Show.

Sharmi writes: “This project, AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, has brought up many complex feelings for me. Much of my adult life has been spent battling cis white men for space in the experimental and new music community, so to create an event where two white men are intentionally representing pieces for a group of people of color feels like a complex intentional action. Questions that have been brought up for me include: How is having whiteness represent our work challenging or investigative? How can we use these bodies to ask harder questions? What is the point in making music (reprise)?

“Freelancer's Jest or Sorry I'm A Fuckup” is a piece that explores ideas of power, privilege, vulnerability and accountability. I hope with this piece to put the performers in a position that is uncomfortable for them and challenging to the audience. I hope these pieces make us think about ways that power is taken from us whether it is consensual or not. I hope they help us figure out whether it is really useful for us to use white privilege as a means of investigating white supremacy.

Credit: The text in the 3rd section is from a piece called Thinking Through Perpetrator Accountability from Rolling Thunder #8, published by crimethinc mixed with words and ideas from other articles that say pretty much the same thing many hurt folks have been saying about wisdom, care, harm and trauma for a very long time. Specific links are available in the text of the score.”

Born and currently based in Oakland, CA, SHARMI BASU is a South Asian woman of color creating experimental music as a means of decolonizing musical language. She attempts to catalyze a political yet ethereal aesthetic by combining her anticolonial and antiimperialist politics with a commitment to spirituality within the arts. In addition to her compositions and solo electronic performances, Basu founded and hosts MARA, a performance and improvisation collective centered around queer, trans and/or womyn of color and is building The Universe Is Lit: Bay Area Black and Brown Punk Festival.
**YGSLRHSTFUT: “RAGE” (2:20)**

Contact: Chella Coleman.

This piece was written and performed by Ygslrhstfut: Chella Coleman (vocals/bass), Maya Sage (bass/vocals) and Mateas (drums).

Though recording cannot do justice to Ygslrhstfut’s dynamic and powerful live performances, “Rage”—the last track on the ensemble’s self-titled debut album—captures the ensemble at its most energized. The work features the ambient sound of the ensemble members in the studio segueing seamlessly into a combustible combination of feedback, bass, and aggressive percussion. The vocals of Chella Coleman are foregrounded, serving as incantation, call to action, and expression of rage. The track abruptly stops seemingly mid-performance, a shockingly inorganic end to an exceedingly organic performance.

**YGSLRHSTFUT** is a Los Angeles–based trans black GNC punk band seeking to not get famous but be part of a revolution in a punk rock way. For what the name means, ask them. The ensemble consists of Chella Coleman (vocals/bass), Maya Sage (bass/vocals) and Mateas (drums).

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**MORGAN CRAFT: “PERFORMANCE” (FROM AFFIRMATIVE ACTION) (10:09)**

Contact: Morgan Craft.

This piece was commissioned and performed by The Living Earth Show.

Morgan writes: “My impetus in working on this piece is focused on the question: ‘What makes the live performance of Music unique and special within the domain of the industry as we’ve come to know it?’ In the age of ubiquitous digital recording software, whereby anyone can lay claim to being an audio artist, of Bandcamp albums with their one-inch square image to accompany an audio file and YouTube clips, how does the live experience/performance stand uniquely situated to make a singular impact? What makes a performance special is the Musician in the space itself, with its particular characteristics, the audience, being there in the flesh. Seen from this reality, the live performance of Music affords us the opportunity to communicate and explore new territory.”

**MORGAN CRAFT** is a musician, improviser, composer, and writer. Currently based in Amsterdam, Craft’s compositions dialogue with the role of the performer in the interpretation and realization of improvised concert works. He founded Circle Of Light Recordings in 2001. He has played with Butch Morris, Talib Kweli, Pete Cosey, Ikue Mori, Meshell Ndegeocello, Anton Fig, Beans, Muzz Skillings, Greg Osby, Rhodri Davies, Johnny Kemp, Marc Ribot, Christian Marclay, Simon H. Fell, Nona Hendryx, Carl Hancock Rux, Daniel Carter, Vernon Reid and Greg Tate. He has released 13 solo albums as well as numerous essays and articles.