

**EMPAC**

**ARE  
TING  
YOU**



**Laure Prouvost,  
Sam Belinfante  
Pierre Droulers**

## **THEY ARE WAITING FOR YOU**

Music by Sam Belinfante, Pierre Droulers, Eli Keszler, and Laure Prouvost

Movement by Pierre Droulers

### **FEATURING**

Sam Belinfante: Conductor

Pierre Droulers: Mover

Laure Prouvost: Narrator

Bethany Battafarano, Alia Jeraj, and Tara Loeper: Voices

Eli Keszler: Drums, percussion, and electronics

Jack Magai: Movement

Terry Hempfling: Camera operator, movement

Will Knapp: Production Manager

## ARTIST STATEMENT

This performance is heavy and stinks.

(sound) A Flight is landing.

You want to stand up from your sit but feel so heavy you can't.

...Choirs in the audience start to breath: ha ha hum ha ha ha

A lot of darkness with glimpses of flashing.

The audience is one Neuron connecting feelings with each other...

I would like to create the sensation that the audience is one, large, breathing phenomenon, a

lung. The room starting to breath up and down with its audience.



## BIOGRAPHIES

**LAURE PROUVOST'S** artistic output consistently returns to themes of escape into unfamiliar worlds or imaginings of unexpected alternative environments. A strong narrative impulse propels her practice, resulting in immersive, trans-medial installations with interwoven story lines that combine fiction and reality. Her videos, installations, paintings and tapestries unhinge commonplace and expected connections between language, image, and perception. Stepping away from traditional linear narratives, the artist crafts sensual environments laden with playful mistranslation that open a space for the viewer to grapple with the unstable relationship between imagination and reality. The elasticity of the written word comprises a central element of Prouvost's practice, stating: "Words for me are very visually powerful, because with words people create their own vision. I am just hinting and suggesting possibilities, the audience is making its own image in its head. It is also about misunderstanding, misinterpreting, miscommunicating—words also suggesting failure and other senses."

**SAM BELINFANTE** is an artist living and working in London. Along with filmmaking and photographic work, his practice incorporates curating, sound, and performance. Recent exhibitions include *This is a Voice* at MAAS Sydney and Wellcome Collection, London (2016-17); *The Curves of the Needle* at BALTIC 39, Newcastle and *The London Open* at Whitechapel Gallery, both 2015 and the solo show *Many Chambers, Many Mouths*, Southard Reid, London (2013). He curated and participated in *The Voice and The Lens*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, which toured to Whitechapel Gallery as part of Spitalfields Festival in June 2014. Recent performances include *Feedback* at Palais De Tokyo, Paris (2017) and *On the One Hand and the Other* at Camden Arts Centre and Supernormal Festival, UK (2016). Recently Belinfante won the Hayward Touring Curatorial Open. His exhibition *Listening* opened at BALTIC 39 in September 2014 and toured to the Bluecoat, Liverpool; Site Gallery, Sheffield and the Sheffield Institute of Arts Gallery; and First Site and Art Exchange, Colchester.

**PIERRE DROULERS** is a French and Belgian choreographer and dancer. He is now associate artist at Charleroi Danses, the Choreographic Centre of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Droulers trained at Mudra, the multidisciplinary school founded by Maurice Béjart in Brussels, and in Poland with Grotowski. He has worked with artists like Robert Wilson and Steve Paxton and created solos and groups works with, amongst others, Steve Lacy, Sherryl Sutton, Winston Tong, and Sussan Deihim. As a performer, he worked with renowned European choreographers like Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker and Michéle Anne De Mey. In 2000, Droulers staged *MA* at the Festival d'Automne with Michel François, Ann Veronica Janssens and Yuji Oshima – a stroll through the architecture of modern cities. In 2001, he returned to the stage with *Sames*, a duo with Stefan Dreher about the question of doubles and the notions of same and different. That same year, he opened a venue in Marseille, the Bird Studio, for hosting artistic residencies and north-south migrations on the site of Cap 15. In 2003, he was given a free hand for a production at the Balsamine in Brussels; this event presented a pathway between dance, the visual arts, and sound. In 2004, he produced *Inouï*, which was presented in Belgium, France and Germany, and in 2005 he presented work as part of the Kunstenfestivaldesarts. Recent works include: *Flowers* (2007), *All in All* (2009), *Walk Talk Chalk* (2009), and *Soleils* (2013). In 2016, Droulers published *Sunday* (Fond Mercator Press and Actes-Sud), an expansive catalogue that re-visits the choreographer's decades-long career. A performance installation, *Dimanche* (2017), also accompanied the publication.

**ELI KESZLER** is a New York-based artist, composer and percussionist. Keszler's installations, music and visual work have appeared at Lincoln Center, MIT List Center, 67 Ludlow, Victoria & Albert Museum, Sculpture Center, The Kitchen, South London Gallery, Hessel Museum, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Luma-Foundation, Centraal Museum in Utrecht, Barbican-St. Lukes, LAX Art, and Greater New York at MoMa PS1. His work has been featured in *Frieze*, *Bomb Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Wire Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *Gramophone*, *Modern Drummer* and *Modern Painters* among others. He has released solo records for Empty Editions, Esp-Disk', PAN and REL records. As a composer Keszler has received commissions from the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, ICE Ensemble, Brooklyn String Orchestra and So Percussion. Keszler is a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music and was a 2016 New York Foundations for the Arts fellow.

Movement-based interdisciplinary artist **TERRY HEMPFLING'S** work has been presented at myriad venues in New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco. She is a camera operator for Dia Art Foundation, the Theatre on Film and Tape Archive and the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Terry has been a Lighthouse Works Fellow, a Shandaken Project Artist in Residence, a Mellon Foundation subsidized artist and a Guest Artist at Antioch College. As a performer she has worked with Marina Abramovic and Pavel Zustiak (among others) and is currently developing a performance piece with Minneapolis- based writer Rachel Jendrzejewski.

**JACK MAGAI** employs objects, methods and sites traditionally beyond the theatrical in order to investigate the evolution of attitudes about nature. This has led him to form the Troy Chainsaw Ensemble and to dance with chickens. In 2008 he co-founded the Emergent Scores Lab, a weekly meeting of time-based artists in Troy, NY to study the spontaneous development of improvisational structures. He studied dance and literature at Bennington College. He has collaborated with, among others, Dayna Hanson, Heather Kravas, Paul de Jong, Lori Goldston, and Adam Frelin.

**ARTEMIS** is a treble-voice chamber ensemble based in Minneapolis that focuses on collaboration, sound innovation, and femme empowerment. The ensemble consists of six fluctuating members. Collaborating on Laure Prouvost's program are Bethany Battafarano, Alia Jeraj, Tara Loeper, and Elizabeth Windnagel. The group formed in the fall of 2014 and performs a wide variety of repertoire, including Gregorian chant; Irish, Bulgarian, and Mexican folk music; experimental improvisation; and contemporary classical works by such icons as Meredith Monk and Steve Reich, as well as many local Minnesota composers. In the last two years, Artemis has received several commissions from local composers. In 2016-2017, the group collaborated with composer Catherine Dalton on her work *Bluets*, which received both MRAC Next Step and MSAB Artist Initiative grants. In 2016-2018, Artemis has been commissioned by Minnesota-based 113 Composers Collective to perform two full programs of contemporary classical repertoire. The group has performed at such venues as The Guthrie Theater, The Bedlam Theater, Northern Voice, Northern Spark, Jazz Central, Studio Z, and The Baroque Room.

**BETHANY BATAFARANO** is a Twin Cities-based classically trained soprano and composer. Currently, Battafarano sings with The Rose Ensemble and MN Chorale in addition to freelancing. She was a 2016-2017 Cedar Commissions artist, for which she collaborated with Chilean musicians of Twin Cities band Alma Andina to compose a 30-minute work, *Oda a la paz*. In 2017, she helped to launch Twin Cities-based choir, Border CrosSing, whose first season, *Puentes*, draws from early Mexican music. Battafarano has also worked as a Spanish medical interpreter and as a caregiver for children who have autism. She received her BA in Music, Anthropology, and Psychology from Macalester College in 2013.

Based in the Twin Cities, **ALIA JERAJ** works as a performer, writer, and educator. She holds her degree from the University of Minnesota in Music and Gender, Women's, and Sexualities Studies, and seeks to create art that draws from both pools of knowledge. Some of Alia's favorite collaborations have included *Crone House* with Lizz Windnagel (2016), Mixed Precipitation's *Picnic Operetta* (2014-2018), and Dameun Strange's *Helianthus* (2017). She currently works as an advisor at the High School for Recording Arts where she nurtures students' creativity and supports them on their path towards graduation.

**TARA LOEPER** is a singer, composer, and improviser based in Minneapolis. She is a co-founder of Six Families, a local music collective, and has performed extensively in the Twin Cities. In 2015, Tara received the Cedar Commission to create *Aurelia*, a new composition for voice and electronics which Artemis premiered in January, 2016 at the Cedar Cultural Center. She has been fortunate to collaborate with a number of wonderful organizations and ensembles including: DaNCEBUMS, 113 Collective, Walker Art Center, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Open Eye Figure Theater, and Jazz Implosion.



## THANK YOU

The performance is co-commissioned by The Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (EMPAC) and the Walker Art Center.

Geoff Abbas  
Aimée Albright  
Mick Bello  
Victoria Brooks  
Eric Brucker  
Bruce Bryne  
Zhenelle Falk  
Ian Hamelin  
Ryan Jenkins  
Carl Lewandowski  
Stephen McLaughlin  
Daniel Meltzer  
Todd Vos  
Michael Wells  
Justin Ayd  
Philip Bither  
Sophie Buchmueller

Katie Deutsch  
Ryan Ellingson  
Christian Gaylord  
Ben Geffen  
Molly Hanse  
Rosie Hartunian Alumbagh  
Jacob Hofer  
Jon Kirchhofer  
Douglas Livesay  
Pearl Rea  
Gwyneth Shanks  
Karen Sherman  
Jasio Stefanski  
Victoria Sung  
Julie Voigt  
Megan Winter  
Max Wirsing





## I CAN SEE A VOICE: The Making of They Are Waiting for You

By Victoria Brooks

French-born artist Laure Prouvost, now based in Antwerp, produces visually and aurally rich moving image installations in which she conflates reality and fiction, words and images, reveling in moments of mistranslation that open up new avenues of meaning. The winner of the 2013 Turner Prize, Prouvost's recent presentations create immersive, interdisciplinary spaces, exhibiting painting, sculpture, collage, drawing, sound scores, or found objects alongside her moving image projections. Laure Prouvost is one of nine artists commissioned through the Walker's Interdisciplinary Art Initiative, supported by the Mellon Foundation, which is dedicated to the continued development of artists' practices as they experiment across artistic disciplines. Her new performance work, *They Are Waiting For You*, premieres at the Walker February 9–10, 2018. In the following essay, Victoria Brooks, curator of Time-Based Visual Arts at EMPAC (Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), reflects on Prouvost's recent production residency at EMPAC.

Based on my experience, the first thing a visual artist will do when confronted by the material fact of producing a performance for a theater—where the seats rise from a rectilinear proscenium and the stage recedes, channeled by several pairs of heavy black duvetyn legs that shield the audience from the stage mechanics—is to get rid of a theater's various stage curtains, like the “wings” and “borders.” By removing these visible indices of theatrical design, the audience can gaze into a vast black box, as if a dollhouse with one wall removed. The stage becomes a sort of three-dimensional screen, if with depth and the technical support—the human and infrastructural ground that makes the production possible—is made visible as a constituent of the narrative. And indeed, these same requests came within the first hour of Laure Prouvost, Sam Belinfante, and Pierre Droulers' recent production residency at EMPAC and, as such, the stage was set (or rather un-set) for *They Are Waiting For You*.

In order to write a “making-of” that doesn’t describe the content of the show prior to its premiere, I will take a similarly structural and/or materialist approach. That is to say, I’ll focus on those things in support of the production: the architecture, materials, objects, technology, and people. At EMPAC, the residencies not only include intensive infrastructural support (including the theater, concert hall, and production studios), but the collaboration of an experienced team of engineers and technicians who have worked for more than a decade with artists from visual arts, film, performance, and music to translate technically complex and interdisciplinary ideas into form. One way in is to step through some of the performance’s requirements, especially its titular means of production. The development of *They Are Waiting For You* has thus far included several residency periods at both commissioning institutions, EMPAC and the Walker Art Center, all of which lead up to a world premiere at the Walker in February 2018 and a performance at EMPAC the week following.

*They Are Waiting For You* is collaborative, and its production has been a process of artistic and technical experimentation by everyone involved. Prouvost’s uncle, Pierre Droulers, is experienced in theatrical environments. (He is, of course, the one who resists theatricality the most.) Belinfante previously collaborated with Prouvost on the technical aspects of her installations. As an artist his prolific and interdisciplinary approach encompasses visual arts, performance, and film, while his source material is always sonic and/or musical. As such, for *They Are Waiting For You* he arranges the music, narration, video, and the on-stage actions as if a conductor.

The piece includes, of course, Prouvost, Belinfante, Droulers, a production manger, curators/producers from each institution, a rigger, a master electrician, an audio engineer, several video engineers, production technicians and stage hands, four singers from the Artemis Ensemble, the percussionist Eli Keszler, a micro-perforated screen, a variety of scrims and improvised fabrics, a kabuki drop, some theatrical lights (including washes, work, and moving lights), various tables and chairs, fixed seating in the auditorium, multiple line-sets and battens, a fly system, a genie lift, microphones distributed around the audience, a set of drums, logs, branches, bread, oranges, a couple of projectors, one or two video cameras, a dancer, a naked woman, a motorbike, a few bags of leaves, a large fish, a helium balloon, and maybe a goat. This list of constituent parts and collaborators could read like a call list for an imagined Laure Prouvost video shoot, except for a couple of major differences: the specific architectural features of a theater, the titles of some of the technical team, and, of course, the audience.

But this comparison is not meant as a means to frame the discourse around the mechanical reproducibility of moving image versus the liveness of the theater. For this show I prefer to follow Erika Balsom’s approach to situate cinema in the realm of the performing arts by foregrounding it as an event, one that is experientially unique even as it is mechanical or digitally reproduced.<sup>2</sup> In the simplest sense this framework gestures to artist Ian Breakwell’s hair in the proverbial gate of spectacle quoted in the epigraph of this text.<sup>3</sup> It is the act of projection along with the particulars of architecture, acoustics, screen quality, atmosphere, and people that muddies the gap between the experience of cinema and theater.

Though primarily a visual artist whose videos, installations, and signs are mostly presented in galleries and museums, Prouvost also remains present as a performer in all of her works. However, she is usually at least one step removed from the audience—either mediated by the camera or through narrative fictionalization of familial history. Prouvost’s vocal performance is marked by an unmistakable whisper that slips between mistranslation and neologism as she urges us, and the “magic electronics” (programmed by Belinfante), to follow her instructions. In the making of *They Are Waiting For You*, Prouvost’s approach to the relationship of language and image is expanded through the potential of the linguistic and architectural construction of the theater. As an artist who usually works in moving image, this is an unfamiliar mode of production: a literal new language. Although there are common conditions in the experience of watching cinema and theater, such as forward-facing fixed seating and a certain disciplined linearity of audience experience (many early cinemas are converted theaters, of course), the language born out of the divergent techniques of film production and theatrical production is often at odds. The staging of this mistranslation, which remains at the heart of Prouvost’s work, therefore becomes the underlying context of this performance.

It was particularly interesting to observe how Prouvost, Belinfante, and Droulers—as individual artists who each film, record, edit, and perform themselves—relinquished authorial control at different moments during the residency. The unruliness of others’ experience, expertise, ideas, and actions can engender radically new ways of working as well as frustrating confusions. “No improvisation!” was the retort regularly yelled to and by anyone involved in the production when anyone appeared to be going ‘off-script’ (even when there was not something necessarily as tangible as a printed page to follow). This phrase, aside from propagating a common parlance during the residency, served to cloak critique and gently refuse an idea whilst remaining generous to deflated egos. Linguistic

shortcuts are present in the making of just about any artwork that requires the skills of a group and therefore the deft navigation of complex webs of social interaction. Usually by the second day, everyone has synched their speech patterns with the vernacular of any given production. Moreover, as a curator of “time-based visual art” who also produces EMPAC commissioned artworks, my role is much like that of a translator: situated in-between the artists and the engineers, technicians, and infrastructure, between the museum, the studio, the cinema, and the theater, all the while attempting to catch the mistranslations between disciplinarily specific vernaculars.

This period of experimentation was mirrored through the frame of the performance. The anatomy of the production was structurally visible, and, as such, the first act was staged as cinema. Prouvost’s video—made for her current solo exhibition at Walker Art Center—was projected on a large micro-perforated screen that masks the stage at the proscenium. The video addressed us, the audience, as a group, iterating through words and actions a set of instructions. The spatial and linguistic transformation that followed tapped into our common experiences as well disciplined audience members. The material of the projection surface was slowly revealed as a back light shined onto it and reconstructed the screen as scrim: what was opaque became semi-transparent, no longer able to reflect a seamless cinematic illusion.

The performance progressed and focused our attention, as viewers, past this projection screen and into the stage space. I was reminded, as this shift happened, of Breakwell’s insistence on the gap between watching and seeing.<sup>4</sup> *They Are Waiting For You* presented so many different ways of seeing (and, for that matter, hearing). A literal array of surfaces appear and disappear at multiple distances, animated by a fast-paced switching of sources between pre-recorded footage and live video that in turn doubles the performed actions on stage. It appeared the whole theater was activated in order to fracture the distance between language, object, and experience. In a traditional theatrical context, a scrim interacts with light to conceal and reveal, a cyclorama reflects, and duvetyne absorbs both light and sound in order to cloak, mask, and frame the stage area like the rectilinear limit of a lens. But rather than theatrical tricks, *They Are Waiting For You* used this material tactility to produce a sense of unmoored dislocation for us as viewers. This was produced through the joyful choreography of the theatrical infrastructure, such as an interlude of “batten ballet” when curtains, scrims, and light fixtures took over the stage with the

rapid rise-and-fall of the line-sets. As the stage elements appeared to act on their own, undisciplined, they exposed the supposedly rational technical and linguistic structures that support our experience.

On the last day of the residency, we invited the local public to give feedback on the work-in-progress, and as the dramaturgy of the middle section did not yet match its ambitious technicality, it was decided to stage the show as a beginning and an end with an imaginary middle. This section took place overlaid with Prouvost’s voice directing us to “imagine” the actions that were, for the most part, not happening on stage. And sitting there in the semi-dark, the performance still happened. Not in a spectacle of complicated theatrical tricks, not in practical or special effects, but in the audience imagining a series of images and actions. Philosopher Vilém Flusser claimed that, “film does not give an account of events but imagines events and makes them imaginable: it makes history, if always three steps removed from the concrete phenomena.”<sup>5</sup> *They Are Waiting For You* goes a step further. It collapses the event with the phenomena, and it points towards the audience as actively capable of conjuring both.

Toward the end of the performance, smoke imperceptibly started to fill the room. These particles were transformed into a hazy screen when a projector was turned on and pointed out towards the house. Choral voices and spoken words were distributed around the audience and we were all enveloped in a sort of cinematic sensorium. *They Are Waiting For You* is certainly expanded cinema with its double-entendre act of projection and its play with the construction of discipline. It gestures back to a time when magic lanterns and moving images shared the stage with performers and lighting tricks, when the act of seeing was always an act of learning.

## NOTES

- 1 Ian Breakwell, *Seeing in the Dark: A Compendium of Cinemagoing*, eds. Ian Breakwell and Paul Hammond (London: Serpents Tail, 1990), 7.
- 2 Erika Balsom, *After Uniqueness: A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 179–181.
- 3 Ian Breakwell (1943–2005) was a British conceptual artist and diarist equally committed to the interplay of image and language, and the place of experience in cinema. His work took many forms including photcollage, theater performances, film, film performances and expanded-cinema events, installations, environments, video, audio works, digital imaging, and writing. He worked as part of the Artists Placement Group with John Latham among others. Prouvost worked with Latham for several years and continues to incorporate references to the artist in her own works.
- 4 Ian Breakwell, *Continuous Diary and Related Works: 1965–1978* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre & Scottish Arts Council, 1978).
- 5 Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*, trans. Nancy Ann Roth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 90.

## STAFF

**Geoff Abbas** / Director for Stage Technologies  
**Aimeé R. Albright** / Artist Services Specialist  
**Eric Ameres** / Senior Research Engineer  
**Argeo Ascani** / Curator, Music  
**Eileen Baumgartner** / Graphic Designer  
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**Peter Bellamy** / Senior Systems Administrator  
**Michael Bello** / Video Engineer  
**Victoria Brooks** / Curator, Time-Based Visual Arts  
**Eric Brucker** / Lead Video Engineer  
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# THEY WAIT FOR