



House of Sparrows

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Steven Snowden



GROUNDWORKS

dancing camera

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# About the Work

House of Sparrows was created as a tribute to the sesquicentennial commemoration of the American Civil War in 2015. With House of Sparrows, I have imagined a kind of dream; a journey through which we are transported back in time into the experience of individuals who lived and died during the epic struggle that redefined a period, a way of life, a country. It is a dream shifting with the force of change, full of great pain, loss and dislocation, and it takes us to a place where nothing can ever be the same.

The work is in 9 sections. Each section was inspired in some way from archival photographs, essays and personal memoirs from the Civil War. I used these as starting points for trying to imagine what it was like for the average person during that time; images and stories of lives dislocated. I see these lives as part of a “House” – a symbol of a state of mind, an identity, the “House of Self,” fractured and upended. “Home” was also literally and figuratively at the center of the community, the “Collective House,” a symbol of continuity and connection, torn apart and displaced, and that idea extended to a nation divided on itself.

In my research I was struck by a quote, which for me, allowed this dark and terrible dream to begin to resurface; the acknowledgement of the inevitability of change, with or without our understanding.





# About the Work



“A singular fact about modern war is that it takes charge. Once began it has to be carried to its conclusion, and carrying it there sets in motion events that may be beyond men’s control. Doing what has to be done to win, men perform acts that alter the very soil in which society’s roots are nourished. They bring about infinite change, not because anyone especially wants it, but because all-out warfare destroys so much that things can never again be as they used to be.

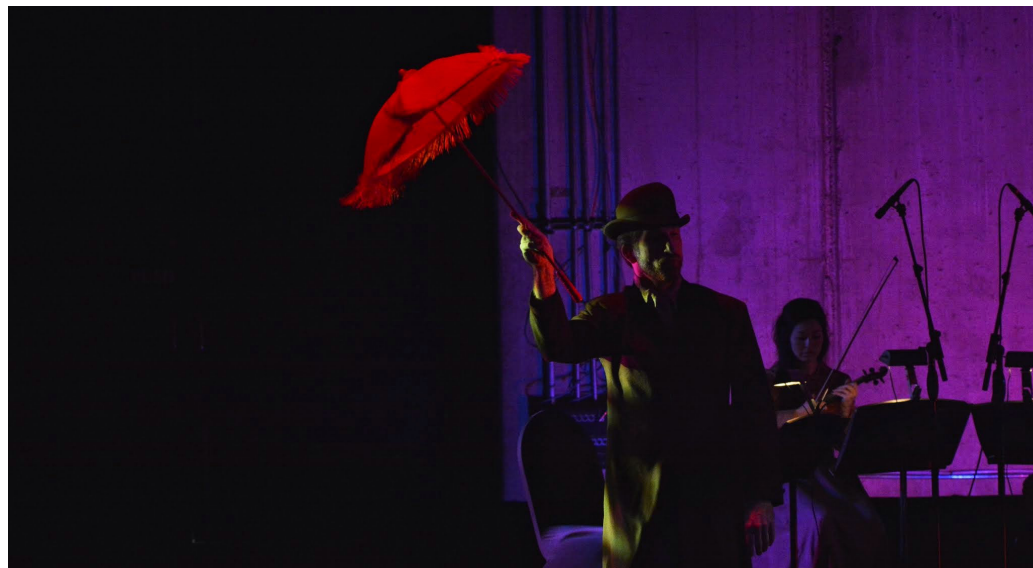
“In the 1860’s the overwhelming mass of people in the North and in the South, were conservatives who hated the very notion of change. Life in America had been good and it had been fairly simple, and most people wanted to keep it that way. The Northerner wanted to preserve the old Union, and the Southerner wanted to preserve the semi-feudal society in which he lived; and an unspoken aim in each section was to win a victory which would let people go back to what they had in a less turbulent day. But after a war cuts as deeply and goes as long as the Civil War, no one goes “back” to anything at all. Everybody goes on to something new...”

The American Heritage New History of the Civil War – narrative by Bruce Catton, Viking/Penguin Group



# Artists

- Choreography: David Shimotakahara – in collaboration with Felise Bagley, Noelle Cotler, Damien Highfield and Annika Sheaff
- Music Composed by: Steven Snowden
- Music Performed by: The Aeolus Quartet: Nicholas Tavani – violin, Rachel Shapiro – violin, Greg Luce – viola, Alan Richardson – cello
- Lighting: Dennis Dugan
- Video: Nic Petry, Dancing Camera
- Set: Ian Petroni
- Props: Ian Petroni
- Costumes: Janet Bolick
- Sound: Chuck Karnak
- Photography: Mark Horning
- Dancers: Felise Bagley, Noelle Cotler, Annika Sheaff, Damien Highfield



# Artists

## GroundWorks DanceTheater

GroundWorks DanceTheater is imagination you can see. Critically celebrated as an “artistically significant” ensemble, GroundWorks explores the nuances of the human experience through unique and adventurous choreography. This exciting, eclectic work brings audiences face-to-face with fresh, fascinating performances of passion, intellect and humor.

Artistic director David Shimotakahara founded GroundWorks in 1998, determined to challenge preconceptions about dance. From its Northeast Ohio base, this group of outstanding artists has introduced dance lovers and neophytes alike to an experience that is unconventional, yet deeply human and resonating. From performing in unusual settings to featuring live musicians onstage, GroundWorks enriches its work with subtle layers of meaning that deepen the impact and enjoyment for the audience. This desire to push the boundaries is also evident in Shimotakahara’s bold initiative: To constantly seek collaboration and input from groundbreaking choreographers of the highest caliber and to make certain that the repertoire of the company is constantly evolving.





# Artists

## **Aeolus Quartet**

Praised by the Baltimore Sun for combining “smoothly meshed technique with a sense of spontaneity and discovery,” the Aeolus Quartet is committed to presenting time-seasoned masterworks and new cutting-edge works to widely diverse audiences with equal freshness, dedication, and fervor. Violinists Nicholas Tavani and Rachel Shapiro, violist Gregory Luce, and cellist Alan Richardson formed the Aeolus Quartet in 2008 at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Since its inception, the all-American quartet has been awarded prizes at nearly every major competition in the United States and performed across the globe with showings “worthy of a major-league quartet” (Scott Cantrell, Dallas Morning News). Luke Quinton of the Austin-American Statesman writes, “The Aeolus Quartet is a powerful and thoughtful group of young musicians who are plotting an ascending course...this vibrant group shows great promise.” They are currently the Graduate Resident String Quartet at the Juilliard School.

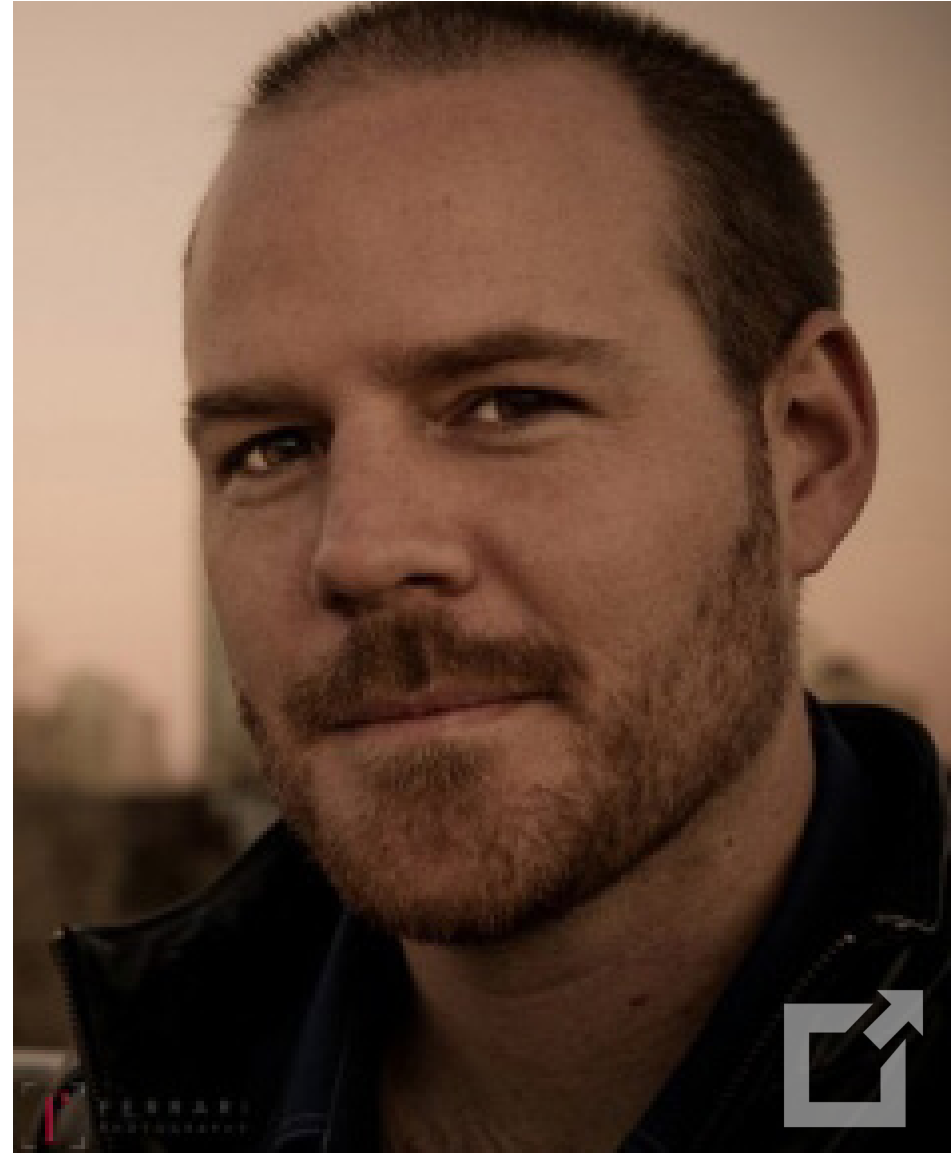


# Artists

## Steven Snowden

Steven Snowden creates music for a diverse array of settings including theater, dance, film, multimedia installations, and the concert stage. He has focused much of his recent work on interdisciplinary collaboration and remains active as a performer in both acoustic and electronic music. Raised in rural Southwest Missouri, Snowden began composition studies in 2002, received his Masters degree in composition at the University of Colorado and DMA at the University of Texas at Austin. He is a co-founder/director of the Fast Forward Austin new music organization and his works have been performed by many outstanding ensembles at numerous festivals and concert series across five continents.

He has recently received awards and fellowships from the Aspen Music Festival, the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, the Austin Critics' Table, Copland House, ISCM World Music Days, New Music USA, IC Hong Kong, The Mizzou New Music International Composers Festival, Future Places Portugal, The National Endowment for the Arts, and the ASCAP Morton Gould Awards among others. He was also the recipient of a 2012-2013 Fulbright Grant to Portugal in music composition/technology where he researched the augmentation of interactive motion tracking systems for use in large-scale interdisciplinary collaborations. In 2013-2014 he was a visiting professor and composer in residence at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and currently works as a freelance composer and concert presenter in Austin, Texas





# Artists

## **Nic Petry - Dancing Camera**

Dancing Camera has been telling stories through moving images for nearly a decade. We electrify the visions of our clients to make ideas dance upon the screen. Dancing Camera's founder, Nic Petry, is a professional dancer with The Bang Group. His nuanced approach to musicality, aesthetics, and rhythm highly inform both his work in dance as well as film. He graduated from Princeton University, where he majored in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and received a certificate in Dance. He attended the University of Illinois, where he received his M.F.A and taught courses on Dance for Camera, editing, and camera techniques.





## THE PLAIN DEALER

GroundWorks DanceTheater teams with composer, string quartet on work inspired by Civil War



## THE PLAIN DEALER

Groundworks DanceTheater alights on a winner with Civil War dance 'House of Sparrows' (review)



## CLEVELAND CLASSICAL

Groundworks Dance Theater to present premiere of House of Sparrows with the Aeolus Quartet at the Breen

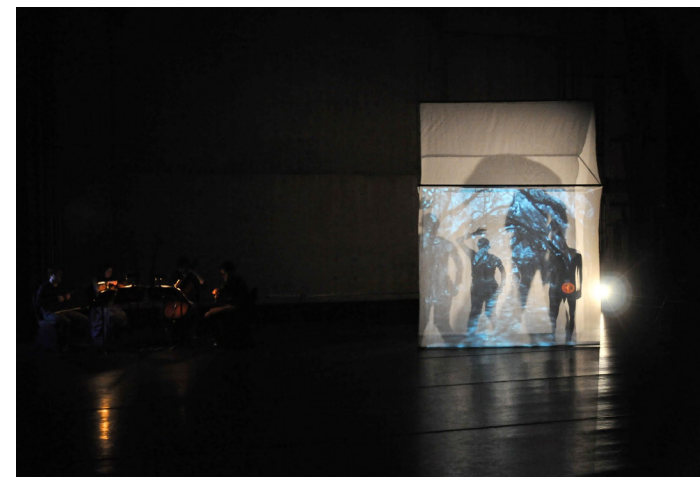


## BEACON JOURNAL

Stage Notes





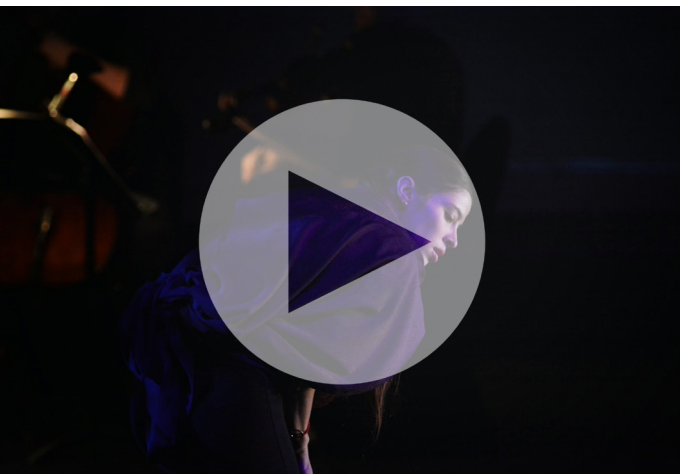








# Video





House of Sparrows