
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Hearing is the Deepest Contact: Psychedelic Stax's Divine Blue Light

Mike Sonksen · Monday, March 27th, 2023

“Hearing is the last energy to go before the body disappears,” declares surrealist poet [Will Alexander](#) while in conversation with MC Hymnal on the January 20, 2023 Psychedelic Stax episode. “Hearing is the deepest contact point of the 5 senses,” Alexander avers. [Alexander heralds music as medicine](#) as conveyance as a healing force. This motif is a central theme in Alexander’s now book *Divine Blue Light (For John Coltrane)* and for the [Psychedelic Stax](#) radio show, now in its 9th year.

Psychedelic Stax is the dublab radio show hosted by Terry Robinson aka Hymnal and Mixmaster Wolf on the third Friday of every month. Initially launched in 2014, these two have been close friends since they met in 1990. This essay celebrates Psychedelic Stax, Will Alexander and the medicine of music.



MC Hymnal and Mixmaster Wolf of Psychedelic Stax

Alexander told me via email a few days before he recorded the dublab interview that: “Listening to Trane gave me an instantaneous connection with realms that were unknown to me within the borders of the conscious mind,” Alexander says. “I was being spontaneously educated via realms which proved to be poetic praxis.” The educational and empowering qualities of Coltrane and other like minded musicians like Eric Dolphy are what Alexander calls “renewable resources.” In other words the transformative and transcendent power of sound. Alexander’s celebration of Coltrane honors the infinite inspiration he received from the great saxophonist.

Born in Los Angeles in 1948, Will Alexander has authored over 30 books for various independent presses like City Lights and New Directions. Considered one of the premier surrealist poets alive, his last book *Refractive Africa* was shortlisted for the Pulitzer and won the California Book Award in Poetry in 2022.

The January 20th episode of Psychedelic Stax spotlights Alexander with him reading an excerpt of his Coltrane poem along with broadcasting three of his favorite Coltrane songs and a set of nearly 90 minutes of spiritual jazz curated by Hymnal before the interview and Alexander's poem recitation. To have Alexander on Psychedelic Stax is apropos because MC Hymnal aka Terry Robinson is a surrealist poet himself and along with his co-host Mixmaster Wolf, he is an astute musicologist.

Sonic Notation

"I read your work like I listen to music," declared Kamau Daaood to Will Alexander at Beyond Baroque in Venice on January 21st. The day after Alexander was on Psychedelic Stax, he was in conversation with the great Leimert Park poet Kamau Daaood in Venice. Besides being an award-winning poet, Daaood is a famed record collector who owned his own record store for many years in Leimert. Alexander and Daaood reminisced about their long poetic careers, their deep friendship and their mutual love of music. They've been friends for 60 years since meeting at Horace Mann Middle School in South Los Angeles in the early 1960s.

Their conversation is instructional here because their relationship is kindred to the connection that Hymnal and Mixmaster Wolf share. The Alexander-Daaood event culminated with the two great poets reading their respective Coltrane poems in a braided method trading lines. It was a spontaneous poetic jam session that may never happen again. Hearing Alexander and Daaood together on stage made me think about the 30 plus years of friendship between Hymnal and Mixmaster Wolf. Besides all four of them being born in Los Angeles, Hymnal and Wolf also met as teenagers and like Alexander and Daaood, they were in the music scene together from jump street.

The hosts have not only been friends for 33 years, they collaborated in a hip hop crew, Darkleaf that jammed in 1990s spaces like the Good Life Cafe, Afterlife and Project Blowed. "These psychedelic swirling dervishes were punk shock and rhyming alchemy," declares artist Mear One that "came with the most bizarre entertaining experience. Lyrics that just slapped you upside the head, pushing your ability to keep up while bringing you back to earth for a quick check up before launching into a new dimension."

Darkleaf came up at the same time as groups like Pharcyde, Jurassic 5 and Freestyle Fellowship, but they were the most eclectic and avant-garde of the bunch. Mear One remembers seeing them perform in 1992 at King King in Hollywood when the whole group got into a fist swinging brawl yet somehow managed to finish the show screaming obscenities.

"They dropped truth bombs while exploring the psyche unafraid of its outcome," Mear recalls. "Bravery beyond limits in a lyrical sense. What made these artists different wasn't how f'ed up they could get, but they had critical minds with something to say. They were some smart dudes who rejected the brand vibe and instead told it as it was. Real art doesn't expect a paycheck, it offers a middle finger. In the spirit of H.R. of Bad Brains meets Frank Zappa in a rap battle, Darkleaf had to come into existence when they did. They went deep inside to confront what others

feared. Real Art.”

The spirit of Darkleaf can be heard in both Psychedelic Stax and every Saturday night at Funky Sole at El Cid on Sunset Boulevard in Silverlake where Wolf and Hymnal mix records on the patio. They have spent hundreds of hours together on stage, shopping for rare records and on cross country road trips to music festivals.

Beyond his three decades of DJing and producing music, Mixmaster Wolf has been the lead vocalist of the funk band, [Breakestra](#) for 25 years. One of my favorite songs about Los Angeles ever is the Breakestra cut, ‘[Hit the Floor](#),’ in which Wolf runs down California freeways and boulevards in his charismatic sing-rap register. The founder of Breakestra, multi-instrumentalist, DJ and producer Miles Tackett exclaims, “Mixmaster Wolf has been a great friend, DJ inspiration, and collaborator for a good part of my musical life. The pied piper of the lowdown stank with a heart of gold.”

Hymnal is a founding member of Darkleaf and has also recorded and toured with Cut Chemist since the mid 90s. Cut Chemist and Hymnal’s 2006 collaborative song, “What’s the Altitude,” has over 111 million views on YouTube. Hymnal has inspired a whole generation of MCs like Open Mike Eagle and Rhys Langston. “For me,” Langston states, “Terry Robinson aka Hymnal vibrantly represents the many intersections of the LA underground: of psychedelic lyricism amid ‘the cool’ in swinging rhythms; of fringe literature within and without experimental hip hop; in his own aloof frequency and as an unseen cog in the West Coast scene that birthed the many styles of today.”

This is the deep experience Hymnal and Wolf bring. Every episode is engineered with hand-picked musical selections. “Wolf and Terry and their show Psychedelic Stax is so good,” composer, producer, DJ and multi-instrumentalist Dan Ubick states, “because you can hear the love and excitement they have for the music they play on every episode. Those two have known each other for so long too so you get humor and brotherly love as well.”

I Got a Thing, You Got a Thing, Everybody Got a Thing

Rooted in the history of sample culture, Hymnal and Wolf have a long list of influences from DeLaSoul, Eddie Hazel, Redd Foxx, Flip Wilson, Richard Pryor, George Clinton, Isaac Hayes, Casey Kasem, Don Cornelius, Wolfman Jack, Sly Stone, Pink Floyd, Curtis Mayfield and Creedence Clearwater Revival. Above all the show is about choice music cuts, but there is also a witty repartee that shows their camaraderie and knowledge. “Let’s fly the mothership,” Wolf states. Mixmaster Wolf is a funk expert and his favorite Funkadelic song is “I Got a Thing, You Got a Thing, Everybody Got a Thing” from 1970.

Though these two are well schooled in musical history, they do not cater to the elite. “We try to express our lives in the moment,” Hymnal states, “with an ear to the novice.” Joy and the therapeutic power of music is the focus. Each show has a specific theme reflecting what’s happening that month. The Will Alexander episode was called “Soul Trane,” October’s show was “Funktober,” and their last two Valentine’s Day editions were dubbed, “It’s a Love Thing,” named after the iconic Whispers song.

Hymnal calls Wolf “an improvisational genius.” Wolf interned at KDAY 1580 AM under the legendary Russ Parr in the 1980s while he was in high school, so Wolf’s charisma directly descends from a lineage of local radio royalty. There’s a joyful banter between Wolf and Hymnal as they interact with the funk, soul and psychedelic rock they grew up with. They are excavating

their own past while reconnecting with their roots of growing up in 1980s Los Angeles and the days when they both made mixtapes featuring Al B. Sure for their high school girlfriends.

Hymnal is both co-host and sound engineer. He uses recording software to splice it all together with meticulous precision. They balance each other out and each two hour show is a sophisticated musical segment that could even be its own standalone concept album. Hymnal calls their chemistry “a feeling beyond language in a space outside of time.” They mash up musical genres and most of what they play is pre 1985. Similar to Sly Stone, they combine rock, funk, hip hop and soul to break down barriers and bring people together.

Music runs deep in both Wolf and Hymnal’s families. Wolf is the son of Daryl Munyungo Jackson, a percussionist that has played with Miles Davis, Stevie Wonder, Sting, Herbie Hancock, Kenny Loggins, Four Tops, the Supremes and the Temptations among many others and Wolf’s grandfather was also a DJ. Hymnal’s father was known as DJ Robin Red Vest in Independence, Missouri where he played music in speakeasies in the early 1960s before he made his way to California. Both Wolf and Hymnal inherited records from their fathers and some of the vinyl they play dates back to their dad’s collections.



MC Hymnal and Mixmaster Wolf of Psychedelic Stax

Some months Hymnal and Wolf are joined by DJs like Octavio Camacho and Adam Hayden. “Spontaneous and electric musical magic mingled with soulful vibes and ineffable love,” is how Hayden characterizes each session. To bring it back to Will Alexander, the poet told Hymnal on the “Soul Trane” episode that his process is “an ongoing repartee with the cosmos.” Wolf and Hymnal share Alexander’s enthusiasm for this timeless cosmic conversation, the three of them know that hearing is the deepest contact point of the five senses. Listen in for a ride on the mothership.

The playlist for the January 2023 show is below.

Psychedelic Stax Playlist

January 20, 2023

Bobbye Hall “Ovinu Malkaynu”
 Davey Graham “The Fakir”
 Alice Coltrane “Paramahansa Lake”
 Gabor Szabo “Ravi”
 Paul Horn “Tabla Solo in Teental”
 Alan Lorber Orchestra “Djellaba”
 Joe Harriott/John Mayer Double Quintet “Multani”
 Alla Rakha & Buddy Rich “Khanda Kafi”
 John McLaughlin “Peace One”
 Ford Lile “Track of the Scarab”

John Coltrane “My Favorite Things”
 John Coltrane “India”
 John Coltrane “Ole”

Will Alexander reading an excerpt of his poem “Divine Blue Light”

Interview with Hymnal and Will Alexander

Will Alexander’s Five Favorite John Coltrane selections

1. *My Favorite Things* (different versions across his oeuvre starting from the Atlantic recording, to his late Impulse recording Live In Seattle)
2. *A Love Supreme*
3. *India* on Impulse Records
4. *Ole*
5. *The Father, Son/Holy Ghost*

Original poem by Mike Sonksen based on Psychedelic Stax

The Right Song on the Right Night

Broadcasting from the Funky Sole patio
 Terry Hymnal & Mixmaster Wolf mix
 vinyl records under a warm June moon
 You better shake that thing turn it loose

Soul unlimited it must be witchcraft
 some still have their masks on
 but the gloves are off follow instructions
 the clean up woman is hip to the trip
 the wrong place at the right time
 the right song on the right night
 Wolf got a bag of 45s that'll save
 your life I can never get enough
 Psychedelic Stax is the recipe
 I learned my lesson last night

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Passion Postponed

Ann Haskins · Saturday, March 25th, 2023

A world premiere in Hollywood helps feed seniors, a U.S. premiere mulls the risks of chocolate in Costa Mesa, a diverse dance festival goes *al fresco* in Leimert Park, ballet solos dissected downtown, dance solos spice a theatre fest in Hollywood, more SoCal dance this week (March 24 to 30) and a peek at next week.

Live This Week

Did someone say chocolate?

Like Water for Chocolate, Laura Esquivel's revered book about thwarted lovers, magical realism, and emotion-charged cooking enthralled readers. The 1992 film version ignited more fans, including celebrated British choreographer Christopher Wheeldon whose full-length ballet version that **American Ballet Theatre** premieres here this week. Developed as a co-production by ABT and Britain's Royal Ballet where Wheeldon is Artistic Associate, the world premiere was in London but SoCal gets the U.S. premiere with a live orchestra (New York doesn't see it until June, further solidifying ABT's SoCal presence). While the ballet plot departs from the book, the central, thwarted love story of Tita and Pedro remains the pulse of the ballet as does Tita's otherworldly gift of imbuing her emotions into others through her cooking. In interviews, Wheeldon explained the rough translation of the title refers to something "boiling over" which is one way to describe the finale of the ballet. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Wed.-Sat., March 29-Sat., April 1, 7:30 pm, Sat. & Sun., April 1-2, 2 pm., \$29-\$250. [SCFTA](#).



Christopher Wheeldon's "Like Water For Chocolate." Photo by Tristram Kenton

Celebrating 10 outside

With sister festivals now in Phoenix and Joshua Tree, the original **BlakTinx Festival** in LA celebrates its 10th anniversary. Led by Licia Perea, this year's fest showcases ten Black and Latinx choreographers including Edgar Aguirre, Stephen & Aisha, Ysaye Alma, Nadia Calmet, Angel Castro, Tori Christi, G'Bari Giliam & Shantal Urena, Mari Maria, and Diana Toledo. Blankets and folding chairs are suggested. The festival founder and director Perea is being honored the night before by the LA Women's Theatre Festival for her "contributions fostering non-traditional and multicultural" works. Festival at Leimert Park Plaza, 4395 Leimert Blvd., Leimert Park; Sat., March 25, 4 pm, free. [BlakTinx Festival](#).



BlakTinx. Photo courtesy of the artist

Dance to feed souls and stomachs

In *Abbale*, **Bodies in Play** artistic director/choreographer Andrew Pearson brings a trio of true tales of fatherly relationships crossing different eras and cultures. Responding to ongoing food insecurity among LGBTQ seniors, the event also is a “food raiser” with attendees invited/encouraged to bring canned, dried, and other items. Full list of appropriate food donations is at the website. After these performances, the show moves on to San Francisco for a run. The Broadwater Main Stage, 1076 Lillian Way, Hollywood; March 30-31, April 1, 8 pm, \$20-\$40 [Bodies In Play](#).



Bodies in Play. Photo courtesy of the artists

First position, please

In one of its intermittently recurring programs, **American Contemporary Ballet** offers *Dancing School* in which multiple dancers perform a ballet solo which is then critiqued and discussed. The afternoon also includes a conversation with sculptor David Simon. At ACB Studios, Two California Plaza, 350 S. Grand Ave., Suite 2850, downtown; Sun., March 26, 2 pm, \$55-\$95. [American Contemporary Ballet](#).



American Contemporary Ballet. Photo by Ryan Ward

Going solo

Among the theater performers presented by this year's *LA Women's Theatre Festival* are several

solo dance artists, including **Lynn Jassem, Vannia Ibarguen, Juli Kim** and **Vyshnavi Aysola**. At Barnsdall Gallery Theatre, 4800 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Lynn Jassem (Fri., March 24, 8 pm), Vannia Ibarguen (Sat., March 25, 3 pm), Juli Kim, Vyshnavi Aysola, and Jassem (Sun., March 26, 7 pm). \$20. [LA Women's Theatre Festival](#).



Vannia Ibarguen. Photo by Prin Rodriguez

Out is not over

In this event celebrating the Persian new year, **The White Feather: A Persian Ballet Tale**, mixes history and resistance through a tale of the dismantling of Iran's ballet with the rise of current regime and the struggle for art ever since. Irvine Barclay Theater, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine; Wed., March 22, 7 pm, \$35-\$135. [Irvine Barclay Theater](#).



The White Feather: A Persian Ballet Tale. Photo courtesy of the artists

Bring in the clowns

Emerging from pandemic-induced financial chaos, **Cirque du Soleil** returns with *Corteo*. The clown-themed show promises the extravagant, often breath-taking mix of acrobats, gymnasts, and yes, clowns, that made this cirque, the one by which all others are measured. Microsoft Theater, 777 Chick Hearn Ct., downtown; opens Fri., March 24 7:30 pm to Sun., April 30, 1 & 5 pm, (see website for full list of performances and times), \$45-\$115. [Microsoft Theater](#).



Simone Forti. Photo courtesy of the artist

Post-Modern History, Live

Several of the notable figures who emerged from the post modern dance era centered at New York City's Judson Church in the 1960's left and came to SoCal. Rudy Perez and Simone Forti are among those NY transfers who became forces on the LA dance scene and now have *éminence grise* status here. Forti's oeuvre and the materials that fueled them are the focus of **Simone Forti**, the first museum exhibit to survey what she produced. The three-month exhibit includes live performances of *Dance Constructions*, one of her landmark works from 1961. Sarah Swenson, a known LA choreographer and long-time associate of Forti, acted as Performance Coordinator for this project and Forti's *Dance Constructions* presented throughout the exhibition, were staged by Carmela Hermann Dietrich. Hermann Dietrich and Forti have a relationship dating back to 1989 that includes improvised duets, the most recent of which, in 2017, was at Highways Performance Space. The exhibit also includes Forti's sculptures, videos, drawings, and notebooks. *Dance Constructions* at MOCA Grand Avenue (Museum of Contemporary Art), 250 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Exhibit runs to Sun., April 2. Performances of *Dance Constructions* performed Thurs., 3:30, 4:45, 6:00, & 7:15 pm, Sat. & Sun., 12:30, 1:45, 3:00, & 4:15 pm, throughout the exhibit run, free with timed museum admission. [MOCA](#).

A Peek at Next Week

Megan Doheny and Luca Renzi + Mike Tyus *LA Dance Project: 2023 Launch* at LA Dance Project studios, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., Arts District; Fri.-Sat., March 31-April 1, 8 pm, Sun., April 2, 2 & 6 pm, \$20, \$15 students. [LA Dance Project tickets](#).

LA International Flamenco Festival at Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center, 1935 Manhattan Beach Blvd., Redondo Beach; Sat.-Sun., April 1-2, 8 pm, \$45-\$165. [Kalakoa Entertainment](#).



BalletRED. Photo courtesy of the artists

BalletRED in *Shades of RED* at Athletic Garage, 121 Waverly Dr., Pasadena; Fri.-Sat., March 31-April 1, 7:30 pm, Sun., April 2, 5:30 pm, \$65. [BalletRED](#).

Max 10 Electric Lodge, Scott Kelman Theater, 1416 Electric Ave., Venice; Mon., April 6, 7:30 pm, \$10. [Electric Lodge](#).

Dance Notes

Postponed

The celebrated Spanish guitarist **Paco Peña**, scheduled to perform on April 1 at the Luckman Fine Arts Complex, has been postponed to 11-4. Info at [Luckman Fine Arts Complex](#).

A costume clear out

After 18 years, **LA Contemporary Dance Company** is having a clear-out, a one-day sale of costumes accumulated over LACDC's two decades of performances. Items will range in price from \$1 – \$20. Credit card or cash only. Bags will not be available on site so shoppers are advised to bring reusable bags. Sale at Stomping Ground, 5453 Alhambra Ave., El Sereno; Fri. March 31, 3

pm to 7 pm, RSVP requested from [LA Contemporary Dance Company](#).

Choreography fest deadline

This year's **Versa Style Street Dance Festival** (the 18th) covers two days, May 27 and 28. Day one is filled with street dance battles, day two with a theater showcase. Organizers are accepting applications from local artists for that second day of theater showcases. Deadline is March 27, 10 pm. Info and application at [Versa Style Street Dance Festival](#).

And another fest deadline

The **SoCal Dance and Choreography Festival 2023** is accepting application for the July 2023 event. Organizers are looking for innovative choreography in ballet, contemporary, hiphop, jazz, ethnic, cultural, and other dance forms. Apply online before the March 31, 11 pm deadline. Info and application at [SoCal Dance and Choreography Festival](#).

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Fascinating Technology from Your Favourite Video Games

Our Friends · Friday, March 24th, 2023

A lot of us enjoy relaxing with a video game at the end of a hard day's work, but how many of us stop to think about how the game actually functions? The mechanics behind video games are almost as interesting as the games themselves. Plus, with the [speed that technology is developing](#) nowadays, there are endless new bits of tech to explore. We're going to talk about some of the most frequently used bits of gaming technology, as well as some that are really cutting-edge.

Gesture Control Technology

On that cutting edge is gesture control technology. This technology has created a brand new way for us to interact with our games, both through smartphones, consoles, and in some cases even PC. At the moment, gesture control relates almost entirely to our hands with 3D cameras that are able to track up to 22 separate points in each hand. This means that the most advanced gesture control cameras can spot us giving a thumbs up, an 'okay' sign, or even swearing at them! All of these gestures can be used to help us interact with a game, but so too can our ability to swipe, tap, and count.

Some gesture control technology also uses the player's stance and body movements to control the game. The Wii Console, for instance, was a pioneer of its time, asking players to hold a stick-shaped remote and move it as though they were playing the game on the screen. Sports were a natural fit for this, allowing players to practice their swing in golf, their batsmanship in baseball, and even boxing, all from the comfort of their own homes. Mario Kart and Breath of the Wild also employed gesture control technology in their releases, but to a lesser extent. It will be interesting to see what the future holds for this type of tech, especially when the polish of the Wii comes together with more mainstream titles.



Photo by Nick Hillier on Unsplash

Random Number Generators

Our next bit of technology is the random number generator, and whilst it might not sound as futuristic as gesture control technology, it's a driving force in many of the games that we like the most. For example, all of the [best online casinos](#) use random number generators in order to achieve absolute fairness across a variety of their games. Slot machines and roulette wheels are the classic examples of how RNGs can create total integrity in online versions of casino games. RNGs work by inputting a seed number through a complex equation and then generating a different number from that. The different number can be used to control where the roulette wheel will land, or where the reel will stop spinning on a slot game.

Voice Control Technology

Many of us take for granted the Google Home or Amazon Alexa that we have in our houses and don't even think about the technology involved when we ask them to turn on the lights or set a timer. However, few of us interact with video games using our voices in this way. Some pioneering game studios have decided that they want to change this and have begun implementing voice control tech in their video games. At the moment, games like Tom Clancy's Endwar and Phasmophobia are [using this tech](#) to provide another method of interaction for humans, but seeing this tech combined with virtual reality technology could be one of the most exciting adaptations yet.

Photo by Aideal Hwa on Unsplash

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How To Include Your Kids In A Bathroom Remodel

Our Friends · Friday, March 24th, 2023

Are you planning a bathroom remodel and want to involve your kids in the process? Great idea! Including your children in the project not only teaches them valuable life skills but also helps create a functional and enjoyable space for the entire family. In this article, we'll guide you through the steps to include your kids in a bathroom remodel, from gathering ideas to enjoying the final result.

Why include your kids in a bathroom remodel?

Involving your children in the remodelling process has several benefits:

Teach responsibility and teamwork

Working together on a home improvement project helps kids understand the importance of teamwork and responsibility. They will learn to contribute to the family's well-being and take pride in their accomplishments.

Encourage creativity and self-expression

A bathroom remodel is a perfect opportunity for kids to express their creativity and explore their design preferences. Allowing them to participate in the decision-making process can boost their self-confidence and encourage a sense of ownership.

Create a functional space for the whole family

Involving your kids ensures that the remodeled bathroom caters to everyone's needs, making it a more functional and enjoyable space for the entire family.

Gather ideas and inspiration together

Before diving into the remodeling process, gather ideas and inspiration with your kids:

Browse online resources

Visit websites, blogs, and social media platforms to find design ideas and trends that appeal to your family.

Visit showrooms and home improvement stores

Take your kids to showrooms and stores to see bathroom fixtures, materials, and designs in person. This hands-on experience can help them better understand the options available.

Create a shared Pinterest board

Compile your favorite ideas and inspirations on a shared Pinterest board, which will help you visualize the final design and make decisions together.

Choosing the right materials

Selecting the appropriate materials is crucial for a kid-friendly bathroom remodel:

Safe and kid-friendly materials

Choose materials that are durable, easy to clean, and safe for kids. Opt for round-edged fixtures and shatterproof mirrors to prevent injuries.

Peel stick wallpaper and bathroom wallpaper

Peel stick wallpaper and [bathroom wallpaper](#) are excellent options for adding personality to your bathroom without breaking the bank. They are easy to apply, remove, and replace, allowing your kids to update the décor as their tastes change.

Easy-to-clean surfaces

Opt for surfaces that are low-maintenance and easy to clean, such as non-porous countertops and stain-resistant flooring.

Incorporating fun and educational elements

Make the bathroom an enjoyable and stimulating space for your kids by incorporating fun and educational elements:

Colorful and playful themes

Choose themes and color schemes that reflect your kids' interests, such as their favorite animals, hobbies, or characters. This will make the bathroom a more inviting and engaging space for them.

Learning tools and educational décor

Incorporate educational elements like alphabet tiles, world map shower curtains, or growth chart wall decals to stimulate learning and curiosity.

Maximizing storage and organization

A well-organized bathroom is essential for a family with kids:

Install adjustable shelves and hooks

Use adjustable shelving and hooks to accommodate the changing needs of your growing children. This will help keep the bathroom tidy and organized.

Use labeled storage containers

Label storage containers and bins to make it easy for your kids to find and put away their items, promoting responsibility and organization.

Ensuring safety in the bathroom

Safety should be a top priority when remodeling a bathroom for kids:

Non-slip flooring and bath mats

Choose non-slip flooring and bath mats to minimize the risk of slips and falls in the bathroom.

Childproofing fixtures and electrical outlets

Install childproof locks on cabinets and drawers, and use outlet covers to prevent accidents involving electrical appliances.

Teach kids about sustainability and eco-friendly choices

A bathroom remodel is an opportunity to teach your kids about sustainable living:

Water-saving fixtures

Install water-saving fixtures like low-flow faucets and showerheads to teach your kids about water conservation.

Energy-efficient lighting

Choose energy-efficient LED lighting to reduce energy consumption and teach your children about the importance of environmental responsibility.

Involving kids in the remodeling process

Include your kids in the remodeling process by assigning age-appropriate tasks and encouraging their input in decision-making:

Assign age-appropriate tasks

Give your kids tasks they can handle, such as painting walls, assembling storage units, or decorating the space.

Encourage their input in decision-making

Allow your kids to share their opinions and preferences during the remodeling process, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement.

Enjoying the final result together

Once the bathroom remodel is complete, celebrate and enjoy the new space together as a family. This will help reinforce the importance of teamwork and the satisfaction of a job well done.

Conclusion

Including your kids in a bathroom remodel is a rewarding experience that teaches valuable life skills and creates a functional, enjoyable space for the whole family. By following these steps, you can create a bathroom that suits everyone's needs and preferences, while fostering a sense of teamwork, responsibility, and creativity.

FAQs

1. How can I make my bathroom remodel budget-friendly?

Choose cost-effective materials like [peel stick wallpaper](#) and prioritize the most important updates to stay within your budget.

1. What age is appropriate for kids to be involved in a bathroom remodel?

Kids can be involved at any age, as long as tasks are age-appropriate and supervised by an adult.

1. How do I ensure the bathroom remodel is safe for my kids?

Focus on safety features like non-slip flooring, rounded fixtures, and childproofing cabinets and electrical outlets.

1. What are some fun themes for a kid-friendly bathroom?

Some fun themes include underwater adventures, jungle explorations, space travel, or your child's favorite cartoon characters. Choose a theme that reflects your child's interests and personality.

1. How can I make the bathroom remodel eco-friendly?

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Why Street Crime is Rising in the U.S.

Our Friends · Friday, March 24th, 2023

Street crime, also known as “ordinary crime,” refers to criminal activities in public places, such as robbery, assault, and drug-related crimes. Despite a decades-long trend of declining crime rates in the United States, recent years have seen a concerning [rise in street crime](#) in many parts of the

country. This has caused widespread concern among citizens and policymakers alike and increased pressure on law enforcement agencies to address the problem.

The reasons for this increase in street crime are multifaceted and complex, ranging from economic inequality and lack of opportunity to drug addiction and gang activity. Other reasons include the lack of reporting, the recent COVID pandemic, and its peculiar characteristics concerning criminal activities. Whatever the factors, research has shown an alarming conclusion, i.e., the rise of street crimes in the U.S. is evident. The wider community must take measures to curb this trend for the betterment of society.

Many in the field of law suggest a balance to be struck between punishments and corrective measures to curb the rising number of street crimes. [Aaron Black](#) from Phoenix also opines that despite the diverse factors contributing to high street crime, there should be a greater role played by the community to improve this concerning trend.

1. Economic Inequality:

[Economic inequality](#) is a major factor in the rise of street crime. When people feel that they cannot achieve economic success through legal means, they may turn to illegal activities to make money. The disparity between the haves and the have-nots is a major factor that pushes economically distressed people to resort to crime. The disadvantaged leave legal means of earning to choose a seemingly easier way of life, i.e., committing crimes.

2. Lack of Opportunity:

Lack of opportunity can also contribute to street crime. This can include limited job prospects, education, and training, leaving individuals with few options other than crime. Unemployment is a serious problem prevalent in many countries, and there's a direct correlation between unemployment and street crimes. The mere state of being unemployed leads to many individuals being stressed and thus committing crimes they normally wouldn't have considered.

3. Drug Addiction:

Drug addiction is another factor that can lead to street crime. Addicts may resort to theft or other crimes to support their drug habits. The dependency on drugs for addicts becomes a real threat to their sanity and financial status. The users need more money to buy the drugs they require to satiate their addiction and ultimately resort to a life of crime to meet these financial demands.

4. Gang Activity:

Gang activity is a significant contributor to street crime. Gangs often engage in violence and drug-related crimes, and their activities can spill over into communities, leading to increased crime rates. Gang-related street crimes are more difficult to curb as they are part of a larger problem of gang-related violence. However, many agencies in the U.S. are fighting the good fight against drugs and the gangs perpetuating these crimes to peddle drugs in the community.

5. Police-Community Relations:

Police-community relations can also impact street crime rates. When there is a lack of trust between law enforcement and community members, individuals may be less likely to report crimes

or cooperate with investigations. Recent events in the institute's history have posed serious questions about its handling of the situation, which have alienated the general public from the institute. It means there is a significant lack of reporting of crimes for fear of retribution or not being taken seriously.

6. COVID-19:

The pandemic has also played a role in the rise of street crime. The pandemic has wreaked economic havoc on many individuals, leading some to turn to crime to make ends meet. Additionally, pandemic-related restrictions have made it more difficult for law enforcement to respond to and prevent crime. Also, living in isolation, communities cannot support each other in these trying times. Isolation can lead to many mental problems in individuals, ultimately leading to street crimes.

In conclusion, the rise of street crime in the United States is a complex issue requiring a multifaceted approach. While law enforcement efforts are important, it is equally crucial to address the underlying social and economic factors contributing to crime. This could include initiatives aimed at providing more opportunities and resources for at-risk communities and efforts to improve police-community relations and provide more effective support to drug addicts and those struggling with mental health issues. Ultimately, communities can address the root causes of street crimes through their combined efforts to create safer and more secure communities for all.

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Don't Let This *Parade* Pass By

David Sheward · Monday, March 20th, 2023

Perhaps the most powerful moment in *Parade*, the stunning revival of Alfred Uhry and Jason Robert Brown's 1998 musical about the infamous Leo Frank case, is a silent one. Ben Platt, who gives a stirring performance as Frank, a man falsely accused of murdering a young girl, sits silently high up on Dane Laffrey's evocative set, lit by Heather Gilbert to suggest a jail cell. Platt remains seated at a simple table throughout the intermission with a look of desperation on his face. We know the character's ultimate fate—Frank was kidnapped and lynched after his sentence was commuted to life in prison—and it makes this unspoken sequence all the more shattering.



Micaela Diamond and Ben Platt in *Parade*.

Credit: Joan Marcus

What comes before and after is one of the most devastating musical experiences in recent Broadway memory. Platt, last seen on Broadway in his Tony-winning turn in *Dear Evan Hansen*, delivers another emotionally charged interpretation. He conveys Frank's transformation from a pinched, emotionally closed husband to a passionate partner to his wife Lucille, beautifully played by Micaela Diamond, who makes a similar sojourn from submissive housewife to fearless defender of her wronged spouse. Platt also gets to have some fun when he enacts the prosecution's depraved version of Frank, moving his body with honky-tonk hijinks (Lauren Yatango-Grant and Christopher Cree Grant are credited with the bouncy choreography). But these brilliant leads are just two of a remarkable ensemble of cherished Broadway vets. (More on them later.)

When it first opened, *Parade* was powerful and moving. But this current Broadway revival, a transfer of the recent City Center Encores staging, is twice as impactful given the current polarized political atmosphere. The story follows the real-life case of Frank, a factory supervisor accused of the murder of 13-year-old Mary Phagan, one of his employees, in 1913 Atlanta. Antisemitic hatred swelled against Frank, a Jewish outsider from Brooklyn, and he was convicted on circumstantial evidence and trumped-up testimony. Echoes of our current divided state of affairs can be heard in rallying cries to protect the establishment from wicked, usurping minorities. (As if to demonstrate the show's relevance, neo-Nazi protestors harassed ticketholders as they waited to enter the Bernard B. Jacobs Theater at *Parade*'s first preview.)



The company of *Parade*.

Credit: Joan Marcus

Seeing Michael Arden's arresting production is like watching an old newsreel come to life. His staging is fluid and cinematic, blending musical sequences and dramatic scenes seamlessly. Gilbert's lighting transforms Laffrey's set which resembles a combination courtroom and reviewing stand into multiple locations while Susan Hilarity's sepia-toned costumes place us in the right historical period. Sven Ortel's projections of vintage photographs of the actual principals give context to the traumatizing events from the murder itself to the one-sided trial and its long aftermath, reaching up to the present day in a clever bit of staging that brings the issues addressed into the present moment.



Paul Alexander Nolan and Howard McGillin in *Parade*.

Credit: Joan Marcus

Uhry's panoramic book offers multiple perspectives on the events with each viewpoint given full weight. Industrialization versus rural lifestyles, political motivations behind the attacks of Frank, power dynamics and historical background reaching back to the Civil War are all part of the rich canvas. Brown's flavorful score combines a variety of influences, such as jazz, ragtime, blues, and gospel, to reflect that diversity.



Erin Rose Doyle and Jake Pedersen in *Parade*.

Credit: Joan Marcus

The estimable company, led by Platt and Diamond, is among the best on Broadway in the last several years. As Jim Conley, the factory's African-American janitor who testifies against Frank, Alex Joseph Grayson nearly steals the show with a rapid-fire turn on the witness stand and then almost makes away with it again when he puts across a rough-edged chain-gang lament. Kelli Barrett is heartbreaking as Mary's grief-stricken mother. Jay Armstrong Johnson gives snap and sass to an opportunist reporter. Paul Alexander Nolan is oily and slick as the racist prosecutor with his eye on the Governor's mansion. Sean Allan Krill ably displays the conflict faced by the current Governor, torn between expediency in order to stay in office and justice for Frank. Stacie Bono provides sturdy support as his wise wife. Manoel Feliciano colorfully spews volcanic hatred as a demagogic newspaper editor. Danielle Lee Greaves gives soulful heft to the Franks' housekeeper, forced to give false evidence against her boss. Howard McGillin is vivid as the biased judge and a Confederate soldier. Also praiseworthy are Erin Rose Doyle as Mary who appears as an angel sitting on a trapeze during the trial, Jake Pedersen, Douglas Lyons, Courtnee Carter, Eddie Cooper, and Christopher Gurr. Even the smaller parts, such as Gurr's elderly prison guard, are given depth.

This is a complex, passionate *Parade*, reflecting our conflicted past and present. It's as vital and

informative as tonight's news and just as imperative for viewing if you want to know what's going on in America.



Paul Alexander Nolan and Alex Joseph Grayson in *Parade*.

Credit: Joan Marcus

***Parade*. March 16—Aug. 6. Bernard B. Jacobs Theater, 242 W. 45th St., NYC. Running time: two hours and 40 mins. including intermission. [Telecharge](#).**

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Review: *A Map of Every Undoing* by Alicia Elkort

Kelsey Bryan-Zwick · Thursday, March 16th, 2023

In Alicia Elkort's world a child wishes for survival and, *A Map of Every Undoing*, does the hard work of delivering that gift. This collection is a lifeline to the present but also an evocation back in time offering comfort to the brutalized body of youth. Elkort looks at familiar tropes of American life to expose the often-unspoken horrors of girlhood experience. These poems do not linger or wallow, rather their forms are easy and welcoming enough to give the reader room to navigate through treacherous scenes. With this method one also begins to see the possibilities of healing and the worth of re-writing one's narrative so that there can be, at least, a happier ending.

The arc of the book echoes the folklore and mythos that guide many during childhood and adolescence. Characters like Medusa, Mary and her lambs appear alongside others, and the primordial forest where all these figures exist, is familiar to readers. Yet this is a deeply personal

narrative. Elkort implements and bridges the raw and bold energy of confessional poetry with the balm of the spiritual and natural world.

The opening poem, “In Praise of Broken Sidewalks,” is reminiscent of LoVerne Brown’s iconic poem “A Meeting of Mavericks.” Though in Elkort’s poem when the pavement blooms the speaker declares:

Now I accept your jagged dandelion
flowers, taken root in the detritus & today
we’ll worship edges, you too
are only a guest in this world—

It is this sense of a collaborative and persistent beauty alongside an acceptance of the boundaries of our temporal reality that provide the speaker and reader with solace. This tender comparison between the speaker and the dandelion, both “only [...] guest[s] in this world,” is the kind of sweetness and understanding never provided to the speaker’s younger self. Instead, the speaker must herself take a hard look at the world around her—how sister, mother, and grandmother have endured—in order to begin gleaning the honey that life also has to offer.

Elkort’s speaker must measure everything in the context of the terrible harm done to them and the lack of support and comfort offered in the wake of such crime. In the poem “I am fashioned from a gourd,” the speaker is shaped by their environment. This list poem helps the reader see the speaker more clearly: daughter of Russian immigrant Jewish parents displaced by WWII. In poems like these that adhere to a realistic point of view we understand this is not a family with much power. The vulnerability that comes with immigrant status, with being working class, with girlhood—all spills over into the mouth, mind, and body of the reader. It is this understanding that amplifies previous lines in the book, that leave the reader with a taste of “Can you pour fear into a glass?/ Shatter it against the wall?”

In the poem “Medusa,” we see the speaker able to acknowledge her own experience through the lens of this well-known story. The power of gossip, the perils of patriarchy, and the demonization of female sexuality are all on blast in this poem:

[...] every time a person
asks what was she wearing was that vodka
she was drinking who does she think she is
to turn so much beauty & not owned by a man?
Channa’s sisters call her a liar they called my
beautiful friend a wicked liar to ruin the family
name but her father raped her & sisters
abandoned her on an island named Grief

By re-telling Medusa’s story Elkort’s speaker can rage through the pain of her experience, and this ability to voice, ultimately empowers her to knowingly and frankly live in her pain. It is in this wisdom that shame is shed, and the speaker can move on in her own grief.

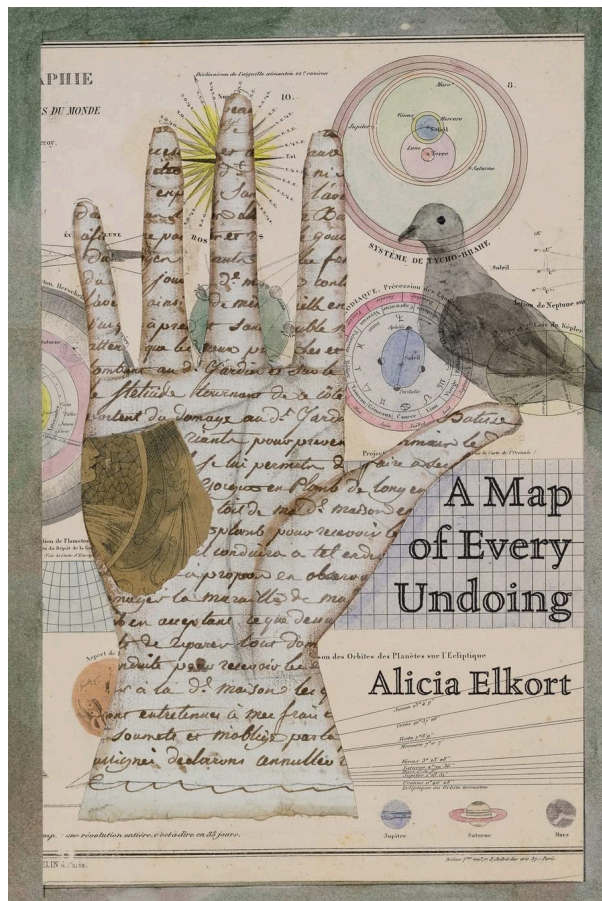
With an appreciation for both the wounding and the wonderful, we eventually find a balancing in the pages of, *A Map of Every Undoing*. When moments of whimsy can be enjoyed the acute pain of trauma is deescalated and we see the speaker heal. These little joyous lines are often a blend of real and ordinary daily life, revealing a more extraordinary appreciation for the world that we inhabit:

As the porridge warmed
 I went outside to look
 at the sky.
 When I looked up
 I saw a cloud shaped
 like a marshmallow &
 I opened my mouth.

This delicious image hangs in the mouth of the reader.

A Map of Every Undoing is an important text for many reasons. One could simply study the techniques implemented and the use of forms by the author, especially the different apparitions of the prose poem. The way folklore and myth are brought forth to meet a modern need in storytelling is also phenomenal. I find though that the true reward in reading this book is emotional. It is the space to embody the underlying misogyny that we all encounter, whether we are the bullies or the bullied, we are all shaped by this dynamic. With the caring salve of Elkort's words though, we may dare to find our own dandelions, and the possibilities in wishing for a kinder world.

*



A Map of Every Undoing by Alicia Elkort

Purchase *A Map of Every Undoing* by Alicia Elkort

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La Pequeña Daisy

Kayri Hernandez Campos · Wednesday, March 15th, 2023

La Pequeña Daisy by Kayri Hernandez Campos

As a Latina woman, her life is full of colors, music, religion, language, and so much more. Let's name her the little daisy since she loves daisies so much. There are various parts of her culture, which can get a bit confusing. For one, she is a mix of both Honduran and Salvadoran. Her mother is from Honduras, while her father is from El Salvador. For the little daisy and her three brothers, Spanish was their first language; their parents wanted them to preserve the language. They wanted them to understand it and speak it properly. As she and her brothers went to school in America, they started to learn more English than Spanish. The little daisy's parents were worried since speaking Spanish was a way to communicate with them. They started helping their children speak more Spanish at home, though today, they still ask what certain words mean or how to say something in Spanish. Still, they were all happy they could understand each other now; even the little daisy and her brothers were teaching their parents to speak English.

Although the little daisy and her brothers could now speak two languages, their parents wanted something more for them. Their parents wanted them to grow up with Christianity in their lives. Preferably being Pentecostal, which is a much stricter religion. Comparing it to the Catholics, it meant following all the rules of the bible and praising God even more. Back then, the little daisy's grandmother had started the whole endeavor of following the lord's will. She had made the little daisy's father, uncles, and aunt go to church. It was around the early 80s that she started to convert to Christianity. And at the time, she was involved with the protestants that were coming out, overpowering the Catholic religion; as stated in, "Protestant Growth and Change in El Salvador" (Christian, Patricia B., et al, 140). The little daisy's grandmother had not only immigrated with her children, but she also brought along their beliefs to America. Later, when the little daisy's parents met her mother didn't believe in anything. Though, after being together for a few years she slowly started to convert, and today you'll see her reading the bible often. Now growing up the little daisy and her brothers were forced to go to church, at some point she had believed in the lord and followed his rules, but now she doesn't. It's not that she hates him, but she feels freer after leaving her church, and she still respects him. He is what shaped her to be kind, caring, and to be a good person in life.

The little daisy's parents wished she stayed in their church. God, for them, gave them a second chance in life. They are taught that God is their father and the one who brings the world peace and destruction. God teaches them how to live their lives respectfully as Christians. How they should dress appropriately as men and women. How they should respect their parents, neighbors, and elders. That they should give him thanks for giving them life, letting them breathe. Although they may go through tough situations, they have someone to entrust their lives with. To them, he's the only one who can guide and keep them safe in this world.

Another important part of the little daisy's life is the meals she eats. Growing up, she would always enjoy her mother's cooking. Every time she was home, and it was time for either breakfast, lunch, or dinner, she would run to the dining table. Especially if her mother made pupusas that day, you bet she was the first to try them. Eating together as a family was important to them. Eating together as a family is what brought them together even more than before. They always loved to share their

food, enjoying the taste together. They would talk about how their day went, make jokes, and enjoy each other's presence.

Speaking of having meals together, most Latino families stay together throughout their whole lives. This includes her family in the category of staying together for most of their lives. They all get this feeling of responsibility for their family matters. When a family member needs money, the little daisy's family usually helps them out by sending them some to help. If they need a place to stay for a bit, they at least give them their living room to sleep in. If they are sick, the little daisy's family does their best to take care of them and give them support.

For them, family is all that they have in this world. A lot of Latino families will agree that family comes first. Sometimes that's why some of them end up rebelling. Family this, family that, it can get overwhelming for a lot of them. The reason for the little daisy is that not all family members are good people. Some like to use them for their own gains with money, food, clothing, and even living in their own homes. Most of the time the elders in their family will continue to help them out, while others like the little daisy see the truth of what they really want. Although, in the end, they still help because they don't want any family to be left behind. Who else is going to help them but their family? Most elders believe that acquaintances, coworkers' friends, and best friends can leave them one day. They believe that their family will stay with them till the end of the line.

Now to keep living together as a family they need to earn enough to provide for themselves and each other. In El Salvador and Honduras, it's seen that a lot of people are trying to survive through farming and tending to animals for food and clothing. In Honduras, it's less about earning money and more about farming while El Salvador is a bit of the opposite. Both of the little daisy's parents grew up poor and had to work at an incredibly early age. That's also why their mentality is more mature than hers. They didn't want her brothers and her to suffer as they did back then. Whenever she would ask her parents about how they survived as children, they would smile as they spoke about their past.

Working over there is difficult considering the heat, and the fact that there's less food as well. As stated before, her parents had to work when they were kids back then. And today that still happens over there. While in the U.S child labor is illegal and immoral, over there it's very normal to see a child working. A lot of families over there cannot afford to send their children to school, so they put them to work instead. It makes it easier for them since the labor is now spread out with more people helping them. The little daisy is glad her parents came here, the fact that they wanted their children to be born into an easier life shows us that they do really love us. Life couldn't be better without all the colors, music, and love that surround her life. And that's all for the little daisy's intro into her life as a Latina.

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