

I wanted to make a muscular work, something overtly percussive. In the beginning, I wasn't thinking about instruments or music, but about the kind of world I wanted to manifest. My creative process started with broad intuitions and imaginings: flying clay targets, fluorescent orange discs, thrown across the stage and smashing.

Clay targets—once real pigeons and now called clay pigeons—are launched by trap machines in Olympic shotgun events. The spectacle, danger, strangeness and precision of the sport piqued my interest, however, its violence and blood thirsty origins also disturbed me. This interplay of intrigue and ethical troubling, power and danger became a driving force in the project. I wondered, could a trap machine become a musical instrument?

Trap machines represent the complex history and relationship between humans and pigeons. Pigeons have at times been a source of food, messengers, war heroes, symbols of peace, labelled 'rats with wings' or feral pests, living symbiotically with humans and endemic to urban environments the world over. Already, at the outset of the creative process, the trap machine was steering the conceptual framing, material exploration and performative ideas of this work. It had become a collaborator in a percussion project.

Any object or material can be rendered a percussion instrument, I celebrate this extraordinary freedom in my creative practice, and therefore all the on-stage instruments have emerged out of pigeon-human relations. Pigeons don't sing; they coo and call. I was not seeking song, but rather aiming to let musical and performative worlds emerge in collaboration with concepts and materials, rather than imposing musical ideas upon them.

In *Pigeons*, the trap machine's role is flipped into a dangerous weapon in its own right, firing clay projectiles across the stage, towards the performers' bodies and percussion instruments.

Machine and clay prey become predators, and a hierarchy of power relations is established where the human is no longer the master of the concert stage.

Percussionist or pigeon, maestro or mammal, the performers exist like a pigeon-pair in a liminal space, oscillating between the worlds of the stage and cage, in a theatre of war and theatre of concert practice.

Aspiration and psychosis entwine in the Birdman's dream, where we, da Vinci-winged performer-makers, conjure flight from make-believe. The birdcage world is orchestrated with; perch, bird mirror and bell, anti-bird spikes, clay target saucers, feathers, polystyrene, fencing and bird seed. Twelve types of pigeon call, including the Australian species—crested pigeon, white headed and my favourite the diamond dove—become the call-response of human on-stage banter.

Are the broken clays, broken bones? Are they guano or bird seed, trampled underfoot? Is the bird mirror a clay target shining a mirror back at us, the audience, animal, aggressor, the agent? These symbolic readings help us find meaning. Are we gambling with our fate, like the now extinct passenger pigeon? Are we journeying towards a dystopian future or simply marvelling in and musing over our distinctly human cultural practices like the requiem mass?

'Worlding percussion' is my approach to creating a holistic percussion artwork, where new musical instruments, set and costume emerge through collaborative exchanges between materials, artists, practices and ideas. It's my hope that we lose ourselves in a wild interplay of pigeon-human relations and that the work takes on a life of its own.

Thank you to the prodigiously talented team of collaborators, the Speak Percussion staff and board, and the many supporters behind this project. And to you too - thank you for coming along the journey and sharing in *Pigeons*.

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*This project was funded and supported by Creative Australia, City of Melbourne, City of Darebin, Creative Victoria and the Robert Salzer Foundation.*