

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

---

All Music Department Programs

The Caine College of the Arts Music Program  
Archives

---

1-12-2017

## Roomful of Teeth

Roomful of Teeth

Brad Wells

Estelí Gomez

Caroline Shaw

Eric Dudley

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/music\\_programs](https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/music_programs)



Part of the [Music Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Roomful of Teeth; Wells, Brad; Gomez, Estelí; Shaw, Caroline; Dudley, Eric; Burton, Dashon; Cluver, Martha; Warnken Kelsey, Virginia; Griffin, Avery; and Beauchamp, Cameron, "Roomful of Teeth" (2017). *All Music Department Programs*. 82.

[https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/music\\_programs/82](https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/music_programs/82)

This Faculty/Guest Recital is brought to you for free and open access by the The Caine College of the Arts Music Program Archives at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Music Department Programs by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@usu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@usu.edu).



---

**Author**

Roomful of Teeth, Brad Wells, Estelí Gomez, Caroline Shaw, Eric Dudley, Dashon Burton, Martha Cluver, Virginia Warnken Kelsey, Avery Griffin, and Cameron Beauchamp

# ROOMFUL of TEETH

*Grammy Award-winning Vocal Project*

THURSDAY • JAN 12, 2017 • 7:30PM  
CAINE PERFORMANCE HALL, USU CAMPUS



CAINE  
COLLEGE  
of the ARTS

UtahStateUniversity.



# ROOMFUL OF TEETH

January 12, 2017

## Partita for 8 Voices

Caroline Shaw

### *1. Allemande*

## Coloring Book

Ted Hearne

1. *The game of keeping*
2. *You are not the guy*
3. *What feels*
4. *Letter to my father*
5. *Your people*

-- intermission --

## Beneath

Caleb Burhans

## a promise in the stillness

Ambrose Akinmusire

## Otherwise

Brad Wells

## PERSONNEL

Estelí Gomez, soprano

Martha Cluver, soprano

Caroline Shaw, alto

Virginia Warnken Kelsey, alto

Eric Dudley, tenor

Avery Griffin, baritone

Dashon Burton, bass-baritone

Cameron Beauchamp, bass

Brad Wells, artistic director

## NOTES

### ***Partita for 8 Voices*** (2009-2011)

The score's inscription reads: "*Partita* is a simple piece. Born of a love of surface and structure, of the human voice, of dancing and tired ligaments, of music, and of our basic desire to draw a line from one point to another."

Each movement takes a cue from the traditional baroque suite in initial meter and tone, but the familiar historic framework is soon stretched and broken, through "speech, whispers, sighs, murmurs, wordless melodies, and novel vocal effects" (Pulitzer jury citation). Roomful of Teeth's utterly unique approach to singing and vocal timbre originally helped to inspire and shape the work during its creation, and the ensemble continues to refine and reconsider the colors and small details with every performance. *Allemande* opens with the organized chaos of square dance calls overlapping with technical wall drawing directions of the artist Sol LeWitt, suddenly congealing into a bright, angular tune that never keeps its feet on the ground for very long. There are allusions to the movement's intended simulation of motion and space in the short phrases of text throughout, which are sometimes sung and sometimes embedded as spoken texture.

Of the premiere of *Partita*, *New York* magazine wrote that I had "discovered a lode of the rarest commodity in contemporary music: joy." And it is with joy that this piece is meant to be received in years to come.

- CS

### ***Coloring Book*** (2015)

"They will never, so long as their whiteness puts so sinister a distance between themselves and their own experience and the experience of others, feel themselves sufficiently human, *sufficiently worthwhile*, to become responsible for themselves, their leaders, their country, their children, or their fate."

- James Baldwin, "An Open Letter to My Sister, Angela Y. Davis"

(1970)

Ted Hearne's piece *Coloring Book* sets the words of three Black American writers of different generations – Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin and Claudia Rankine. Hearne sets these texts, each addressing the idea of identity, in surprising and personal ways, using stylistic juxtaposition to explore the boundaries separating the authors' conception of cultural identity from his own, and to better understand the differences between them.

*Coloring Book* was commissioned with generous support from The Barlow Endowment for Music Composition.

## TEXTS

### I. The game of keeping

*[The position of my white neighbor is much more difficult.]*

No brown specter pulls up a chair beside me when I sit down to eat.

No dark ghost thrusts its leg against mine in bed.

*[The game of keeping what one has is never so exciting as the game of getting.]*

Zora Neale Hurston

from "How it feels to be colored me" (1928)

### II. You are not the guy

And you are not the guy and still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description.

Each time it begins in the same way, it doesn't begin the same way, each time it begins it's the same. Flashes, a sired, the stretched-out roar—

And you are not the guy and still you fit the description

—roar—

still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description.

This is what it looks like. You know this is wrong. This is not what it looks like. You need to be quiet. This is wrong. You need to close your mouth now. This is what it looks like. You can't drive yourself sane. You are not the guy.

And you are not the guy and still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description. Get on the ground now. Then I just knew. Yes officer rolled around on my tongue, which grew out of a bell that could never ring because its emergency was a tolling I was meant to swallow.

Claudia Rankine

from *Citizen* (2014)

### III. What feels

What feels more than feeling?

You are afraid there is something you are missing, something obvious.

A feeling that feelings might be irrelevant if they point to one's irrelevance pulls at you.

What feels more than feeling?

Claudia Rankine  
from *Citizen* (2014)

### IV. Letter to my father

Him. He

He has only heard what I

I felt. He

He is far away but I

I see him.

Him but dimly across the ocean and the continent that have fallen between us.

Us. He

He is so pale with his whiteness then and I

I am so colored.

Music. The great blobs of purple and red emotion have not touched him.

He is so pale with his whiteness then and I

I am so colored.

Zora Neale Huston  
from "How it feels to be colored me" (1928)

### V. Your people

Your self and your people are indistinguishable from each other,  
really, in spite of the quarrels you may have,  
and your people are all people.

James Baldwin  
from an interview with James Elgrably in  
*The Paris Review* (1984)

### *Beneath* (2010)

In my piece *Beneath*, I was looking to explore the full vocal range of Roomful of Teeth, which spans over four octaves. The title is drawn from an episode of the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* entitled "From Beneath You, It Devours."

-CB



### ***a promise in the stillness* (2016)**

This piece is about solitude, stillness and their impact on the passage of time; the experience of rawness; that we are all animals (and how this relates to our vulnerability); the beauty and **uniting** force of individuality (in that even every leaf is different); a reminder that in our day-to-day lives we are surrounded by layers of sound, home, familiarity and all of these **opposites**.

-AA

### ***Otherwise* (2012)**

Otherwise features Sardinian cantu a tenore-inspired singing, belting, and some yodeling all in a melange to highlight a baritone in full bel canto glory. The title comes from one of my favorite Jane Kenyon poems but uses no text, only non-sense syllables as lyrics. It's a celebratory little vocalise for Roomful of Teeth.

-BW

## **ENSEMBLE BIO**

Roomful of Teeth is a GRAMMY-winning vocal project dedicated to reimagining the expressive potential of the human voice. Through study with masters from vocal traditions the world over, the eight-voice ensemble continually expands its vocabulary of singing techniques and, through an ongoing commissioning process, forges a new repertoire without borders.

Founded in 2009 by Brad Wells, Roomful of Teeth gathers annually at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) in North Adams, Massachusetts, where they've studied with some of the world's top performers and teachers in Tuvan throat singing, yodeling, Broadway belting, Inuit throat singing, Korean *P'ansori*, Georgian singing, Sardinian *cantu a tenore*, Hindustani music, Persian classical singing and Death Metal singing. Commissioned Composers include Rinde Eckert, Fred Hersch, Merrill Garbus (of tUnE-yArDs), William Brittelle, Toby Twining, Missy Mazzoli, Julia Wolfe, Ted Hearne and Ambrose Akinmusire, among many others.

Projects in 2016-2017 include *The Colorado*, a music-driven documentary film that explores water, land and survival in the Colorado River Basin (featuring former Kronos Quartet cellist Jeffrey Zeigler and Wilco's Glenn Kotche); collaborations with A Far Cry and Nick Zammuto of The Books; appearances at new music festivals in the US, Canada and Sweden; and partnerships with nearly two dozen higher education institutions across the country.

## CAINE COLLEGE *of the* ARTS

*Excellence with Integrity*

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Caine College of the Arts serves the people of the State of Utah and supports the mission of Utah State University by cultivating artistic and academic excellence, by preparing our students to realize their full creative potential as artists and citizens, by increasing the visibility of the college and university, and by fostering professionalism and collegial relationships in all aspects of our operations.