

# THEOREM



Story ELIZABETH BRADFIELD  
Visual Art ANTONIA CONTRO  
Original Music ELIZA BROWN  
Art Direction ANDREW BOYCE  
Animation JOSEPH MERIDETH  
Performed by CLARA LYON

*How do we map a secret? How do we plot long-held silences? When words are withheld, how can sound and image speak?*



Equal parts installation and performance, Theorem is subtle, expansive, rooted, spare, and ultimately transformative in its investigation of the shape-shifting nature of secrets as we carry them through our lives, our bodies, and the spaces we inhabit.

Storytelling through design, sound, image, and movement offers audiences a meditative, immersive experience and invites participants to consider silences their own lives have embodied, no matter the particulars.

Is this a healing work? A delving work? Yes. Both. And more: Theorem's interdisciplinary dialogue allows art to speak the truths that lie beyond word and image.

# THEOREM | PROJECT DESCRIPTION



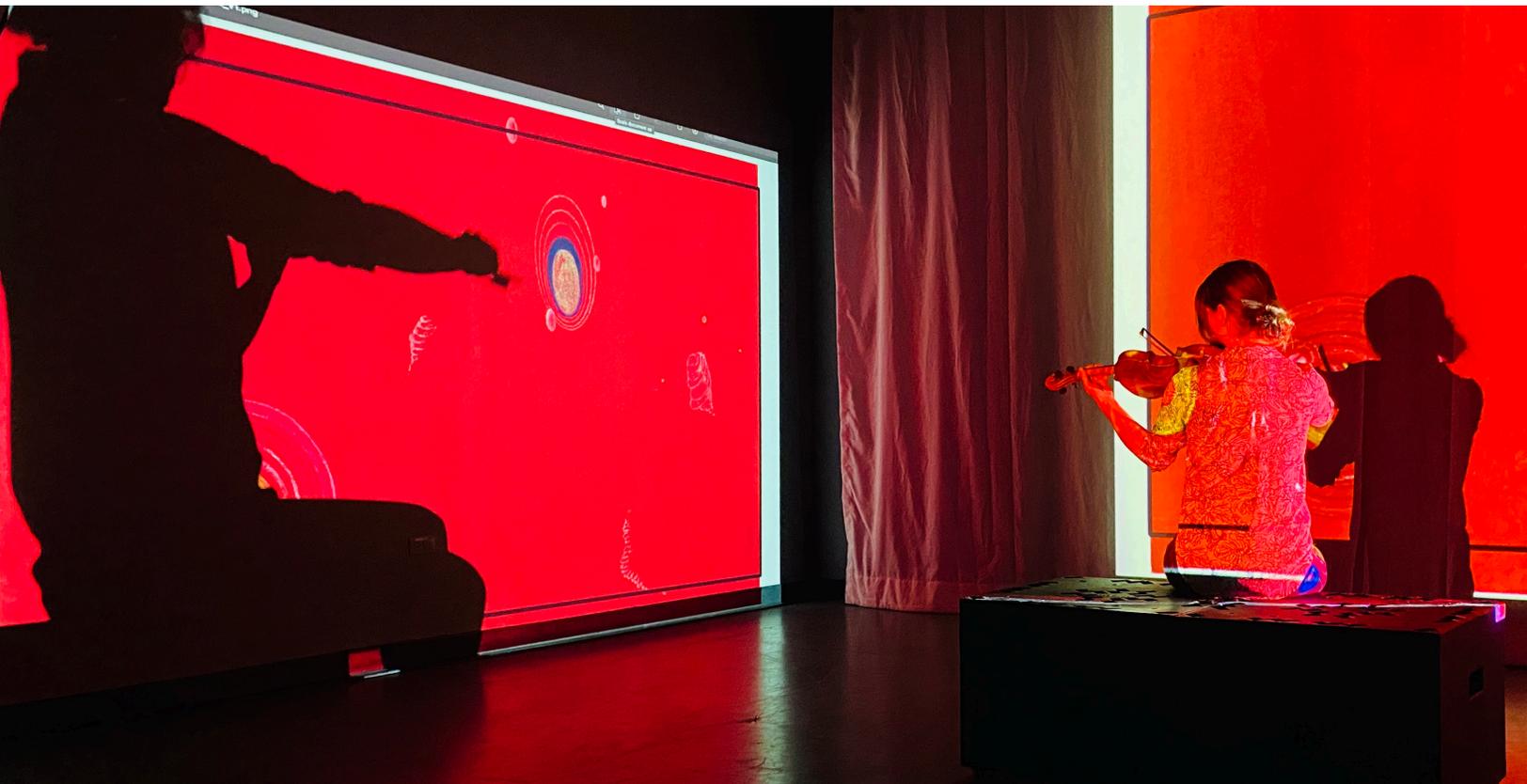
In Theorem, the viewer becomes participant, building a sense of story from the elements provided. Theorem is at once “here” and also anywhere.

Quiet, recorded narration offers a framework of story. Rich projections of imagery on a variety of surfaces create a built environment primed for immersion. Subtle but provocative animations demand deep consideration. Field recordings situate Theorem, at times invoking the realm of the natural world literally through water dripping from cedars, at others suggestive of more metaphorical way-finding. Throughout, a solo violinist wanders—floating between the worlds of words, sound, and image. This lone performer is erstwhile protagonist, guide, and commentator.

Theorem never reveals its secrets—rather, the magic lies in Theorem’s ability to speak around specific life events and the absences they require. As a consideration of trauma, Theorem is never overt. Instead, it is tender, protective, and interior. In Theorem, the abstractions of geometry, cartography, physics, and astronomy offer a safe way to comprehend and reckon with the shame, confusion, guilt, and wonder of personal history.

In our tell-all world, which rewards sharing even the most intimate details on public platforms, we still choose to be silent about the powerful events that shape our inner lives. Theorem honors such silences and illuminates their power, providing a necessary counter-narrative.

[www.theorem-collective.com](http://www.theorem-collective.com)



The Theorem Collective first assembled at Lake Madron, Michigan in September of 2018 for an artist retreat. Our aim was to consider the richness of collaboration across disciplines. From this time, a shared vision emerged of an immersive world for participants to explore emotions through sight, sound, and motion.

Centered around *Theorem*, an art book by Elizabeth Bradfield and Antonia Contro, our work as a collective has been holistic in nature and wholly transformative: we began with a deep investigation of our various artistic practices and consideration for what each might bring to this work, and we have followed that toward a new, performative vision.

From fall of 2019 through fall of 2021, we developed our approach, workshopped concepts, and built materials. In fall of 2022, during a residency at the Ragdale Foundation, we will mount staging workshops and previews.

## SUPPORT

The Theorem Collective is grateful for the support of the Theodore and Jane Norman Fund at Brandeis University, DePauw University, and the Ragdale Foundation for providing resources to develop, craft, and hone our work.



## PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

*I found myself sighing, stopping and reflecting, radiating, and by the end of it, I felt—most importantly—at ease.*

—The Chicago Reader

*Theorem is a radiant example of how we do not go to art for information or even knowledge, but to rock back on our heels before something fully itself, something real and full of wonder, despite its careful elisions of detail.*

—EcoTheo Review

*Theorem holds authorial privacy as a sacred, nonnegotiable core... those who embrace the book on its own terms—as meditation, not story—will be rewarded.*

—The Brooklyn Rail

*The revelation is not in arriving at a destination but in beginning to map the journey, as well as in recognizing that one's perspective of past events changes as time goes by.*

—John Yau, Poet, art critic, and curator

# THE THEOREM COLLECTIVE



## Art Director

Andrew Boyce is a Chicago- and New York-based designer working in Theatre, Opera, and Film/TV. His New York credits include Lincoln Center Theater, New York Theater Workshop, Roundabout Theater Company, Atlantic Theater Company, Primary Stages, Rattlestick Theater Company, Play Company, Playwrights Realm and others. Chicago credits include Goodman Theater, Steppenwolf, Writers, Northlight, Court Theater and Victory Gardens. Andrew is a member of the design collective Wingspace, is a graduate of Yale School of Drama and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Northwestern University Theater Department. [andrewboycedesign.com](http://andrewboycedesign.com)



## Writer & Storykeeper

Elizabeth Bradfield is the author of *Once Removed*, *Approaching Ice*, *Interpretive Work*, and *Toward Antarctica*. Her work has been published in the *New Yorker*, *Kenyon Review*, *Poetry*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and she is the recipient of the Audre Lorde Prize, a Stegner Fellowship, and other honors. Editor-in-chief of Broadsided Press, she works as a naturalist/guide and teaches creative writing at Brandeis University. [ebradfield.com](http://ebradfield.com)



## Composer

The music of composer Eliza Brown, described as “delicate, haunting, [and] introspective” by *Symphony Magazine*, has been performed around the world by leading new music ensembles, including Ensemble Dal Niente, International Contemporary Ensemble, Spektral Quartet, Quince Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, and ensemble recherche. Eliza’s work is frequently intertextual, interdisciplinary, and marked by collaborations that distribute creative agency and authorship. She is currently Assistant Professor of Music at DePauw University. [elizabrown.net](http://elizabrown.net)



## Artist

Antonia Contro is a visual artist whose work ranges from discrete objects to site-specific installations and collaborative projects that engage artists and practitioners from a variety of disciplines. Exhibitions include *Tempus Fugit* at the American Philosophical Society Museum; *Ex Libris* at Chicago Cultural Center; *Field Guide* at Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum; *Closed/Open* at Chicago’s Newberry Library; and *Descry* at the Museum of Contemporary Photography. Her work is in the Art Institute of Chicago, Hammer Museum, Harvard Art Museums, Menil Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art, and others. [antoniacontro.com](http://antoniacontro.com)



## Performer

Clara Lyon is an accomplished performer and curator whose practice seeks meaningful connections across sonic languages and societal contexts to build spaces that foster investigation, emotion and imagination. For the last seven seasons Lyon has been a violinist and Director of Programming with the Chicago-based Spektral Quartet, during which time they were nominated for three GRAMMY awards and named 2017 ‘Chicagoans of the Year’ by the Chicago Tribune. She is a prizewinner of the Irving M. Klein International Competition and the Schadt International Competition, and her curatorial work received special recognition as a recipient of the 2020 Music Academy of the West Enterprise Award. Her recordings can be heard on the New Focus, Sono Luminus, Nimbus, and Sideband labels.



## Animator

Joseph E. Merideth is an animator and educator who has been a fixture in Chicago’s animation community for 25 years. He has worked as a story artist and character animator for commercials, television, video games, and feature films including *Boxtrolls*, and upcoming Netflix projects *Green Eggs and Ham* and *Klaus*. Joseph’s animated short, *Stubble Trouble*, was nominated for Best Animated Short at the 74th Annual Academy Awards. He has also collaborated on several video and installation projects with other Chicago-based artists including *Field Guide* with Antonia Contro for the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.