

# TECHNO DREAM AND NIGHTMARE CHOIR

– a consideration by Frank Barry

July, 2012, St. John's

(The **Techno Dream and Nightmare Choir** was a futuristically primitive live/streaming performance presented by the BLACK BAG MEDIA COLLECTIVE headed by Tina Pearson and Liz Solo and including members of the BBMC, ethno-musicologists from Memorial University and other artists via SECOND LIFE and live stream from Germany, the USA and beyond - with Krista Vincent, Sarah Comerford, Chris Tonelli, Mehrenegar Rostami, Andreas Mueller, Mike Kean.)

The other night I attended a strange performance. And by strange I mean original, interesting, moving – good. In a small room in the basement of the LSPU hall a group of performers/artists/musicians had gathered to ask themselves a question. Their intention (I believe) was to perform both the question and the myriad of answers (more questions) that the original question evoked. The question was this – What are our fears and dreams of the emerging digital technology?

ONE THING INTO ANOTHER – in this piece found texts from various social media were woven together into a song performed by the artists and participants in the room. This was a very moving piece that allowed us to share our common humanity using both text media and the human voice. Somehow the whole night made you realize - no feel - that whatever these new things are they are tools made by us and that we are responsible for them.

Another beautiful and perhaps strange thing about the night was that I felt that I was at the very beginning of something. That I felt something like that old ape had felt when he knocked a tree limb against a rock and all the other apes looked up. Do it again! Do it again! Make that sound. Tell us something. I felt that I was not in a room of technology whiz kids but in a room where adults were asking valuable questions about the nature of a human creation that was changing our lives. To be in a room where people were asking valuable questions was original enough these days but to see them do it without the smugness of rhetoric but with a true need to ask the questions was as exciting a piece of honest theatre I've seen in a long time.

Some of this new technology has now been around for a long time in today's terms. But what was new and original and exciting about the night was in the end the questions that arose from experiencing it, not alone in a room, but in a community that was asking, like Gauguin's famous questions, which in fact were themselves a form of mixed media as they were painted as text on one of his paintings. Where did we come from? Who are we? Where are we going? To which I will audaciously add – And who is bringing us there? A night of questions. A night of memory. A night of future.

*Frank Barry is a writer, actor, director and dancer for theatre and film currently working in St. John's Newfoundland.*

*Techno Dream and Nightmare Choir is Black Bag Media Collective Production facilitated by composer-in-residence Tina Pearson, in partnership with the Newfoundland Sound Symposium, St John's Newfoundland in July, 2012.*