



# **How We Dropped a Piano**

Jeremy Stewart

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### *Ideation*

In the process of planning the second year of Casse-Tete: A Festival of Experimental Music, pianist and Registered Piano Technician Peter Stevenson suggested an idea to me that immediately struck me as audacious and exciting: to drop a piano from the roof of the Exploration Place, the festival venue. Peter intended this gesture to give a ruined piano a last hurrah; I saw it as an opportunity to engage the community with visceral, aesthetically challenging material. Peter's artistic intentions were ultimately explicated in the festival program; those notes are included here in Appendix I.

### *Securing a Piano*

As a Registered Piano Technician, Peter was aware of a range of decrepit pianos. The piano he chose from these belonged to Enchainement Productions. Permission to dispose of it was secured from business owner Judy Russell.

### *Fundraising*

The excitement and interest of the piano drop made it an attractive fundraising hook, as did its materiality. On the festival's IndieGoGo crowdfunding campaign, I made pieces of the piano, post-drop, a benefit at every level of sponsorship, partly contingent on how many of each piece were available. For example, there was only one fallboard decal, which was tied to the highest level of support at \$500, but there were 88 keys, so these were tied to the lowest level at \$25. Anyone supporting at a higher level was entitled to select a lower level's reward if they preferred that specific piano part, subject to availability. The idea of the hierarchy of different parts was Peter's, and he took photographs of various piano parts (some from Judy's piano, some from other pianos) in iso-

lation to show people what they were getting, which were included in the campaign website. The campaign raised over \$1000. The materials used to promote the campaign are included in Appendix II.

### *Sponsorship*

The right to have one's business' name associated with the drop was also an idea I regarded as a promising source of revenue. In the event, The Prince George Citizen newspaper elected to purchase the title sponsorship by exchanging that honour for a substantial value in advertising for the festival as a whole. The introductory letter used to solicit that sponsorship is included in Appendix III.

### *Outreach*

As an opportunity to connect the greater community's openness to spectacle with the relatively less broad acquaintance with experimental music, the piano drop represented a significant outreach. It was featured in the press release about the festival that was circulated to the local papers and other news outlets provincially, nationally, and internationally. The press uptake in other centres was (perhaps predictably) uninspiring, but locally, it was very successful in attracting people to the event. The press release used is included in Appendix IV and the press clippings are included in Appendix V.

## *Venue*

I initially pitched the idea of a piano drop to Exploration Place CEO Tracy Calogheros at Theatre North West's 2013 International Wine Festival, also held at the Exploration Place. Tracy immediately assented to the idea, pending logistics. I was advised to discuss it with Building Manager John Calogheros. Understandably, John was at first unconvinced that it was a good idea. Over the course of several months, we went back and forth, discussing what part of the roof would be best for the drop; what point on the ground around the building would make the most suitable drop zone; what measures had to be taken to prevent the roof from being damaged; what measures had to be taken to prevent the drop zone from being damaged, including preventing any potential damage to the side of the building. The only access to the roof from within the building was through a small opening reachable via ladder, so there was no question of getting the piano onto the building except by lowering it by crane.

It was difficult to achieve a vision for the event that would satisfy John. After I realized a crane would be necessary, Peter and I considered whether a drop from a crane or even a helicopter would work better than from the roof, given the potential for damage to the building. What I learned in the course of pursuing these questions is that a helicopter could not ensure enough accuracy to be safe, and that cranes are designed to prevent loads from being dropped in mid-air for safety reasons. The piano would be dropped from the roof or not at all.

Eventually, with considerable help from Exploration Place Curator Bob Campbell, John and I concluded that the west side of the roof would be most suitable, and I proceeded to make a site visit to take measurements and see what the best means of dropping would be. It was concluded that a ramp that could help

the piano overshoot the light metal flashing at the edge of the building would be necessary, and that this would also help prevent the piano from hitting the building on the way down. The ramp would need to be weighted by sandbags to prevent it from falling along with the piano. The drop zone would need to have plywood to absorb the impact of the piano, as well as more plywood leaned against the building to prevent shrapnel from becoming an issue. I would need to hire a carpenter to design and build the ramp, as well as to spec and purchase the materials. The piano itself would need wheels installed to allow it to travel down the ramp. We did not really know what the ultimate path of the piano through the air would be, so we decided to have a wide plywood base at the projected impact point.

## *Licensing*

Because we were dropping the piano onto a city park, we also needed to get the permission of the City of Prince George for the event. After being passed around the parks department without success, I spoke to Scott Hunyadi, who coordinates and licenses special events in the park such as the usual concerts and weddings. I made the complete pitch to Scott along with the logistic plan such as it was, and he was very open to it. Because the event was happening under the rubric of a charity resident of the park—the Exploration Place—the license was provided at no charge. It took around two weeks to secure.



## *Insurance*

Insurance for the entire festival was purchased through Hub International Barton Insurance Brokers. The piano drop was included in the total package, which cost around \$300. The logistical requirements imposed by the insurers included that there be a 50 foot exclusion for spectators around the drop zone; security fencing; and a security guard present at the event. The city and the insurance brokers required copies of their respective documents pertaining to the drop. It took around three weeks for the brokers to arrange the insurance.

## *Ramp*

The ramp was designed and constructed by John David Young. We consulted around the various logistical issues that had to be satisfied, especially for the sake of protecting the building, and settled on a design that consisted of simple wedge shape built of a few sheets of plywood; some dimension lumber; sandbags; wheels for the piano; a simple, locking release mechanism to permit the piano to be held securely to the ramp and then released with endangering anyone. The front of the ramp had a notch cut out of it to allow it to clear the flashing at the edge of the building. The materials were purchased from Central Builders and Princess Auto at a cost of around \$600; the labour cost was around \$150 including transportation of the materials to the construction site and transportation of the finished ramp to the Exploration Place. The work to purchase the materials, design, and build the ramp was completed over two days. The ramp was dropped off on the lawn on the west side of the Exploration Place around 10:00 a.m. on the day of the drop. The cost also included the extra plywood used for the drop zone.

## *Transportation*

On the morning of the day of the drop, Peter and his brother Samuel Stevenson picked the piano up from Enchainement's studio using a truck borrowed from Richard Thompson and Maggee Spicer. They drove it over to the Exploration Place and parked it on the lawn nearest the west wall of the building. We lifted the piano out of the truck box and placed it on the ramp around 10:30 a.m. on the day of the drop.

## *Crane*

I phoned around, and on the advice of another crane company I found in the Yellow Pages online, I called Sterling Crane to hire them to get the piano and ramp onto the roof. I spoke to Manager Ken Morland, who was interested in the project, and decided to donate the crane and operator service free of charge—a \$1600 value. The booking was done two weeks before the drop, which I was advised was actually not enough notice under normal circumstances.

The crane and operator arrived by flat deck truck around 1:00 p.m. on the day of the drop and parked at the easternmost edge of the west parking lot at the venue. The operator used heavy fabric straps to tie the piano, lain on its side, to the ramp, and then to lift the ramp and piano together as one package onto the roof, where it was guided into place at the extreme western edge of the building by Bob Campbell, Peter, and Samuel. There was a slight mishap which resulted in a scuff on the roof of the building, but no one was hurt. I understand that this scuff was later repaired by John Calogheros.

After the piano and ramp were in place, Bob, Peter, and Samuel removed the straps and threw them to the ground, where John David Young and I were ensuring that no one would get in the way. The whole process with the crane took almost two hours.

## *Drop Zone*

As per the requirements of our insurance and our park use license, we created an 8x8 foot square of plywood four inches thick on the ground where we imagined the piano would drop. We also laid several sheets of plywood against the building to protect against shrapnel.

## *Fence*

The fence chosen to keep spectators out of the drop zone was an interlocking metal construction fence rented from Prince George Rental Centre for around \$100 including delivery and pickup of the fence; delivery was at 3:00 p.m. the day of the drop, and pickup was at 9:00 a.m. the following morning. The fence took three people to set up effectively, and required about an hour to set up, but the company that picked it up took it down themselves. We used a tape measure to verify its insurance-required distance from the drop zone.

## *Security*

As per the insurance, a security guard was hired from Regional Security at a cost of around \$90. The security guard arrived at 5:00 pm and left at 8:00 pm. He directed traffic away from the Exploration Place's west parking lot where the spectators were massing, and was also available to remove people from the drop zone prior to the drop if necessary, which it was not.

## *Presentation*

An extension cord connected Peter's Fender Passport p.a. system to an exterior outlet on the west side of the Exploration Place, but not coinciding with the drop zone. A microphone was connected to amplify brief remarks from Peter and I, as well as an intro-

duction and countdown by the festival M.C., Samuel Stevenson. Samuel made the crowd aware of the sponsors, the artistic intention of the performance, the safety precautions, as well as the ongoing fundraising opportunity to purchase pieces of the piano once dropped. Peter and Bob were on the roof to supervise, and I was on the ground; Peter was the one to trip the piano's release mechanism. As it turned out, the countdown and the cheer at the moment of impact slightly interfered with recorded the impact sound of the piano—a crack and smash followed by the long ringing of all the strings at once.

## *Documentation*

Festival videographer Ryan Wugalter was stationed on the roof of the building, although several feet away from the piano, and took stills, audio, and video of the crowd and the drop itself from the roof. I used a Zoom H4n audio recorder on a tripod near the drop zone, behind the nearby fire hydrant. Festival photographer Chris Wagner took numerous stills of the drop. Many people in the crowd took photos, video, and audio, and some even uploaded it to YouTube and Vimeo in the following hours. I also wrote a poem for the festival chapbook entitled "The Time Drop" which explored the experience of planning the event, as well as the event itself. Some links to the crowd's documentation of the event can be found by Google searches like "Piano Drop Prince George." The Prince George Symphony Orchestra maintains a video of the drop on its YouTube channel.

## *Aftermath*

In the immediate aftermath of the drop, I took the microphone and reminded the elated, cheering crowd that they could still purchase keys for \$25, which several people did. Prince George Citizen reporter Frank Peebles went through the crowd gathering reaction. Peter went to the piano wearing protective goggles and ensured that the strings would not snap upon inspection. Several members of the crowd converged on the piano to examine its remains. Prince George Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster Jose Delgado-Guevara was recorded improvising music on the remains of the piano's harp.

We discovered that we had underestimated the distance the piano would travel away from the building; it hit the far edge of the drop zone plywood and sprawled beyond it onto the lawn, which was gouged. The plywood at the point of impact was totally destroyed, but the under layer was unharmed.

The surplus intact plywood was donated to the Exploration Place, including the ramp, which was later taken apart in place

on the roof; its separate parts were thrown to the ground the following day. The damaged plywood was taken away by an interested patron. The piano parts that were needed to reward funders were boxed up and relocated to a secure area of the museum. The other parts were either hauled away by the metal recycling company who Peter offered these pieces to or by that same patron who took the broken plywood.

In sum, the of the piano drop was done by Peter Stevenson, me, Samuel Stevenson, Bob Campbell, John David Young, John Calogheros, Ryan Wugalter, Chris Wagner, Haylee Tucker, and Kyle Myhre. Also hugely helpful were the Exploration Place, Sterling Crane, The Prince George Citizen, Hub International Barton Insurance Brokers, Scott Hunyadi and The City of Prince George, Regional Security, and P.G. Rental Centre. There are definitely other people who helped in other ways who I am forgetting now—thank you to everyone who assisted with this project; to all the funders; and to all the attendees. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...

*Appendix I: Program Notes by Peter Stevenson*

Every year, hundreds, if not thousands, of pianos are taken to the dump. We are at a unique point in history when the old uprights from the beginning of the 20th century and the short, cheap pianos made in the 1960s are generally falling apart and becoming unserviceable.

In my work as a piano technician, I frequently encounter pianos like this. They are often beloved by their owners, who cannot bring themselves to take their pianos to the dump. Instead, the pianos are too often passed along to other unsuspecting piano lovers who must make the difficult decision themselves.

Therefore, I am often looking for ways of honouring the beautiful lives of these pianos and their makers. I began a recycling program so that the metal parts can get reused in other products. I have encouraged several owners to turn their pianos into furniture or art pieces.

The piano drop is an opportunity to confront the fact that pianos are destroyed every day, and by putting the piano's destruction into a performance setting, we can find beauty in the process. After all, since we can no longer find beauty in the music of these pianos, if we are to find beauty in them at all, we must find beauty in their destruction.

Peter Stevenson





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## Casse-Tete: A Festival of Experimental Music Returns!

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Last year's festival brought so much amazing, challenging music to Northern BC, we knew we had to do it again! Let's work together and make it happen!

[Prince George, British Columbia, Canada Music](#)

First, we're going to drop a piano off a building.

Then we're going to follow that with two jam-packed days of experimental music performed by artists from across Canada and beyond, including fabulously talented and original locals. It's at The Exploration Place, Prince George, BC on June 13-15, 2014.

Won't you join us?



And will you help us? This is the second year of Casse-Tête: A Festival of Experimental Music, and like last year, we are relying on donations and sponsorships as well as ticket sales to cover the expenses related to such an undertaking, most of which are artists' fees. Unlike last year, the budget has increased a great deal to reflect the increase in artists' travel costs, since we are bringing so many from so far afield. Like last year, sponsors like The Exploration Place have been immensely generous and supportive; the festival's budget is very lean and carefully planned; and almost all of our costs are artists' fees, and yet the artists almost all shoulder a share of their own costs to perform here because they simply care that much. We need your help in welcoming them as warmly, and supporting them as thoroughly as we can.



\*\*\*

I'm Jeremy Stewart, Casse-Tête's Festival Producer. I'm an arts professional as well as an artist, with 15 years of experience producing concerts, as well as working for years in the non-profit sector, including work for Theatre North West, Island Mountain Arts (where I was ArtsWells Festival Coordinator), and the Community Development Institute. I created Casse-Tête because I wanted to share the music I love with my community, and because I wanted to share my community with the music I love. I also like to play the guitar and write poems. I grew up right here in Prince George and I love to see the city flourish.





It was Peter Stevenson, local musician and piano tuner, who came up with the idea of doing The Piano Drop; he shared it with me over lunch after the first Casse-Tête, and I knew immediately that including a performance of the piece in this year's festival was an absolute must.

The plan is that we will hire a crane company to lift a donated piano of no value (donated by Judy Russell), along with a wooden ramp, onto the roof of the Exploration Place, from which the piano will then be rolled over the ramp and dropped off the roof onto a couple of sheets of plywood below. It's important to note that the piano in question would not be better off saved, repaired, restored, donated, etc. It has irremediable damage that means that this piano will go to the dump whether we drop it off a building first or not. Peter expressed it nicely when he said that "we will give a piano that won't get played again a 'last hurrah.'"

Uniquely within the festival's programming, The Piano Drop event is free to attend. It will be professionally audio and video-recorded, and these recordings will be shared through social media. There will be security fencing and personnel in accordance with our insurance policy. The pieces of the piano will go to contributors to our fundraising, which I hope you are as excited about as I am.

The idea is to create a high-profile event to generate interest in the festival, as well as to cultivate the audience for challenging and experimental music ideas in the community at large. These goals are closely aligned with the festival's overall goals and values.

The idea is also to drop a piano off a building as a piece of music. This goal is perfectly aligned with the festival's overall goals and values.



I also have to note one thing: it is still possible that The Piano Drop's logistical challenges will not be met, and the event won't happen. I am going to do everything I can to make sure that it does happen. Fingers crossed. Watch this page for updates.

\*\*\*

Casse-Tête, poetically “broken head,” is both the French term for “puzzle” and for “headache.” It can also refer to a bludgeoning weapon like a club, or to a violent, deafening noise. I owe this name to my brilliant wife, Erin Arding, who is as fluent in French as she is in noise, a powerhouse artist, musician, and poet. She also came up with the illustration on this year’s poster and web graphics, etc., which is a drawing of a metal sculpture by the American artist John Chamberlain, whose work absolutely floored us in the retrospective we saw at the Guggenheim Museum when we were there in May 2012.



Kind words from some artists who participated in the first year of the festival:

“The Casse-Tête festival was very welcoming to our band. We greatly enjoyed our time with other performers and audience members, and also felt very privileged as members of both. This gathering of experimental music lovers provided a very promising example of the bright future of all forms of art in our country.”

—Myles Bartel, Pigeon Breeders, Edmonton

“Casse-Tête is where you can hear music fresh from the fountain head, before it drips lower and lower down to the bottom where children throw their pennies in the hope their irrelevant, non-musical dreams may come true, before the non-musical capitalist stem the flow to collect said pennies without the distraction of the pure and real.”

—Stanley Jason Zappa, Oliver

\*\*\*

The incentives to donate consist of some very special, top-quality handmade commemorative and documentary items, along with utterly unique physical artifacts of the triumph of The Piano Drop.

Everyone who donates will be recognized in the program. You deserved to be recognized as contributors to the good of this community.

Depending on the level of your contribution, you can receive everything from an exclusive, hand-bound chapbook by the Casse-Tête Poet Laureate inspired by the festival, to an exclusive CD library of recordings of festival performances; an exclusive commemorative photo book, to a framed copy of the 2014 Casse-Tête poster signed to you personally by all participating festival artists. Each of these items will be produced by artists with the greatest care and of immense quality. Your generosity really, really matters to us, and we want you to know it!

We also have options for interested businesses inclined to support Prince George's development in this way; these are sponsorships, and thus the associated benefits are promotional in nature.

\*\*\*

Let me ask you this: what kind of city do we want to have? What kind of dreams do we want to dream here, and do we think they can come true or don't we? It's not just about the future; it's about the present. Supporting Casse-Tête is something you can do right now to help make Prince George the place we're dreaming of. Of course, this is also an investment in the city's future, giving our community access to art that is otherwise not available here, whether that's the incredible visiting artists coming from all over Canada and beyond, or our own, brilliant local talent who otherwise would not have access to this kind of showcase. Casse-Tête brings Prince George to the world, and it brings the world to Prince George in a fresh, beautiful way.

If you can't afford to donate, I understand! I thank you in advance, however, for sharing this campaign as widely as possible, and of course, do pick up your festival pass or evening performance tickets from Books & Company, available starting May 1<sup>st</sup>, or order your pass now from [www.cassetetefestival.com](http://www.cassetetefestival.com).





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Team



[Jeremy Stewart](#)

Festival Producer

Verified 860 friends

\$1,125CAD

raised of \$2,500 goal

45%

0 time left

This campaign started on Apr 19 and closed on June 01, 2014 (11:59pm PT).

Flexible Funding This campaign has ended and will receive all funds raised.

Campaign Closed

This campaign ended on June 1, 2014

Select a Perk

- \$10CAD  
Encourager



A listing in the program

0 claimed

- \$25CAD  
Supporter

A listing in the program; a keystick from the dropped piano - indicate preference black or white (as available)

Estimated delivery: June 2014

5 out of 88 claimed

- \$50CAD  
Patron

A listing in the program; an exclusive hand-bound chapbook by the Casse-Tete Poet Laureate inspired by the festival; a hammer assembly from the dropped piano - indicate preference bass, middle, or treble (as available). (You may substitute a piano part from a lower support level if preferred, as available).

Estimated delivery: June 2014

3 out of 88 claimed

- \$100CAD  
Major Patron

A listing in the program; an exclusive hand-bound chapbook by the Casse-Tete Poet Laureate inspired by the festival; an exclusive CD library of recordings of festival performances; a bass string from the dropped piano (you may substitute a piano part from a lower support level if preferred, as available).

Estimated delivery: June 2014

2 out of 30 claimed

- \$150CAD  
Sponsorship I

Suitable for supportive businesses. A listing and a quarter-page ad in the program (copy deadline: June 1, 2014).

0 claimed

- \$250CAD  
Sponsorship II

Suitable for supportive businesses. A listing and a half-page ad in the program; logo and link on website/social media; mentions from stage (copy deadline: June 1, 2014).

0 claimed

- \$250CAD

Partner

A listing in the program; an exclusive hand-bound chapbook by the Casse-Tete Poet Laureate inspired by the festival; an exclusive CD library of recordings of festival performances; an exclusive commemorative photo book; a pedal from the dropped piano (may substitute a piano part from a lower support level if preferred, as available).

0 out of 3 claimed

- SOLD OUT

\$500CAD

Champion

A listing in the program; an exclusive hand-bound chapbook by the Casse-Tete Poet Laureate inspired by the festival; an exclusive CD library of recordings of festival performances; an exclusive commemorative photo book; a framed copy of the 2014 Casse-Tete poster signed to you personally by all participating festival artists; the one-of-a-kind fallboard decal from the dropped piano (may add any other piano part from a lower support level if desired, as available).

1 out of 1 claimed

- \$500CAD

Sponsorship III

Suitable for supportive businesses. A listing and full-page ad in the program; logo and link on website/social media; logo on posters (copy deadline April 30, 2014); mentions from stage; onsite logo recognition (copy deadline June 1, 2014).

0 claimed

- \$1,000CAD

Major Sponsorship

Suitable for superhero businesses. A listing and full-page preferred placement program ad (7.5" wide x 10" high) (inside front cover is still available); logo and link on website/social media; logo on posters; mentions from stage; onsite logo recognition; logo recognition in all local print advertising (copy deadline June 1, 2014). And, in all likelihood, whatever else we can do for you!

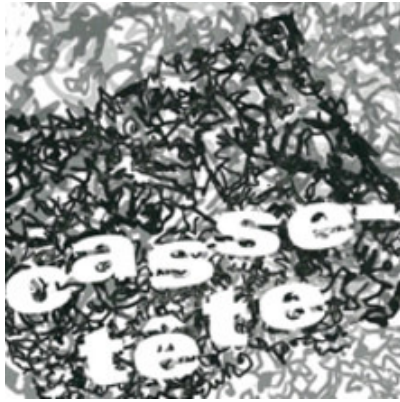
0 claimed

Do you think this campaign [contains prohibited content](#)? [Let us know](#).

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Copy the code below and paste it into your website or blog.

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<iframe  
src="https://www.ind  
iegogo.com/project  
/casse-tete-a-  
festival-  
of-experimental-  
music-returns  
/embedded"
```



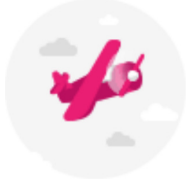
### [Casse-Tete: A Festival of Experimental Music Returns!](#)

[Last year's festival brought so much amazing, challenging music to Northern BC, we knew we had to do it again! Let's work together and make it happen!](#)

[\\$1,125CAD](#)

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### *Appendix III: Sponsorship Letter*

Hello [REDACTED]

hope things are going great. It's been a while, but I imagine you remember our conversation about my festival of experimental music happening June 13-15, 2014 at the Exploration Place. I'm writing to see if the Citizen would consider sponsoring the most visible, most exciting part of the festival: The Piano Drop.

The plan is that we will hire a crane company to lift a donated piano of no value (donated by Judy Russell) along with a wooden ramp onto the roof of the Exploration Place, from which the piano will then be rolled over the ramp and dropped off the roof onto a couple of sheets of plywood below.

The event is free to the public. It will be professionally audio and video-recorded, and these recordings will be shared through social media. There will be security fencing and personnel in accordance with our insurance policy, which is provided by Hub International Barton. The pieces of the piano will go to contributors to our fundraising.

The idea is to create a high-profile event to generate interest in the festival, as well as to cultivate the audience for challenging and experimental music ideas in the community at

large. I thought of the Citizen right away because I know quite a bit about your commitment to the community, not least in the form of your impressive accomplishments as supporters and builders of local arts and culture.

The sponsor commitment I am looking for this event is [REDACTED] I am prepared to reciprocate with naming rights to the "Prince George Citizen Piano Drop at Casse-Tete," or something of the kind, along with an ad in the festival program, logo recognition on the poster, on the festival site, and on the website, and mentions from the stage.

The festival itself comprises two days of musical performances in the space at the Exploration Place, which they are donating for the 2nd consecutive year. Artists are a solid mix of local talent and visitors from such places as New York, Minneapolis, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver. Have a look at the festival website if you'd like to get more of a feel for it, [www.cassetetefestival.com](http://www.cassetetefestival.com).

If you'd to talk about this more, by all means get in touch with me via [jeremydstewart@gmail.com](mailto:jeremydstewart@gmail.com), or by phone at work at [REDACTED] or at home at [REDACTED]

Thanks kindly,

Jeremy

#### *Appendix IV: Press Release*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 4, 2014

#### Experimental Music Finds Eager Ears at the Exploration Place

Prince George, British Columbia, Canada. Prince George may not be the most obvious place in the world to look for an experimental music scene. But if you did, you would find one that is thriving—and growing—thanks in large part to a strange little music festival that’s defying all expectations to likewise flourish. It’s called Casse-Tête: A Festival of Experimental Music, and this June 13 to 15 at The Exploration Place represents its second year of bringing some of Canada’s most challenging music to British Columbia’s central interior.

This year’s visiting artists include Catherine Sikora (New York City), Stanley Jason Zappa (Oliver), Pigeon Breeders (Edmonton), Jung People (Calgary), Chersea (Vancouver), and The Institute for the Study of Advanced Musical Research (Vancouver, Calgary). Participating local artists include Raghu Lokanathan, Christians, Burndog Hyena, Pg9o9, Jose Delgado-Guevara, Anne Harris, Peter Stevenson, and Kaia Andal.

There is also an unusual performance in the works whose fate is now in the hands of the City of Prince George: The Piano Drop. The plan is to take a ruined, donated piano, and to give it a last hurrah: to push it off the roof of The Exploration Place. This performance is inspired by the piano drops that have occurred at MIT since the early 1970s; it represents an exploration of the limits of music, of musical spectacle, and the final limits of the piano as an instrument.

Festival Producer Jeremy Stewart grew up in Prince George, and is a musician and music lover first. “I created Casse-Tête to bring the music I wanted to hear to Prince George, and just as much, to showcase the amazing, mostly unknown artists we have here,” Stewart said. “I seriously doubted I would ever do a second year. But after the success of the first year, I was so encouraged, I knew immediately I had to keep it going.”

“My wife, Erin, speaks fluent French,” said Stewart. “The name was her idea.” Casse-Tête, poetically “broken head,” is both the French term for ‘puzzle’ and for ‘headache.’ It can also refer to a bludgeoning weapon like a club, or to a violent, deafening noise.

Festival passes are \$36 regular price or \$32 with valid student ID, available at Books & Co. Evening show tickets are \$20 each. Children under 12 are free. For more information—including the most up-to-date version of the ever-growing lineup—check out the Casse-Tete website at [www.cassetetefestival.com](http://www.cassetetefestival.com).

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For more information, contact Jeremy Stewart at [REDACTED] or via [jeremy@cassetetefestival.com](mailto:jeremy@cassetetefestival.com).



## Appendix V: Press Clippings

Experimental music festival plays The Exploration Place - Local - Princ... <http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/entertainment/local/experimental-m...>

# THE PRINCE GEORGE CITIZEN

## Experimental music festival plays The Exploration Place

Frank PEEBLES / Prince George Citizen  
June 11, 2014 04:41 AM

Few people are allowed into the lab when scientists do experiments, but experimental music is audience friendly.

Jeremy Stewart loves to mix and emulsify musical notes, playing styles and all the words that go with it. The veteran of the Prince George music and poetry scene is also the founder of this week's extravaganza of the ethereal Casse-Tte: A Festival of Experimental Music. He is so passionate about it, he is going to throw a piano from a high place to make his point.

Experimental does not mean unprepared, however, nor does it mean difficult to listen to. Experimental music is an umbrella term covering free-flowing jazz, some modern orchestral, edgy electronica and really any genre where the envelope of sound and form is being pushed. Like language, music has its version of slang and evolution of meaning.

"We have some fabulously sensitive artists coming to perform this year," said Stewart. "This genre family might be unfamiliar to some people, but it possesses many musical virtues - ones you may not be able to experience in many other musical forms."

He explained that abstract painting is not just mindless splatter on a canvas, there is art and reasoning behind experimental music, too, and it is a journey of discovery for the listener and player alike.

"I believe in accessibility with experimental music," he said, and chose his performers accordingly. "A lot of people might think that means already understanding what's going on but I believe it means you could understand it if given the chance. It might take more work, but there are bigger payoffs when you do get what the musician is doing. It's like trying new food, but the kind of food millions of other people love. Maybe you haven't had it before, but you can trust that it's not bad and you stand a good chance of loving it. That's what we are encouraging. We're not going to serve you haggis, more like sushi. Ted Price [founder of Theatre North West where Stewart was a staff member] called it 'gently expanding audience horizons.' The point is, you want to move your audience, but in way that brings them along with you. It's something you want to experience together."

Now about that piano. It's a ruined one. Irreparable. Enchainement Dance Studio proprietor Judy Russell is donating it to Stewart "because Judy is just the bomb. That is all," he said. The managers of Exploration Place are donating the museum's roof from which this piano will be launched. The ground at the bottom will be protected by plywood, and Stewart has assured the City of Prince George he will pay should unlikely damage occur.

"This was Peter Stevenson's idea [of PS Piano Services, head instrument tech for the Prince George Symphony Orchestra]," Stewart said. "A piano dropping off a high place and landing on the hard ground. You do not need to have a working knowledge of [experimental music godfather] John Cage to appreciate that. That's just good fun. You'll want to see that, it probably won't happen too many times in your lifetime."

This year's visiting artists include Catherine Sikora (New York City), Stanley Jason Zappa (Oliver), Pigeon Breeders (Edmonton), Jung People (Calgary), Chersea (Vancouver), and The Institute for the Study of Advanced Musical Research (Vancouver, Calgary).

Participating local artists include Raghu Lokanathan, Christians, Burndog Hyena, Pg9o9, Jose Delgado-Guevara, Anne Harris, Kaia Andal and Stevenson. Stewart is also likely to find his way onto the stage.

"I created Casse-Tte to bring the music I wanted to hear to Prince George, and just as much, to showcase the amazing, mostly unknown artists we have here," Stewart said. "I seriously doubted I would ever do a second year. But after the success of the first year, I was so encouraged, I knew immediately I had to keep it going."

Casse-Tte is a French term suggested by Stewart's wife and fellow musician Erin. He said it poetically means "broken head" and is both a reference to 'puzzle' and 'headache.'

"It can also refer to a bludgeoning weapon like a club, or to a violent, deafening noise," he said.

The festival runs Friday through Sunday at Exploration Place.

Festival passes are (\$36 regular, \$32 with valid student ID) available at Books & Co.

Evening show tickets are \$20 each. Children under 12 are free.

The piano drop happens at 7 p.m. Friday followed by a panel discussion moderated by Stewart and featuring many of the festival acts. The topic: The Importance and Unimportance of Technique.

For more information - including the most up-to-date version of the ever-growing lineup -check out the Casse-Tete website at [www.cassetetefestival.com](http://www.cassetetefestival.com).

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# THE PRINCE GEORGE CITIZEN

## Piano drop ends with a musical bang

Frank PEEBLES / Prince George Citizen  
June 20, 2014 05:15 AM

If a piano falls in Fort George Park, you can bet a lot of people will hear.

Just because the garden-variety Winter & Company instrument was no longer able to keep tune doesn't mean it had no voice. Its last note was a long one as the combined force of gravity and 88 keys came together from a great height, the echo hanging in the Fort George Park sunshine for an unusually sustained musical call. It subsided in a heap of wooden shards and recognizable bits of familiar piano anatomy that were surreally cast about the impact zone.

And then there was the cheer.

Those watching roared like a Roman coliseum crowd rooting for the death of a gladiator. They were standing at the western wall of The Exploration Place on Friday night where the Casse-Tete Experimental Music Festival got off to a slamming start by dropping the otherwise irreparable piano from the roof of the museum to the lawn (covered in plywood) below.

"It was cool. I love destruction," said Peter Kellet, proprietor of Page Boy Books, relishing the rare opportunity to celebrate the smashing of something formerly valuable.

"It is now a repurposed piano," said Ron Johnson, an engineer for Deltech Manufacturing and the founder of the Believe In PG page on Facebook.

"I thought it would be cool to see a piano go boom. And it was," said Theatre North West marketing and development officer Carli Staub. "It's also a great chance to meet up with the greater arts community and support Jeremy [Stewart, founder of the Casse-Tete festival]."

Stewart admitted the piano drop was a stunt, but it succeeded in bringing more than 100 spectators out to launch not only a piano from a rooftop, but a music extravaganza unlike any other. The Casse-Tete festival went on through the weekend with an audience topping 120 people for a particularly niche form of music. It more than doubled the attendance at the first event in 2013.

"There will definitely be a Casse-Tete 3, and we would love to have it at Exploration Place again," Stewart confirmed on Wednesday, "but I'm thinking we won't drop any furniture this time. We have to keep that special."

The major development they have in mind for next year is to hold the incoming artists, and put the local artists to more use for musician master classes. Stewart said the benefit to the community would multiply if these players of experimental music could impart their skills and experiences to the area's players.

"Prince George can be so mainstream. You can be stuck in the mainstream no matter where you live," said Staub. "And this is what a festival like this is all about - something new, something interesting."

Do you know what's interesting? Seeing a piano's innards come out of its chest, said Bob Campbell, head curator at The Exploration Place and the man who first said out loud in Stewart's presence that Prince George should have an experimental music event of its own. It was Campbell's roof that the piano (donated by Judy Russell) was placed by



Sterling Crane (service donated by Ken Morland of Sterling Crane). He oversaw the construction of some ramp structures so it could slide off the roof without damaging any of the building. He and piano drop conceiver Peter Stevenson of PS Piano Services got the best seats in the house for the final crash.

"I was able to step forward and actually see it hit from this vantage point," said Campbell. "It split in half like a sandwich, then all the deli meats and cheese curds spilled out."

"It was fabulous. Just perfect," said

Stewart. "So many people came out to watch, and so many people did so much to help. I don't know if we can ever do another piano drop, but the first one for Prince George was amazing."

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*Appendix VI: photos by Chris Wagner*









