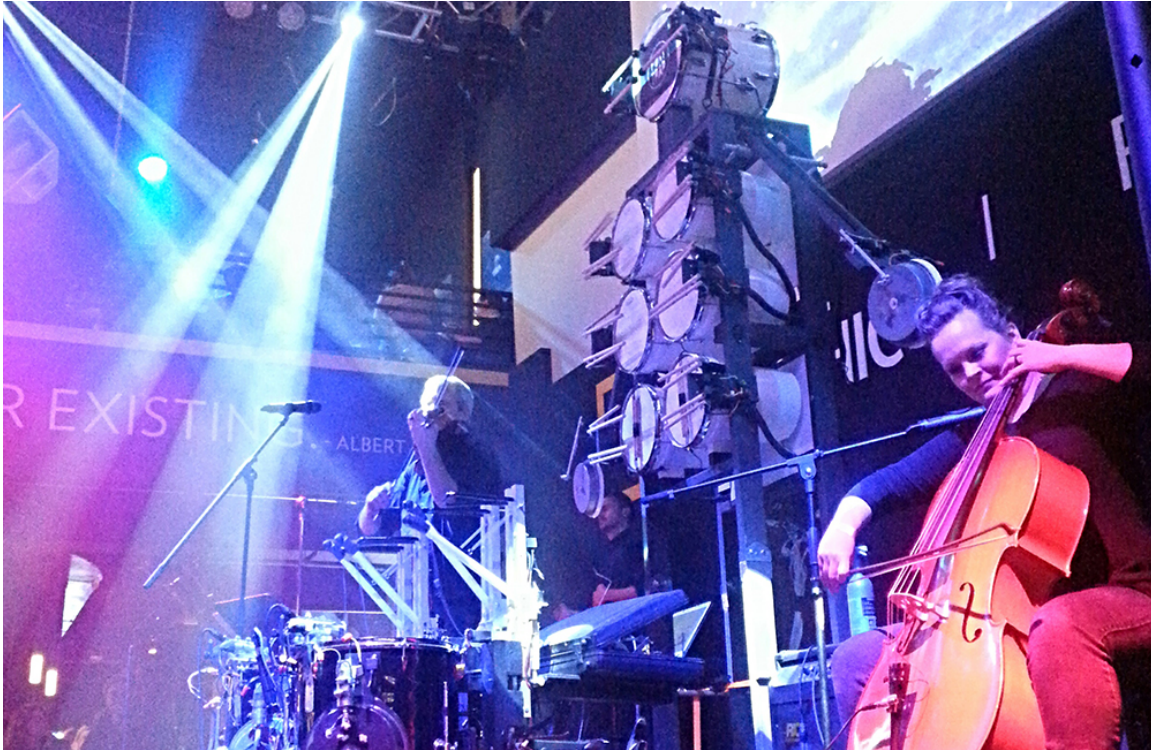


PONYTRAP: Two Humans and a Robot Army



Billing themselves as “industrial music for modern primitives,” Ponytrap is a decidedly unconventional Austin trio, utilizing viola, cello, and robot drummers to create a soundscape that careens from delicate and haunting to fiery and intense.

“Ponytrap treats audiences to chamber music for the age of electricity, at once intimate and thundering, rigid and fluid, classical and industrial.”

- Justin Boyle, CultureMap Austin

Hilary and Quentin Thomas-Oliver are the only warm-blooded members of the band. Their rhythm section is an assemblage of analog-programmed robots, including two floor toms and a twelve-foot-tall human-shaped tower of drumheads.

"These robots look like drum-headed steel racks from some weird sci-fi nightmare Keith Moon might've had... like a big, metal, hyperkinetic, drum-studded Wicker Man."

- Wayne Alan Brenner, Austin Chronicle

Quentin is the mastermind of the project, having learned that creating his own robot drummers from scratch was less challenging than finding the right human for the job.

"Our music is influenced by Ministry, early-20th century composer Paul Hindemith, Ludwig van Beethoven, and the Kodo drummers. The drummers who really want to play our tribal industrial style of music have a hard time keeping up with the weird time signatures, and the drummers with the chops to keep up all want to play jazz. Building our own drummers ended up being the most elegant solution. I guess we can add Alan Turing to our list of influences."

Quentin originally moved to Austin, Texas to attend the College of Engineering at UT, but dropped out to play bass in a hard rock band. He returned to school after seeing a play about 18th-century violinist and composer Niccolò Paganini, which led to an epiphany about combining classical instruments with modern tribal industrial music. Ultimately, Quentin graduated with Honors and Distinction with a degree in Strings Performance from the University of Iowa School of Music and started working to build the band that would be Ponytrap. Several unsuccessful human permutations later, he decided to build his own drummer.

"Ponytrap is the realization of an artistic pursuit that has consumed my entire adult life. The robots are just a bonus."

Hilary Thomas-Oliver brings the perfect layer of feminine energy to the project, with inspirations ranging from Lizzo, Liz Phair, REM, Neil deGrasse Tyson, and Samantha Bee. She played cello in the school orchestra as a kid, and picked it up again as an adult after Quentin brought home a beat-up cello from his job in a music shop.

"I never dreamed I would know as much as I do about amperage, voltage, and power drill motors. When Quentin first started talking about building robot drummers, I sort of patted him on the shoulder and said, "That's nice, honey!"

And then he bought an Arduino and started making lights blink on and off, and I realized he was totally serious."

Hilary was drawn to Austin in the mid-nineties by the burgeoning spoken word scene, but soon found herself in a position familiar to many Austin residents: "I joined my first band in 2004 when a friend called me up and said, 'We're in a band, you play the bass, and our first gig is in ten days.'"

A SAMPLE OF PONYTRAP STORIES (with links)

Esquire ranks Ponytrap one of the 12 biggest highlights of SXSW (alongside President Obama and Drake):

<http://www.esquire.com/entertainment/music/news/a43187/sxsw-2016-highlights/>

NPR's Audie Cornish and Stephen Thompson discuss meeting Quentin and his "snowman of drums":

<http://tpr.org/post/sxsw-30-view-street-level#stream/0>

Ponytrap tells Make Magazine how to make robot drums:

<http://makezine.com/projects/make-robotic-drum-using-arduino-uno/>

The Austin Chronicle previews Ponytrap's *Promethean Waltz* show at the Stateside at the Paramount:

<http://www.austinchronicle.com/daily/arts/2016-01-20/pony-traps-robots-pound-out-a-promethean-waltz-at-the-paramount/>

PONYTRAP ON YOUTUBE (links)

The Bridge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojklqC3zVKk>

Fix No. One: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RE48aN9fsrs>

Waltz: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clB-n_Mmg0Q

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For downloadable photos and more info, visit <http://www.ponytrapmusic.com>