

# REALLY GOOD ELEVATOR MUSIC



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## **Chinatown North public art installation *Really Good Elevator Music* replaces innocuous background noise with meaningful original tracks**

*Asian Arts Initiative artist in residence Yowei Shaw seeks to surprise elevator riders with unique community-building experiences; listening party, March 14, 6–8 p.m.*

PHILADELPHIA — The elevators in Chinatown North’s Wolf Building will get an aural makeover next month with the installation of **Asian Arts Initiative** artist in residence **Yowei Shaw**’s experiential public art project [Really Good Elevator Music](#). Shaw, a local radio producer, created the piece as part of Asian Arts Initiative’s inaugural Social Practice Lab artist residency; with a host of collaborators including **Steven Dufala**, **Aleks Martray**, **Jeff Zeigler** and many more, Shaw created 13 original audio compositions to be played continuously in the Wolf Building’s elevator and other public spaces from **March 3 through March 31**, exploring the potential of sound to stimulate community building and social interaction in the strikingly diverse neighborhood of Chinatown North. Shaw hopes to activate these spaces by filling them with a very different kind of Muzak, the kind that challenges participants to rethink their relationship with these spaces, the neighborhood and one another.

Asian Arts Initiative will host a culminating listening party on **Friday, March 14, from 6 to 8 p.m.**, including a screening of video reactions from participants who encountered the work while riding the elevator. “Audio usually requires active, engaged listening, and there’s a high barrier for people to initiate their participation,” Shaw says. “The idea behind *Really Good Elevator Music* is that people wait in elevators, waiting rooms and lobbies by necessity. It’s a captive audience for audio, so you don’t have that barrier.”

Shaw’s roughly two-minute-long tracks introduce elevator riders to members of the Chinatown North community through taped interview excerpts and found sounds. For example, in “Sunday Breakfast,” by Shaw and producer **Kyle Pulley**, men at the Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission homeless shelter were asked the question, “What’s your favorite food?” Their answers were then layered over sounds of the shelter’s busy lunch shift and voicemail message. Explains Pulley: “We set out to create a piece that humanizes an often-marginalized population by focusing on hopeful musical themes and clips of people discussing something we can all relate to: delicious foods and feeding people you care about.”

Artist and educator **Aleks Martray** describes his contribution, “What is it becoming?,” as a rhythmic collage representing the linguistic and cultural diversity of Chinatown North. “It’s an outgrowth of hours of audio

interviews with dozens of community residents, leaders and business owners, representing over eight different languages,” he says. Martray weaves these samples with sounds of industry and motion to craft a musical dialogue about what the neighborhood is becoming.

Independent radio producer, writer and musician **Alex Lewis'** track compiles answers to the question, “How’s the weather today?” A nod to our tendency to use the weather as a conversation starter, “Really Bad December Music” calls attention to the overlooked significance of passing everyday moments.

Other contributing artists include musician and designer **Steven Dufala**; artist **Jeff Zeigler**; and trombonist **Steve Parker**; the installation was designed by **Lee Tusman**. (*Contributor bios follow below.*)

In addition to hearing the project play on loop at the Wolf Building and other neighborhood locations throughout the month of March, audiences are invited to experience Really Good Elevator Music by visiting the project website ([reallygoodelevatormusic.com](http://reallygoodelevatormusic.com)), playing the tracks in their homes and offices, and recording the results on the site.

## **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

### ***March 3-31***

Wolf Building Elevators and other neighborhood locations

Really Good Elevator Music will play on loop during business hours, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

340 N. 12th St., Philadelphia

### ***Friday, March 14***

Listening Party

6-8 p.m., FREE

Asian Arts Initiative, 1219 Vine St., Philadelphia, PA

Meet the artists and community members behind Really Good Elevator Music and listen to original tracks composed to achieve the following goal: Can we make audio that promotes community in public space? The listening party will also include a video screening of reactions to the installation, a brief artist talk, and an introduction of Houston-based artist Rick Lowe's residency with Asian Arts Initiative. Light refreshments will be served.

## **ABOUT YOWEI SHAW**

Yowei Shaw is an independent audio producer and public radio reporter based in Philadelphia. She's reported for This American Life, NPR, and other national and local public radio programs. Yowei has also worked as an associate producer with NPR's Fresh Air with Terry Gross and NPR's World Café with David Dye. She's received a National Journalism Award from Asian American Journalists Association and an Honorable Mention for Best Documentary award from Third Coast International Audio Festival. Yowei is also a recipient of the 2013 Leeway Transformation Award. In 2011, she created Philly Youth Radio, a project that provided high school students with the tools and training to produce radio stories about their lives and communities.

## **ABOUT THE COLLABORATORS**

**Steven Dufala** is an artist, musician, designer and half of the collaborative practice The Dufala Brothers, with his brother Billy. Together, they've been making art and doing projects for about 10 years, often collaborating with others on projects that take them out of our comfort zone. Steven helped get the band MAN MAN off the ground, writing, recording and touring through most of the first two records. He has worked as a designer with a handful of friends in the live arts community here in Philly. He co-teaches, with

Billy, in the sculpture department at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Less officially, he makes a lot of his own clothing, loves drawing, and makes music for no particular reason.

**Alex Lewis** is an independent radio producer, writer, and musician based in Philadelphia. He has reported stories for national and local media outlets, written about music for newspapers and blogs, and played guitar on stages all over the USA. Mostly recently, with Yowei Shaw as a collaborator, he helped write and produce an audio documentary that examines the legacy of Black radio in Philadelphia.

**Aleks Martray** is an artist and educator who uses visual art, music, and digital media as a vehicle for empowering and connecting people. Aleks received his BFA in painting and MA in Community Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). He has traveled internationally as a musician and filmmaker throughout North and Central America and is the co-founder of “Art of Solidarity”, an arts-based cultural exchange program in Nicaragua. He is the founder and composer of the Philadelphia-based band Grandchildren.

**Steve Parker** is a trombonist living in Austin, TX. He is an Artist-in-Residence at the Bianton Museum, faculty at UT San Antonio, and artist of Ensemble Signal (NYC) and along with Yowei Shaw, was also an artist-in-residence in Asian Arts Initiative’s Social Practice Lab.

**Kyle Pulley** is a musician and record producer. He’s been playing in bands since he was a kid – and he’s been recording, producing, and mixing records since 2007. He began his career working for Bill Moriarty at American Diamond Studios and has had the privilege of assisting on Dr. Dog’s “Fate”. Soon after that, he moved into Big Mama’s Warehouse and began The Headroom studio with Joe Reinhart and has since worked with such artists as Kite Party, The Extraordinaires, and Grandchildren. He was the guitarist in the now-defunct Dangerous Ponies, and he currently plays in Thin Lips.

**Jeff Zeigler** is a musician, producer and recording engineer from Philadelphia, PA. He’s a founding member of the noise pop band Arc in Round and has recorded and produced records for a variety of artists, including Kurt Vile, Purling Hiss, Nothing and the War on Drugs.

### **ABOUT ASIAN ARTS INITIATIVE**

A meeting place, an idea lab, a support system, and an engine for positive change, Asian Arts Initiative strives to empower communities through the richness of art. We believe in a universal human capacity for creativity, and we support local art and artists as a means of interpreting, sharing, and shaping contemporary cultural identity. For more information, please call 215-557-0455 or visit [www.asianartsinitiative.org](http://www.asianartsinitiative.org).

### **ABOUT THE SOCIAL PRACTICE LAB**

Combining artistic innovation with neighborhood development, Asian Arts Initiative’s Social Practice Lab commissions and implements the work of creative individuals and organizations in Philadelphia’s Chinatown North, encouraging neighborhood development and effecting positive community change via inspiring, innovative multidisciplinary art projects. The Social Practice Lab is made possible with major support from ArtPlace and the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

*The project was produced as part of Asian Arts Initiative’s 2012-2013 Social Practice Lab, which invited seven artists in residence to develop and implement public art projects that engage with and enliven the neighborhood of Chinatown and Chinatown North. Really Good Elevator Music was made possible in part with support from ArtPlace, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, PNC Arts Alive and the Surdna Foundation.*

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**To request photos, interviews and more information, please contact:**

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