



The Wilder Papers

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Le 28 August 2014 — *By* [Derrick Belcham](#)



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Last spring, our director Derrick Belcham joined the dancer Emily Terndrup to create The Wilder Papers, an immersive experience mixing dance and live music, in an incredible industrial space in Brooklyn. Here's the story of this unique show, and some infos about what's to follow.

**I**n March of 2014, after filming a video for Eddi Front in their space, the Knockdown Center asked me to pitch an idea for a music series in their space. They were inspired by my work on the Take Away Shows and wanted to find a way to bring people out to their space for intimate and engaging night of cultural appreciation, far removed from the large-venue bookings that they had been exploring the year prior (Red Bull Music Academy, M.I.A.).



I contacted a colleague and friend who I had directed several dance films with, Emily Terndrup, and told her about the opportunity. We both immediately began to dream up an immersive show that would marry an aspect of contemporary dance with the friendships I had developed in the world of independent music. We moved through dozens of iterations of the idea (a Rite of Spring festival involving the actual gods showing up, a send up of the Wicker Man, a paean to the Furies and an experience that explored the seven Celestial Orbs). A simple narrative surrounding a composer and the genius choreographic mind that became his wife stood out to us by the end, a concise and elegant expression of the main tenet of our project, the intersection of dance and music.

We worked for a month straight, first with Emily's sister Helen to write the story surrounding our figures. We were consumed and had marathon planning sessions in spite of the demands of our professions. We assembled a team of dancers, we called in every favor we could, we used every skill we had even casually accrued up to the point. The lead up to the show took every ounce of effort that each of us could muster. We utilized every piece of the Knockdown Center that we could, even to the point of moving hundreds of bricks from the basement into

the space to serve as symbols in our overture. We transported hundreds of items from the history of the Knockdown Center from their immense storage areas back into the space to try and fill the voluminous space with meaningful ephemera of our imagined protagonists. By the time we were finished, the building was transformed by light, set design and performance to the point where any sign of the modern Knockdown Center, even if it was visible, was swallowed up into the mystery of the secret evening between 200 people.



Along the way, Julianna Barwick was the first musician to sign on. We had spent the better part of two years together as a team in support of her record *Nepenthe*, and her commitment became the first anchor for our fledgling ship. Skyler Skjelset and I had worked with one of the dancers, Mariel Lugosch-Ecker, on a long-form dance film set in an abandoned building earlier that year. As soon as he heard the concept, he was locked in. Skyler's belief that we were creating something of worth and something that he had never seen or dreamed of being a part of became a strong source of inspiration for the piece. Hannah Epperson had toured with Julianna the year before, and they had fallen in love with each other. She volunteered immediately after hearing the concept. Mauro Remiddi was a lock as soon as he heard that he could bring his modular synth to the show. I had never met Sarah before, but was in love with her music. I told her about the concept, and she was on board from first contact.

After working day and night for 5 days straight once we actually got the keys to the venue and wiring 60,000 sq ft for sound, light and audience movement, we opened the doors to the Wilder Papers at 7PM on June 4th, and I just paced around the building crying at every moment of the show. So many deeply committed performers living in our constructed world and giving everything they had to the work. The audience could not believe what they witnessed that night. I had never experienced something like it to that point, and may never again.



The event was invitation-only and one night only. When we were done, we walked to a local bar for a celebration, leaving everything in place (including the entire setup in the old ruin beside the building that would be swallowed up by a giant thunderstorm that evening). The next day, Emily, I and Mariel watched the footage that the brilliant videographers had captured of the evening and spent the day crying about what kind of commitment had been captured in every one of the performers and in the eyes of the captivated audience.

In October of 2014, we do it all again with our new production, "Debut". We return to the Knockdown Center years later and with endless activity between now and the events of the Wilder Papers. "Debut" depicts the events of a single evening in the lives of 8 teenagers that break into the long-derelict structure of the Knockdown Center on the night of their senior prom.

