



ARMS AROUND AMERICA PRESS KIT

Dan Froot & Company creates theater pieces, podcasts, and community gatherings that foster dialogue around hunger, race, gun violence, and other pressing social issues.

Comprised of a dynamic group of LA-based performers, and led by award-winning artist Dan Froot, the company currently focuses on gathering book length oral histories and adapting them to theatrical form.

Known nationally for their collaborative approach to theater-making, and for engaging deeply with communities and partners, DF & Co puts art at the center of civic discourse!



Our current project, *Arms Around America* (AAA) is based on stories of real families around the country whose lives have been shaped by guns. We spent several years conducting book-length oral histories of families in South Florida, Western Montana and Southern California. We then wrote audio dramas based on those stories, which have one iteration as a podcast, and a second iteration as a live show.



By opening a window into these families' lives, we explore diverse perspectives and foster dialogue around the complex roles that guns play in our society. We hope that this project can help us all learn how to maintain each other's humanity when discussing divisive topics.

AAA received a National Theater Project Creation and Touring Grant from New England Foundation for the Arts, and commissions from the National Performance Network and UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance. The AAA podcast launches in June 2024, and premieres on stage in November 2024 at The Nimoy Theater in Los Angeles, with subsequent national touring.

Selected Past Projects:

[PANG!](#) is a triptych of audio dramas based on the oral histories of families around the country who are living with food insecurity and hungering for change. The *Pang!* Podcast was featured by the New York Times in 2019 and has been downloaded 3800+ times since its release.



photo by David Hector Rosales



photo by Rose Eichenbaum

[Who's Hungry](#) is a series of adult puppet theater pieces based on oral histories of families dealing with food insecurity in various Southern California neighborhoods.

[Shlammer](#) is a vaudevillian gangster farce in which the protagonist (Froot) bosses around the audience. Their responses advance the action of the story. *The Godfather* meets *Groundhogs Day* meets your nephew's bar mitzvah.



photo by Beatriz Schiller



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[Live Sax Acts](#) is a series of short interdisciplinary (text, movement, music) collaborative duets with New York-based choreographer David Dorfman. These pieces toured for over 20 years in 20 states and six countries. In 1998 the duets were compiled into this single evening-length program.

Arms Around America Actor/Collaborators



Justin Alston is a Brooklyn-born actor who is thrilled to be a part of *Arms Around America*. Justin got his start studying theatre at Duke university before heading to LA in 2002. He has been nominated twice for an NAACP Theatre Award, and he recently Guest Starred on *9-1-1 Lone Star* opposite Rob Lowe and Gina Torres.

Sola Bamis is an actress, writer, performance artist, and filmmaker. A SAG Award nominee, she appears in TV shows, regional theatre, and voiceovers in video games and commercials. Her film script *Crocodile* received awards from Reel Sisters of the Diaspora Film Festival, Lecture Series Short Narrative Screenplay Competition, Film Daily Screenwriting, and Atlanta Film Festival. Her one-woman show, *The Tutorial*, is a prescription for black women's self-love and expression.



Natalie Camunas is an L.A. native, USC Annenberg graduate, and queer-identified artist. Natalie has acted in regional theaters nationally. She originated the role of Gabby Orozco in the world premiere co-production of *American Mariachi* at the Old Globe Theatre and Denver Center for the Performing Arts. TV Credits: *Goliath*, *Speechless*, *Major Crimes*. Plays that Natalie has written have been produced in L.A., NYC, and Ireland.

Dan Froot's performances have toured to such venues as Edenborough Fringe Festival, London Institute for Contemporary Art, Harare International Festival of the Arts (Zimbabwe), Festival de Dança de Londrina (Brazil), and NYC's Joyce Theater. Awards include a Bessie, a City of Los Angeles Artist Fellowship, and a Foundation for Jewish Culture Playwriting Fellowship.



Krysta Gonzalez is a TX-born, NY-trained, LA-based performer, writer, and chingona. Most of the plays they've written are available to view/listen to online through HowlRound, VORTEX, Teatro Vivo, Generic Ensemble Company, and Distilled Theatre Company.

Donna Simone Johnson is an actress, choreographer, and liberator. She is a series regular on *Y'all Family* and a Company Member of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. International credits include *CITIZENSHIP* in Uganda and *CLOUD 9* (RITu, Liege, Belgium.)



Originally from Miami, **Anthony Perez** has acted on film, television, commercials, voice-overs, and Off-Broadway. He played a young Andy Garcia in the Latine-centered *Father Of the Bride*. A son of immigrants (and loving husband of one), Anthony doesn't take lightly the chance to portray a fuller representation of Americans in the mainstream narrative for the next generation, including his beautiful daughter, Luna.

Christopher Rivas is an actor, author, and storyteller. His book, *Brown Enough*, is both memoir and social commentary about what being Brown in America means. With *Stitcher*, he developed the podcasts *Brown Enough*, exploring the themes of his book; and *Rubirosa*, investigating the Dominican diplomat who inspired "James Bond." Rivas is known for his work on the Fox series, *Call Me Kat*.



The rest of the *Arms Around America* team:

Dramaturg: Bobby Gordon

Composer: Julio Montero

Musicians: Julian Gomez, Tom Moose, Isaac Rodriguez

Oral Historian: Tula B. Strong

Sound Design: Duncan Woodbury

Lighting Design: Antony Gutierrez

Arms Around America Synopsis

- **Tiffany's** doctoral dissertation is a critique of military-styled baby carriers, but after a series of school shootings, she bulletproofs her own children's backpacks.
- **Gabriel's** trusty handgun goes missing during a road-trip. Does he report it, and risk being charged for illegally crossing state lines? Or keep quiet, and take a chance on being implicated when the gun is used in a crime?
- **June's** in-laws have a history of self-harm. When her teenage son asks for his deceased father's gun collection, June has to weigh their power to destroy against their potential to heal.
- **Patricia** survives intimate partner violence. Now she lives to heal herself and others.
- Surrounded by police brutality, generational poverty, and gun traffic, brothers **Rich and Dave** work together to create a safe space for their young children.
- And finally, a theater artist from Los Angeles struggles to write a play about **Aaron**, a self-defined "liberal gun nut," only to find himself implicated in Aaron's story.

Project Support

Arms Around America is a **National Performance Network (NPN)** Creation & Development Fund Project co-commissioned by UCLA's **Center for the Art of Performance**, and by **The Myrna Loy** in partnership with **Miami Light Project**, and NPN. The Creation & Development Fund is supported by the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**, the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, and the **National Endowment for the Arts** (a federal agency). This project is also made possible by grants from the **New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Project**, with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and additional support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the **City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs**, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the **Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture**, and from UCLA: the **Office for Research & Creative Activities (ORCA)** Acceleration Grant Program, and the **Chancellor's Council on the Arts (CCOA)**.

Upcoming Performances of *Arms Around America*

- **November 15 & 16, 2024** at The Nimoy Theater (Los Angeles), presented by UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance
 - **February 20-22, 2025** at Lehman Auditorium (Miami), presented by Miami Light Project and Live Arts Miami
 - **February 28-March 1, 2025** at The Myrna Loy (Helena MT), presented by The Myrna Loy
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Selected Past Touring

2019: *Pang!*

- **October 21-27** – University of St. Joseph's Autorino Center for the Arts in Hartford CT, Yale University Pierson College, and Hartford Public Library.
- **October 28-November 2** – Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts's Church Street Center in North Adams MA.
- **November 3-9** – presented by The Yard at Martha's Vineyard Playhouse, in Vineyard Haven MA.

2018: *Pang!*

- **January 22-27** - presented by Miami Light Project at The Light Box at Goldman Warehouse in Miami FL.

2017: *Pang!*

- **October 16-21** - presented by Legion Arts at CSPA Hall in Cedar Rapids IA.
- **November 27-December 3** - 24th Street Theatre in Los Angeles CA.

2014: *Who's Hungry?*

- **March 24-30** - Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts's Church Street Center in North Adams MA
- **March 31-April 5** - Silvermine Arts Center in New Canaan CT
- **April 7-13** - presented by Portland Ovations at SPACE Gallery in Portland ME

2013: *Who's Hungry?*

- **September 10-20** - The Yard in Chilmark MA
- **September 23-28** - Wesleyan University in Middletown CT
- **September 30-October 5** - Charlestown Working Theater in Boston MA

2012: *Who's Hungry?*

- **January 23-February 4** - Highways Performance Space in Santa Monica CA

2010: *Who's Hungry?*

- **June 7-11** - presented by **International Toy Theater Festival at St. Ann's Warehouse**, Brooklyn NY

2008: *Who's Hungry?*

- **September 28-October 3** - Flynn Center for the Performing Arts in Burlington VT
- **June 9-14** - presented by **City of West Hollywood** at Plummer Park's The Great Hall

2006: *Shlammer*

- **March 11 & 12** - Colony Theater in Miami Beach FL

2005: *Shlammer*

- **March 30 – April 2** - Dance Theater Workshop in NYC



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Selected Press (click for full article)

[New York Times - *Pang!* Podcast review](#)

[Vineyard Gazette – *Pang!* review](#)

[Little Village \(Cedar Rapids\) – *Pang!* review](#)

[Capital and Main \(L.A.\) – *Pang!* preview](#)

[Arts Fuse \(Boston\) – *Who's Hungry* review](#)

[Ecumenica \(journal\) – *Who's Hungry* review](#)
[American Theater – *Who's Hungry* feature](#)

[New York Times – *Shlammer* review](#)

[Los Angeles Times – *Shlammer* review](#)

[Village Voice – *Shlammer* review](#)

[Backstage – *Shlammer* review](#)

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Pang!



Who's Hungry



Shlammer

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