

Dominic Shodekeh Talifero

Vodalities: Paradigms of
Consciousness for the Human Voice

Vodalities: Paradigms of Consciousness for the Human Voice
was co-commissioned by the Caramoor Festival, Sō Percussion's New
Work Development Program, Bard Conservatory Percussion, Baylor
University Percussion, the University of Michigan Percussion,
and Vanderbilt University Percussion.

It received its world premiere on December 11, 2021, at Carnegie Hall.

Composer's Note:

Vodalities: Paradigms of Consciousness for the Human Voice

Vodalities: Paradigms of Consciousness for the Human Voice seeks to illuminate the different modalities of the vocal arts utilized by not only me, but vocalists the world over. Through three movements composed specifically for Sō Percussion, with each focused on the vocal modalities, or "vodalities" of Breath Art, Vocal Percussion & Beatboxing, Sō's challenge was to listen to, learn (& of course enjoy) each vocal movement, transcribe the pieces from a Hip Hop-based oral tradition construct to a system of western notation & finally through "technique transcription", figure out which physical, percussion-based instruments & which members of the ensemble using those tools would be best suited to play each element of the overall compositional structure.

In other words, welcome to the 21st century, where compositional paradigms & a synthesis of learning styles can take on a whole new reversal of impact, influence & imagination.

- I. "The Universality of Breath Art" (Dedicated to Bobby McFerrin)
- II. "The Genealogy of Vocal Percussion" (Dedicated to Ella Fitzgerald)
- III: "The Mathematics of Beatboxing" (Dedicated to Doug E. Fresh: The Original Human Beatbox.)

— Dominic Shodekeh Talifero

Editor's Note:

Shodekeh Talifero's *Vodalities: Paradigms of Consciousness for the Human Voice* was composed orally and transmitted to Sō Percussion through recordings. He originally sent us the three movements as completed performances and also as individual stems for transcribing each part. We then translated his vocal percussion sounds into physical percussion. The skill, creativity, and range of colors in Shodekeh's practice is astonishing. The only way to fully grasp this is to hear him perform, which is why it is essential to listen to the accompanying mp3s before building your own interpretation of the piece.

The notated score included here serves as both an archival document of Shodekeh's creation, and also as a reference for each group's unique performance. It does not need to be followed note-by-note. In fact, it does not need to be followed at all! Each group is welcome to download the recordings and build their version from scratch. We adapted it as a quartet, but other combinations are possible.

The notation leaves out many detailed instructions that would be expected in percussion music. I write high and low sounds, and usually give "x" noteheads when a hi-hat or metal sound is indicated, and normal noteheads for drum sounds. The second movement in particular is notated for as many voices as I was hearing on the recording, but neither the exact patterns or voicings need to be followed strictly.

We usually perform the work as a kind of concerto with Shodekeh as the soloist. He improvises along with our performance, which hews very closely to the score printed here. The piece can also be performed alone.

A note on movement three: our arrangement with Shodekeh for live performance has departed from his original recording. I have chosen to include the arrangement rather than a strict transcription of the recording.

- Adam Sliwinski

I: The Universality of Breath Art

Shodekeh Talifero⁵
arr. Sō Percussion

♩ = 100

Vary the color of this "hi-hat" line constantly, perhaps by slightly opening and closing the sound
1

Drum Set

3

Percussion

6

Percussion

9

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath

12

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath

15

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath

Detailed description: This musical score block covers measures 15, 16, and 17. The Percussion part consists of a continuous rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, and some notes with accents (>) in measures 15 and 17. The Short Breath part features a melodic line of eighth notes with accents, starting in measure 15 and continuing through measure 17. The High Breath part has a sustained note in measure 15, followed by a slur over two notes in measure 16, and another slur over two notes in measure 17. The Low Breath part has a sustained note in measure 15, followed by a slur over two notes in measure 16, and another slur over two notes in measure 17.

18

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath

Detailed description: This musical score block covers measures 18, 19, and 20. The Percussion part continues with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks and accents (>) in measures 18 and 20. The Short Breath part has a melodic line of eighth notes with accents, starting in measure 18 and continuing through measure 20. The High Breath part has a sustained note in measure 18, followed by a slur over two notes in measure 19, and another slur over two notes in measure 20. The Low Breath part has a sustained note in measure 18, followed by a slur over two notes in measure 19, and another slur over two notes in measure 20.

21

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath

24

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath

27

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath

30

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath

33

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath

Detailed description: This musical score consists of four staves. The top staff, labeled 'Percussion', features a series of rhythmic marks (crosses) above a staff line, indicating a steady, repetitive pattern. The second staff, 'Short Breath', contains a sequence of eighth notes with a dynamic accent (>) on the first note, followed by a final note with a breath mark (a curved line with a dot). The third staff, 'High Breath', shows a single note with a long, curved line underneath it, indicating a sustained breath. The bottom staff, 'Low Breath', also shows a single note with a long, curved line underneath it, indicating a sustained breath. A vertical bar line is placed between the first and second measures of the score. A circled number '33' is positioned at the top left, and a circled number '34' is at the top right.

II: The Geneology of Vocal Percussion

35 Find a tempo based on recording (Sō plays at about 90 BPM)

Percussion

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

p *mp*

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mp *mf*

Percussion

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mf *f*

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mf *f*

51

Percussion

53

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mp *f*

55

Percussion

57

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

p *mf*

59

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

61

Percussion

63

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mp

Musical score for measures 63-64. The Percussion part consists of a complex rhythmic pattern with asterisks above notes. The Sleigh Bells part consists of a simple quarter-note melody. The dynamic marking *mp* is present.

65

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

ff

p

3

Musical score for measures 65-66. The Percussion part continues with a complex rhythmic pattern. The Sleigh Bells part continues with a simple quarter-note melody. The dynamic marking *ff* is present. A *p* marking and a triplet marking *3* are also present.

67

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

pp

p

Musical score for measures 67-68. The Percussion part features a complex rhythmic pattern with accents and asterisks. The Sleigh Bells part features a simple quarter-note melody with accents. The dynamic marking *pp* is present. A *p* marking is also present.

69

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

Musical score for measures 69-70. The Percussion part continues with a complex rhythmic pattern. The Sleigh Bells part continues with a simple quarter-note melody. The dynamic marking *p* is present.

71

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

3

Musical score for measures 71-72. The Percussion part features a complex rhythmic pattern with accents, asterisks, and a triplet marking *3*. The Sleigh Bells part features a simple quarter-note melody with accents. The dynamic marking *p* is present.

73

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

75

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

p

78

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

81

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

p


83

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

85

Percussion

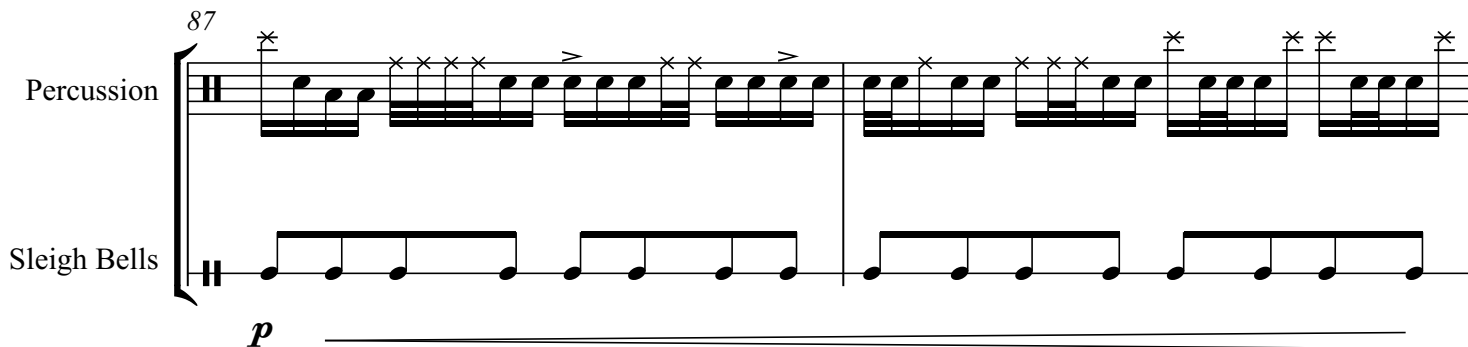


87

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

p

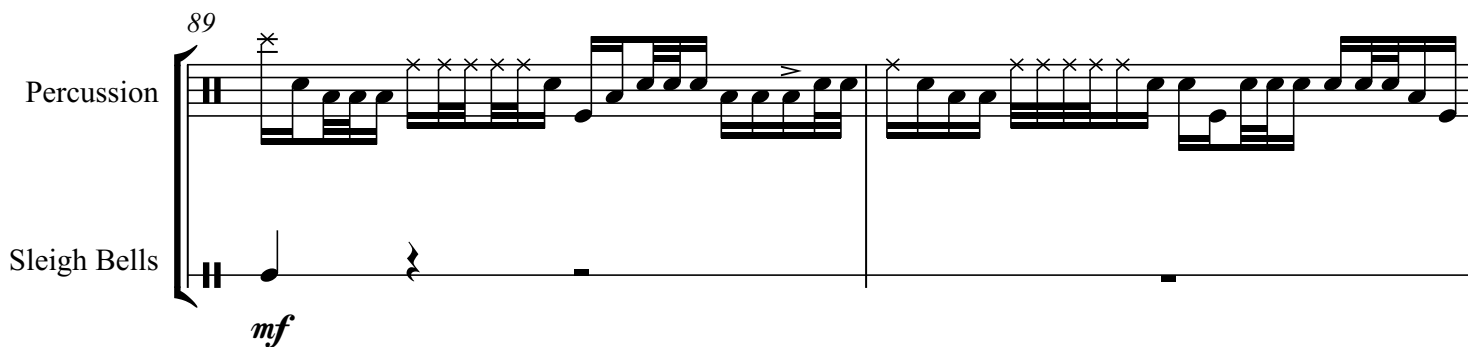


89

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mf

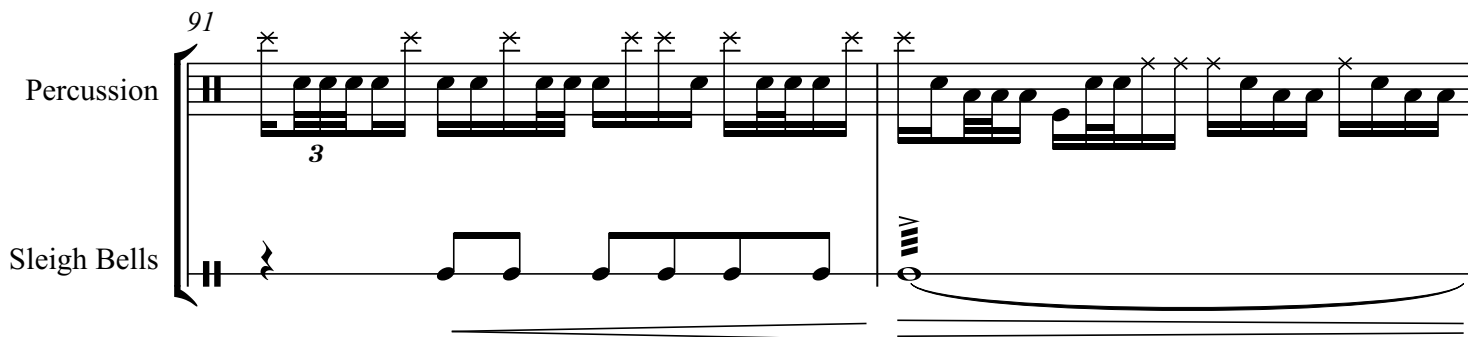


91

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mf

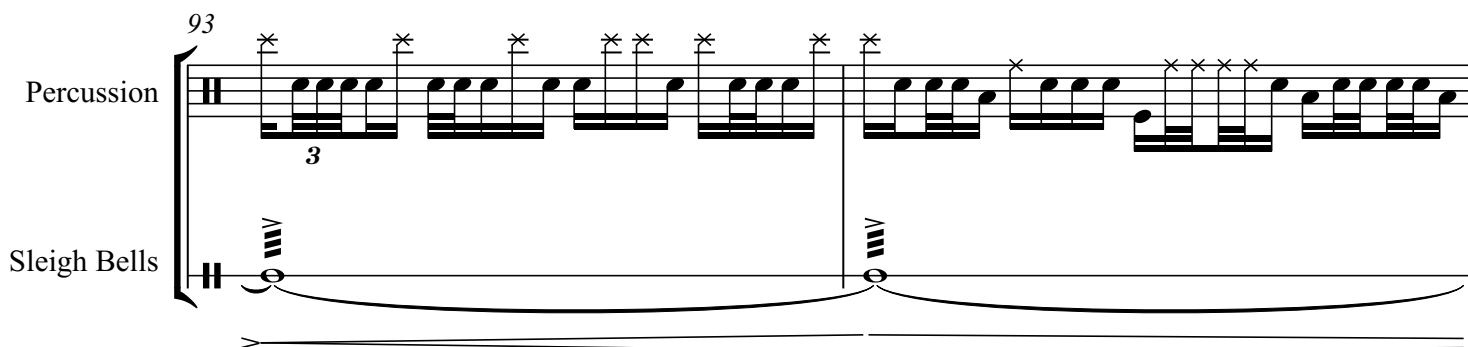


93

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mf



95

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

Measures 95-96. Percussion: eighth notes with asterisks. Sleigh Bells: sustained note with bell icon.

97

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mp

Measures 97-99. Percussion: eighth notes with asterisks and accents. Sleigh Bells: sustained note with bell icon and dynamic *mp*.

100

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mp

Measures 100-101. Percussion: eighth notes with asterisks. Sleigh Bells: sustained note with bell icon and dynamic *mp*.

102

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mp

Measures 102-103. Percussion: eighth notes with asterisks. Sleigh Bells: sustained note with bell icon and dynamic *mp*.

104

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

Measures 104-105. Percussion: eighth notes with asterisks. Sleigh Bells: sustained note with bell icon.

106

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

108

Percussion

110

Percussion

112

Percussion

115

Percussion

117

Percussion

119

Percussion

121

Percussion

123

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

125

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

127

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

129

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

131

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mp

133

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mf

135

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

mf

137

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

140

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

143

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

146

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

149

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

151

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

153

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

156

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

159

Percussion

Sleigh Bells

3

Detailed description: This musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Percussion' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Sleigh Bells'. The score covers measures 159, 160, 161, and 162. Measure 159 features a complex rhythmic pattern in the Percussion part with 'x' marks above notes and a triplet of eighth notes in the Sleigh Bells part. Measure 160 continues the Percussion pattern with 'x' marks and accents, while the Sleigh Bells part has two accented eighth notes. Measure 161 shows a similar Percussion pattern with accents and a Sleigh Bells part with two accented eighth notes. Measure 162 concludes with a Percussion part featuring accents and a Sleigh Bells part with four accented eighth notes. The number '159' is written above the first measure, and the number '3' is written below the first measure of the Sleigh Bells staff.

III: The Mathematics of Beatboxing

♩ = 140

Drum Set

Snare Drum

Record Player

Low Synth

sim.

168

Dr.

S. D.

172

Dr.

S. D.

176

Dr.

S. D.

179

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

Detailed description: This system covers measures 179 to 182. The Drums (Dr.) part features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. The Snare Drum (S. D.) part is mostly silent, with a single eighth note and a quarter note appearing in measure 182. The Low Synth part consists of a sustained low-frequency note that begins in measure 182 and continues through the end of the system.

183

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

Detailed description: This system covers measures 183 to 186. The Drums (Dr.) part continues with eighth notes and cymbal hits, but includes some variations in the pattern, such as a quarter note in measure 183 and accents in measures 184 and 185. The Snare Drum (S. D.) part plays a steady eighth-note pattern throughout. The Low Synth part features a sustained low-frequency note with a slight pitch bend or modulation in measure 185.

187

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

Detailed description: This system covers measures 187 to 190. The Drums (Dr.) part maintains the eighth-note pattern with cymbal hits. The Snare Drum (S. D.) part continues with eighth notes, including some triplets in measure 188. The Low Synth part remains a sustained low-frequency note with a slight modulation in measure 189.

191

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

This system covers measures 191 to 194. The Drums part features a complex pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. The Snare Drum part consists of a steady eighth-note pattern. The Low Synth part has a sustained low note with a tremolo effect, indicated by a wavy line under the note.

195

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

This system covers measures 195 to 198. The Drums part continues with eighth notes and cymbal hits. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 197. The Snare Drum part continues with eighth notes. The Low Synth part has a sustained low note with a tremolo effect.

199

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

This system covers measures 199 to 201. The Drums part features eighth notes with cymbal hits and some notes with accents (>). The Snare Drum part continues with eighth notes. The Low Synth part is mostly silent, with only a few notes visible.

202

Dr.

S. D.

This system covers measures 202 to 205. The Drums part features eighth notes with cymbal hits and notes with accents (>). The Snare Drum part continues with eighth notes.

205

Dr.

S. D.

This system covers measures 205 to 207. The drum part (Dr.) features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating cymbal hits. The snare drum part (S. D.) consists of eighth notes with a double bar line and a sharp sign (F#) above the notes in measures 205 and 206, and a single bar line and sharp sign (F#) above the notes in measure 207.

208

Dr.

S. D.

This system covers measures 208 to 210. The drum part (Dr.) continues with eighth notes and cymbal hits. The snare drum part (S. D.) has a double bar line and sharp sign (F#) above the notes in measure 208, a single bar line and sharp sign (F#) above the notes in measure 209, and eighth notes with a sharp sign (F#) above the notes in measure 210. A large slur is present under the S. D. part, spanning from the end of measure 208 to the end of measure 210.

211

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

This system covers measures 211 to 214. The drum part (Dr.) has eighth notes with cymbal hits. The snare drum part (S. D.) has eighth notes with a sharp sign (F#) above the notes in measure 214. The Low Synth part has a single note with a sharp sign (F#) above it in measure 214. A large slur is present under the Low Synth part, spanning from the end of measure 211 to the end of measure 214.

215

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

This system covers measures 215 to 218. The drum part (Dr.) has eighth notes with cymbal hits. The snare drum part (S. D.) has eighth notes with a sharp sign (F#) above the notes in measure 218. The Low Synth part has a single note with a sharp sign (F#) above it in measure 218. A large slur is present under the Low Synth part, spanning from the end of measure 215 to the end of measure 218.

218

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

IV

Detailed description: This system contains measures 218, 219, and 220. The Drums part features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, and occasional accents. The Snare Drum part plays a steady eighth-note pattern. The Low Synth part consists of a single sustained note per measure, indicated by a long horizontal line with a slur underneath.

221

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

V

Detailed description: This system contains measures 221, 222, and 223. The Drums part continues with eighth notes and accents, with a 'V' marking above the first measure. The Snare Drum part has a long rest in measure 221, followed by eighth notes in measures 222 and 223. The Low Synth part has a dotted quarter note in measure 221, a rest in measure 222, and a sustained note in measure 223.

224

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

V

Detailed description: This system contains measures 224, 225, and 226. The Drums part continues with eighth notes and accents, with a 'V' marking above the first measure. The Snare Drum part plays eighth notes throughout. The Low Synth part has a sustained note in measure 224, a dotted quarter note in measure 225, a rest in measure 226, and a sustained note in measure 227.

227 drag tsa

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

230 Repeat ad lib. for solos

Dr.

S. D.

234 F

Dr.

S. D.

238 F

Dr.

S. D.

242 F

Dr.

S. D.

More solos, only repeat once

246

Dr.

S. D.

250

Dr.

S. D.

254

Dr.

S. D.

258

Dr.

S. D.

262 repeat ad lib. D.C. al coda $\text{\textcircled{O}}$

Dr.

p

266

Dr.

270

Dr.

274

Dr.

pp

277

Dr.

Record Player

winding down...

Starting at m. 271, ad lib. call and response between performers, and possibly with audience.

At m. 275, all performers decrescendo to almost nothing, then build back up to a climactic finish.

Piece ends with the record player alone.

About Shodekeh Talifero

With 36 years of personal, professional, and community-based experience, Dominic “Shodekeh” Talifero continues to make musical strides as a groundbreaking and highly adept Beatboxer, Vocal Percussionist and Breath Artist who pushes the boundaries of the human voice within and outside the context of Hip Hop music and culture. As the first vocal percussionist to do so, he formally served as a dance technique musician and composer-in-residence for Towson University’s Department of Dance for 12 years and is the founding director of Embody, A Festival Series of the Vocal Arts, which strives for artistic and cultural convergence through a variety of vocal art traditions from a multitude of worlds such as opera and Tuvan throat singing, to the many forms of vocal percussion, which has featured such vocal luminaries as Madison McFerrin, Alash Ensemble, Dan Deacon, Raul Midon, and Joyce J. Scott.

Beatboxing is a form of vocal percussion born within the world of Hip Hop, and easily exists as one the most highly advanced vocal art forms known within the diversity of the human voice. Imitating and often replacing a drum set, drum machine, or drum loop through a series of vocal effects or percussive sounds primarily produced by the larynx, nasal, oral and chest cavities, Beatboxing exemplifies the Hip Hop philosophy of creating meaningful artistic expressions with limited resources at its most extreme; it replaces the source of the timeless break beat with the human voice, becoming a ubiquitous and indigenous feature of the African American city experience and soundscape.

Shodekeh recently served as TU's very first Innovator-in-Residence from 2019 - 2022, a historic designation which was anchored by the College of Fine Arts & Communication, allowing him lecture, collaborate, experiment, compose, perform and conduct research within the departments of Music, Art + Design/Art History/Art Education, Dance, Communication Studies, Electronic Media + Film, Mass Communication, Theatre Arts, Arts Integration & Interdisciplinary Arts Infusion, as well as the Asian Arts & Culture Center of TU, the TU Community Art Center, TU Community Dance & the TU Center For The Arts MFA & Main Gallery.

In previous years Talifero served as music faculty of the American Dance Festival at Duke University and has served as the chosen musician for a variety of master class experiences led by such luminaries as Ailey II of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the Paul Taylor American Modern Dance Ensemble, and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. In his close relationship with the world of dance, he has acquired a wealth of experiences of applying his vocal and rhythmic skills in the movement context of ballet, capoeira, fire movement, belly dancing and a wide range of modern dance techniques created by such legends as Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham, and Lester Horton.

This deeply synthesized relationship with dance, which began in 2006 has also played a tremendous role in Shodekeh's sustained & pioneering development of 'Breath Art', which is essentially the deep practice and extensive research of isolated creative breathing techniques and methods maintained within the musical and kinesthetic modalities of universal human vocal expression. This deep artistic and philosophical practice and ongoing research of "Breath Art" are greatly exemplified in the recent commissions of original compositional work for the Covid-19 sculptures created by Rebecca Kamen for the 2021 exhibition "Reveal" at the American University Museum in Washington DC and his cymatic / sound art composition "Vymatics" for the 2022 world premiere event of "Voyages", a brand new immersive science communication series based at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, MD.

Over the years, Talifero has evolved and moved through the world as a musical ambassador from Beatboxing's Hip Hop roots to explore innovative and convergent cultural collaborations with a wide range of traditional and classical artists. He serves as the Beatboxer and vocal percussionist for the globally renown Alash Ensemble, one of the world's leading Tuvan Throat Singing ensembles from Southern Siberia, and features as a guest artist on their Smithsonian Folkways album release "Achai", as well as a co-curator and executive producer on the recently released album "Embodiments" with Bady Dorzhu Ondar of Alash, which is the first full album of Traditional Tuvan Throat Singing and Hip Hop fusion; has become a regular collaborator with the magnificent percussion and rhythm ensemble So Percussion based at Princeton University, with whom he composed for during Shodekeh's historic Carnegie Hall debut in 2021.

One of Shodekeh's most recent and by far bravest endeavor has been the recent establishment of his own collection and living archive with the Towson University Special Collections and University Archives in 2021, which is entitled "Ideations of Potential: Shodekeh's Innovation Lab of Embodied Scholarship & Hip Hop Imagination". This lifelong collaboration is the first Hip Hop-based archive created in the state of Maryland and the first Beatbox / Breath Art driven archive instituted in the world, with the expressed and dedicated mission of maximizing the collection as a platform for raising awareness on the epidemic of black youth suicide and ideation.