ONE BOY'S DAY
CONCEIVED, WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MIKEL ROUSE

Based on the book ONE BOY'S DAY
A Specimen Record of Behavior By Roger G. Barker and Herbert F. Wright
On April 26, 1949, eight observers from Roger Barker’s Midwest Psychological Field Station, armed with timers and clipboards, working in half-hour shifts, assembled a minute-by-minute account of an ordinary day in the life of an ordinary boy in rural Kansas. Harper and Row published the report in 1951 as One Boy’s Day.

In writing about One Boy’s Day, the New York Times enthusiastically reported how Barker and his colleagues “brought child psychology out of the laboratory to study children in their natural habitat, much as a botanist goes into the fields to study flowers.”

The citizens of Oskaloosa, KS gave the researchers near unlimited access to their lives. Barker writes in the preface to One Boy’s Day that the book “marks... a milestone in the degree of participation of a whole community in a scientific undertaking.”
The book contains many references to the theater. The town is described as “a stage upon which Raymond Birch (all names in the record are fictitious) played his roles”. The parts of Raymond’s day are listed as “scenes” and the family, neighbors and friends are itemized as if in a playbill program.

In addition, in Barker’s Introduction, he suggests that along with social scientists “artists and laymen who are interested in the contemporary scene also may find [the record] of value”.

Plate 5. . . . sauntered cater-cornered across the intersecti the courthouse.

Plate 22. . . . rode slowly toward the grocery store.

The book includes meticulous photos and diagrams of all the locations of Raymond Birche’s day as well as noting the entrance and exit of both the observers and characters.

THE ENTIRE RECORD LASTS FOR 13 HOURS AND 33 MINUTES AND UTILIZING THIS ‘TIME BASE’, ONE BOY’S DAY WILL OFFER A RETROGRADE APPROACH TO BOTH THE MUSIC FORM AND THE DEPICTION OF THE SCENES WHEREIN WHAT’S PAST IS PRESENT AND WHAT’S PRESENT IS PROLOGUE.

Before School

I suddenly realized that he had been playing an imaginary game of baseball with himself and that where he had dropped the bat was home plate.

Raymond lay in the grass for a minute, until he recovered his breath.

In this position he glanced up at me, as if to see whether I realized what a good game this had been.

8:24. He jumped up with a stone in his hand, threw it into the air, and fanned at it with the bat.

He hit the stone and yelled in a very surprised tone, "Hit it!"

As he swung the bat around, it accidentally hit the metal flagpole.

This made a wonderful, hollow, ringing noise, so he proceeded to hit the flagpole again.

8:25. He went around and around and around the pole, hitting it with the bat as he did so, until he became so dizzy that he fell down, bat and all. (See Plate 7.)

As soon as he got his bearings, he leaped up.

He hit the flagpole harder and harder, rhythmically, and, as he hit it harder, he went faster and faster around the pole.

He fanned the air with the bat, missing a beat or two.

He hit the flagpole again and again.

8:26. Mr. Frank Pechter came out of the courthouse and said, "Hi," to me.

Raymond looked at Mr. Pechter and abruptly stopped hitting the flagpole.

Instrumental forces include electronic and sequenced material precisely formatted to the time-code of the 13 hour 33 minute installation accompanied by live instrumentalists and singers. Musical performers will mirror the original eight observers and switch positions in tag-team fashion every half-hour. Libretto and sung/spoken material will be derived from the actual text of the observers.

Live performance is mirrored by four distinct films either capturing or simulating the same 13-hour experience depicted in One Boy’s Day. These films will be captured ‘Live’ in the Digital Playground.

The Playground consists of ‘Mini Film Locations’ taken from the diagrams in the record. These sets will surround two large video cubes which will depict the live action from the Playground.
There is a wonderful universality that the book captures in depicting a young American boy growing up in 1949. It will be interesting to contrast this with images from the world of today, hopefully using both urban and non-urban settings. The Video cubes will provide a glimpse of the surrounding scene while also providing the musician's platforms.

Within this setting, class field trips will be encouraged and local parents, teachers and schools will collaborate with the artists to create a ‘real-time’ multi-media playground. In this participatory collaboration, the piece will echo the community involvement of Oskaloosa, KS.

Presentation will take place in those performing arts facilities that feature long-form installation as well as museums and alternative spaces. As with previous installations, the piece will be modular and scalable in order to accommodate a variety of performance venues.
ONE BOY’S DAY CREATIVE TEAM:

Conceived, written and directed by Mikel Rouse
Set and Production design by Jim Findlay
Set & Projection design by Jeffery Sugg
Set and Prop Design/creation by Jim Hayes
Sound design by Christopher Ericson
Lighting design by Hideaki Tsutsui
Musical direction by Matthew Gandolfo
Production Manager - William Knapp

PRODUCING PARTNERS AND SUPPORT:

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts,
Urbana, IL

Fusebox Festival
Austin, TX

Chad Herzog
MIKEL ROUSE

Mikel Rouse is a New York-based composer, director, performer and recording artist hailed as “a composer many believe to be the best of his generation.” (NY Times) His works include 32 records, 7 films, and a trilogy of media operas: Failing Kansas, Dennis Cleveland and The End Of Cinematics. His work has frequently appeared on Top Ten lists around the country.

In 1995, Rouse premiered and directed the first opera in his trilogy: Failing Kansas, inspired by Truman Capote’s In Cold Blood. This led to an emerging art form he calls “counterpoetry,” which involves the use of multiple unpitched voices in counterpoint. In 1996 Mr. Rouse premiered and directed the modern talk show opera Dennis Cleveland, hailed by The Village Voice as “the most exciting and innovative new opera since Einstein on the Beach”. The third opera in his trilogy, The End Of Cinematics, was presented at the BAM Next Wave Festival in 2006.

An innovator in arts technology, Rouse was the first Visiting Research Artist at the Center for Super Computing Applications in Urbana IL. Music for The Merce Cunningham Dance Company’s eyeSpace premiered in NYC in October 2006. The piece was scored for multiple iPods set to “shuffle” so that each audience member had a different realization of the score. The music for the piece, International Cloud Atlas, was released on iTunes and was available for download prior to the premiere.

Recent premieres include Gravity Radio at BAM’s next Wave Festival (2010) and The Demo at Stanford Live, CA (2015), a techno opera based on Douglas Engelbart’s landmark 1968 computer demo. In 2016 Rouse released Metronome-Take Down hailed by Pitchfork as ‘Slippery like Radiohead’s “Daydreaming”—and as chaotically clattering as work by Oneohtrix Point Never—it reestablishes Rouse’s brilliance.’