



**Memory & Trauma WG  
+  
WG Witnessing  
Virtual Work-in-Progress  
Sessions, Fall 2023**

Join us at <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/87697106647?pwd=T3NXbjNSc0YxbmNPMFR3QzNkOXILZz09>

Scholars share current work-in-progress in the fields of Memory Studies and trauma Studies (Memory Studies Association), with discussion and helpful insights to follow. All are welcome.

December 13, 2023 at 9:00 am EST (6:00 am in Kamloops!)

Presenters: Yumi Notohara and Tyler Wertsch

**Yumi Notohara: Echoes of War: Exploring the Memory Through Hiroshima's A-Bombed Musical Instruments**

**Abstract:** This presentation discusses the cultural and peace education roles of the musical instruments that survived the devastation of war in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, known as the A-bombed musical instruments. These instruments, particularly pianos, gained significant attention after one was restored and made playable for the public in the late 1990s (Yagawa, 2010). Their impact extended to events such as the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in Oslo when the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) was awarded for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017. Beyond musicians, these instruments have inspired writers to incorporate them into novels, children's stories, and films (Notohara, 2021).

This surge in attention coincides with a decline in the number of A-bombed survivors, underscoring the pivotal role played by the instruments themselves as "witnesses to the war." However, the paper raises pertinent questions: Can these instruments fulfill the same testimonial roles as the survivor of war? Do they possess a historical significance distinct from other relics or remnants? Can inanimate material effectively convey the memory of war?



This paper explores not only the musical roles but also the cultural and peace educational significance of these surviving instruments, drawing from A. Assmann's memory study (1999) and N. Saunders' trench art study (2003). The following two stories will be examined: (1) the film, "Hiroshima Piano" (2020); and (2) the children's story, "Lagrima Ga Kikoeru (The Sound of the 'Lagrima')" (2020), featuring the Hibaku Guitar."

**Bio:** Yumi Notohara (Ph D Hiroshima University) is currently an associated professor (part-time) at Osaka College of Music in Japan. She has been engaged in music related with the a-bombed city Hiroshima for more than 25 years. Under the theme, she published the book titled "Hiroshima Ga Narihikikutoki (The Sound of Hiroshima)" in 2015 and some papers such as "Musical Narrative in Representing Hiroshima: Erkki Aaltonen's Second Symphony 'Hiroshima' (1949)" (written in English) in 2017, "Hiroshima' in Music: Narratives and Memoirs of Survivors" (written in Japanese) in 2018, and "Sounds' of the Atomic Bomb from Survivor Testimonies" (written in Japanese) in 2023.

**Tyler Wertsch:** Remembering at the Intersections: Synthetic Memory, Affect, and Political Anxieties in Popular Cultural Texts

**Abstract:** I am interested in exploring how the emotional dimensions and weight of memory can be transferred, combined, or conflated with other salient mnemonic narratives in order to create complex sites of remembering in popular texts. In my writing so far, I have referred to this phenomenon as "synthetic memory" (both because it is the synthesis of multiple parts but also due to its artificial nature). I am using the recent film *Rambo: Last Blood* to explore how American memory of Vietnam, complete with attendant details such as PTSD, depression, and a focus on lost innocence. I am particularly interested in how this film combines memory of Vietnam by use of extensive signifiers and an extant intellectual property with more contemporary American Anxieties regarding the US/Mexico border and racialized tropes of sex trafficking. This textual exploration and accompanying theoretical analysis will form the basis of one a dissertation chapter in which I propose and apply the concept of synthetic memory and explore how texts can be syncretised to invoke affect.

**Bio:** Tyler Wertsch is a PhD candidate in American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. His interest in memory and comparative narratives in culturally salient texts grew out of his study and work experience in Japan, Korea, the United States, and Azerbaijan. He is currently writing his dissertation on how popular military shooter video games engender ethnonationalism in American memory through strategic design elements and conflation of disparate narratives.