

“C Ce See” Mvmt. I: *Rising* by Niloufar Nourbaksh

“C Ce See” is inspired by the legacy of dear Cece Wasserman who has affected and lifted so many arts organizations and composers (especially female composers) in the new music scene. The foundation for this piece therefore is to make our connections to one another physically visible. For this purpose, a kinetic structure is designed by my collaborator, Roxanne Nesbitt, and the score is written for this sculpture that intertwines the ensemble into a single unit. The piece also addresses questions about connection through the lens of responsibility and freedom.

From *Four Poems of Nikita Gill*, composed by Melissa Dunphy

Melissa Dunphy's *Four Poems of Nikita Gill* present vignettes on a woman (or multiple women) at various stages of trauma, healing, and in the end "becoming fire." The empowering song cycle was commissioned by Dr. Carol Lines through a Juliet Hardtner Endowed Professorship, McNeese State University.

“And you shall know the brilliance of the dawn” by Niloufar Nourbaksh

In the 20th and 21st century, we have seen the steady progress of gender equality in different aspects of life. Despite this progress, the situation of women in the middle east has always been a fragile one. My piece is a wave that carries on the feminist revolution that has sparked in our region in the middle east, heralding a new era to come. I hope this piece can serve as an invitation to support women in Iran and Afghanistan by becoming active learners.

“Kintsugi” by Anne Goldberg-Baldwin (*world premiere*)

Kintsugi is an ancient Japanese tradition of repairing broken pottery in which broken pieces are welded back together with gold lacquer. The artform becomes a greater symbol of healing, beautifying an object that has been broken and repaired. It encourages the beholder to seek to repair instead of discard objects, and to embrace the beauty of imperfection. This philosophy extends to our sense of embracing our own imperfections and finding the beauty in healing after trauma and hurt.

notes by Anne Goldberg-Baldwin

“Conversations” by Lisa Weiss

I wrote this piece in response to a request for collaborative works for a traveling art show some time ago. I modeled its form off of both a Scarlatti sonata and a series of images by Howie Weiss. His series is about variations of a single symmetrical image and the Scarlatti also moves two measures at a time, slightly varying the core material in a very symmetrical way. At the various museums it travelled to, I had a miniature grand piano attached to a wooden platform that hung on the wall, with a headset so you could listen to the piece, and photos of both the Scarlatti score with Howie's images and my original handwritten score.

Solitary Confinement Aria from the opera *We the Innumerable*, by Niloufar Nourbakhsh
About *We the Innumerable*: After the 2009 presidential election in Tehran, Iran, Roya and her husband, Siavash, become targets of the state for participating in nationwide protests against the election result. Siavash is murdered, and Roya is imprisoned and put under extreme pressure to record a confessional stating that her husband was a Revolutionary Guard force who was killed by the enemies of the state. The opera is the heroic journey of an Iranian woman who **protects the truth in the face of fear and violence**.

“Anybody’s Angel” by Eddie Byrne (*world premiere*)

Inspired by James Joyce’s *Dubliners*, the songs of *Anybody’s Angel* portray characters who, unable to move forward, turn inward. Joyce’s characters are shown in moments of tender reflection which, though ordinary, reveal a deep center of spiritual mystery. Sibling duo Corrine Byrne and Jack Byrne perform songs written by their brother Eddie Byrne, which are inextricable from their shared experience of loss as a family, and their immersion in– and alienation from– their Irish heritage. The Irish folk music tradition, in all its drunken joyfulness, sets a challenging backdrop for Joyce’s mournful stories of grief and faith, and the ghosts of this old music are heard through *Anybody’s Angel*.

notes by Eddie Byrne

“Dawn” by Niloufar Nourbakhsh

Dawn is a selection of three excerpts from “let us believe in the dawn of a cold season” by Forugh Farrokhzad, a trailblazing feminist in Persian literature.

I understand this poem as a reckoning with the universal truth of all human beings; that one day we shall all be dead; to truly come to terms with this universal truth and embrace it with delight: to live one’s life like it is the last day, everyday.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Four Poems on Nikita Gill by Melissa Dunphy

I. Sorcery

for Lindsey Bower

Every day I magic myself alive again
from the near death experience of
trauma.
I swallow my heart back from
the lump it has become in my throat.
I taste my own memories
without the flavour of blood but as
poetry.
I learn how to whisper my name

without it sounding like a curse.
I murmur spells to the parts of me
others have found too dangerous to love.
And after this morning ritual
I finally smile at the woman in my mirror.
Tell me again,
how healing is not a magical thing.
Tell me again,
how I am not made of sorcery.

II. From The Ashes She Became

for Lara Connally

Before she became fire, she was water.
Quenching the thirst of every dying
creature.
She gave and she gave
until she turned from sea to desert.

But instead of dying of the heat,
the sadness, the heartache,
she took all of her pain
and from her own ashes became fire.

III. You Have Become a Forest

for Emily Lancon

One day when you wake up, you will find that you
have become a forest. You have grown roots and
found strength in them that no one thought you
had. You have become stronger and more beautiful,
full of life giving qualities. You have learned to take
all the negativity around you and turn it into
oxygen for easy breathing. A host of wild creatures
live inside you and you call them stories. A variety
of beautiful birds rest inside your mind and you call
them memories. You have become an incredible self
sustaining thing of epic proportions. And you
should be so proud of yourself, of how far you have
come from the seeds of who you used to be.

Kintsugi (2024)

Text by Anne Goldberg-Baldwin

Gold filagree
glinting, glistening, smelted,
scalding, coagulating in each crevice and
fissure,
trickles into the voids and rents,
binding together
the shattered fragments,
adorning my wounds
in royalty.

It crowns my imperfections
frames the fractures and seams
I am assembled anew,
revived but forever reminded,
fragments on display.
The fractures allow the beauty to seep
through.

Dawn by Niloufar Nourbakhsh

Text: Forugh Farrokhzad

Translations from Sin: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad, edited and translated
by Sholeh Wolpé (University of Arkansas Press)

PART I

And here I am,
و این منم

زمان گذشت و ساعت چهار بار نواخت

A lonely woman
زنی تنها

Four times.
ساعت چهار بار نواخت
Today is winter solstice
امروز روز اول دی ماه است

On the threshold of a cold season
در آستانه فصلی سرد

And I know the secret of seasons,
من راز فصل‌ها را می‌دانم

At the dawn of realizing earth's sullied
existence
در ابتدای درک هستی آلوده زمین

Know the language of moments.
و حرف لحظه‌ها را می‌فهمم

And the sky's blue despair
و یأس ساده و غمناک آسمان

The messiah sleeps in a grave
نجات‌دهنده در گور خفته‌است

And the impotence of these hands made of
cement.
و ناتوانی این دست‌های سیمانی

And the earth - the hospitable earth -
و خاک، خاک پذیرنده

Time passed.
زمان گذشت

Beckons one to serenity.
اشارت‌ت‌ست به آرامش

Time passed and the clock struck four
times.

Time passed and the clock struck four
times.
زمان گذشت و ساعت چهار بار نواخت

PART II

The wind blows in the alley.

در کوچه باد می آید

The wind blows in the alley,

در کوچه باد می آید

and I think of the flowers' mating,

و من به جفت‌گیری گل‌ها می‌اندیشم

their slender, anemic blossoms

به غنچه‌هایی با ساقه‌های لاغر کم خون

and this tired tubercular age.

و این زمان خسته مسلول.

A man passes by the wet trees,

و مردی از کنار درختان خیس می‌گذرد

a man whose strings of blue veins

مردی که رشته‌های آبی رگ‌هایش

are dead snakes wrapped about

مانند مارهای مرده از دو سوی گلوگاهش

his throat, pounding his angry temples

with those bloodied syllables:

بالا خزیده‌اند و در شقیقه‌های منقلبش آن هجای خونین را تکرار میکنند

Salaam.

Salaam.

سلام

سلام

And I think of the flowers' mating.

و من به جفت‌گیری گل‌ها می‌اندیشم

PART III

Will I ever again comb my hair with the wind?

آیا دوباره گیسوانم را در باد شانه خواهم زد؟

Will I ever again plant purple pansies in the garden,

آیا دوباره باغچه‌ها را بنفشه خواهم کاشت؟

or set geraniums in the sky behind the windowpane?

و شمعدانی‌ها را

در آسمان پشت پنجره خواهم گذاشت؟

Will I ever again dance in the faces of wine glasses?

آیا دوباره روی لیوان‌ها خواهم رقصید؟

Will I ever again wait anticipating the door bell's chime?

آیا دوباره زنگ در مرا بسوی انتظار صدا خواهد برد؟

I told my mother: This is the end.

به مادرم گفتم: «دیگر تمام شد» .

Before you know it, it shall happen;

گفتم: «همیشه پیش از آنکه فکر کنی اتفاق می‌افتد»

We The Innumerable by Niloufar Nourbakhsh

SCENE III: Solitary Confinement, Libretto by Lisa Flanagan

ROYA: Would they even tell my mother
that I'm dead?
Maybe they already have. Maybe I already
am.
Whatever I say, Siavash will still be dead.
Lay Lalay Lay

Does it matter then?
A little lie they're happy to pry out tooth by
tooth.

Roya's mother: Lay nemamî jiyanim.
Min wêney baxewanim
Be dill çawdêrît ekem.
Bixewey derdit le giyanim

Drag my mother and brother into cells
too!

I want to go home!
I won't listen to the shouts
I will go home. I will be quiet.

Anybody's Angel by Eddie Byrne

I. Irish Song

If I got you to play that one
That old irish song
I'll get band to play along
Just give me the key

Oh don't you remember one
Of them good old Irish songs
We always sang the Gaelic wrong
Get caught up and disagree

It seems we're always able
To get a long happy table
To act like it is attainable
Brush it off and get along

I promised that I'll be around more
you found papa by the wooden door
he fell down like sycamore
when he watered the lawn

And falling apart at the same damn song
And no one knew where it's coming from

But someone's hitting the rim of the
drum
Over rivers and the years

The first Christmas without you
We didn't talk about you
We sang around Johnny McEldoo
and all got sore in the tooth

And like many good catholics
We got it down to a practice
Singing joy in the black abyss
And never showing the truth

And I'll pull off of the highway
And into the driveway
And lay around all Saturday
Until you tune up the strings

And we'll get a good singalong
And we can drink until the drink is gone
And we'll sing that old old song
Or we can sing anything

II. Anybody's Angel

I keep bumping into tables and it kills,
friend
And the medicine can only make it
different
I was trying to remember what the date is
It was written on my doctors office
bracelet
I'm too wounded to be anything but
weightless

It was always you, the sacrificial victim

Been preparing for the moment you'd be
with Him
You got everything you wanted but you're
still scared
Now your fingernails are clutching in the
kitchen

And in the hall I overheard another
stranger
Say you die to be somebody's guardian
angel
I'm too wounded to be anybody's angel

III. Judgement Day

I'm gonna clear all of the sugar from the
bottom of the drain
Hold the thing within me that I'll never
hold again
And go over all the same songs in the
back of the same train
Lord, you should have seen the scene I'm
in

I'll travel backwards through the shadow
of the shadow of the room
Rest up at the crest again just like I did
with you
And then I'll sugarcoat a comfort that I
came all this way through
Singing Lord, you should have seen the
scene I'm in

And when you finally leave
Take me into your pillowy beak

I'm gonna jumble all the forty something
words of the Lord's prayer
Stick em back together, see if
something's sitting there
And then I'll go on without supper, 40
nights in the same chair
Singing Lord, you shoulda seen the shape
I'm in

And when you finally leave
Take a running leap
Over the fires of the beast

And if its judgement day
Baby judge away
We all know what you're gonna say

IV. Diagnosis

Face the town that I burn through
Pace the ground I'll return to
Chose to sanctify that room
Where you liquified the moon
I don't know who would have chose this
I deny the diagnosis
Staring straight and bearing teeth
Throw the roses in the creeks

Knucklebones, a game of chance
Painted herons in a dance
I know it's looking atrocious
But you can defy the diagnosis

I'm carrying your kids
Whisper goodnight to diagnosis

V. Lambabaun

Lambabaun Lambabaun, place your palm round my thumb
Little river, little wind
glitter flickering
Tried to listen when you say
send the wild wolf away
But now theres nothing they can do
nothing they can do

Lambabaun, lambabaun
Place the balm with your thumb
Round your tender little wrist
The tender littlest
I read the marks on the moon
And the salt around the room
And theres no record there of you
No record there of you

Oh the cold wind's coming
And the wild wolf is calling
The bibles bound in cruel skin never said
What's in your head

Little one, happy song, Lamb of All, gentle fawn
Wanna hear you up the stairs
brush the snowfall from your hair
And though the world is getting cold
Though fires have been told
Take a blanket over you
Blanket over you

Oh the cold wind's coming
And the red red wolf is howling
I'm in the driveway warming up the car
And there you are