

PROGRAM NOTES AND TRANSLATIONS

Betsy Jolas - *Mon ami* (1974)

Poet: Betsy Jolas

Savez-vous qui est mon ami?

*Du Nord au Midi, toujours il me suit,
jamais ne s'en fuit*

*Savez-vous qui est mon ami?
C'est l'écho de la montagne*

*Tout ce que je dis, toujours il redit,
rien ne contredit*

*Savez-vous qui est mon ami?
C'est l'écho de la montagne*

My friend

Do you know who is my friend?

From north to south, always follows me,
never flees

Do you know who is my friend?
It is the echo of the mountain

Everything I say, always re-states,
never contradicts

Do you know who is my friend?
It is the echo of the mountain.

This work exists in several forms - for this performance, I will perform the first of 4 "versions" - the simplest. Meant for treble-voiced pianist (child or adult), I enjoy the subtle use of piano string-resonance in Jolas' depiction of the echo.

David Reminick - *Shoshana* (2014)

Poet: Gabriele Zapata-Alma

I. Spina

Needle flesh, so that none may nibble
Without knowing the pain of warmth.
Desert-deserted, left looking, longing
For that wet navel that rests amongst four.
Fear and loneliness, companions mine
Sharp points borne out of a sandy eye
Sky without cloud, through fragrance swirls
Invite soft maiden fingers-plucking me home.

II. Petalo

Roza-oh! Caressing your china bone cheek
Slowly rolls a hot thing, splashing amidst love's
Sanguine lessons. Layered, folding deep
And dank-let ten and three part
As maiden blush and flowing sea
Revealing one canvas, sand skin cheek
Coyly calling, through fragrant sighs
When smelt, brings the soul to paradise

This brief work approaches virtuosic solo-voice writing with a sense of warmth and playfulness that makes *Shoshana* a joy to perform. Breath, ingressive and egressive whistling, and a variety of vocal timbres assist in evoking aural manifestations of the stunning imagery within the text.

Natasha Anderson - *More* (2015)

"More is a fractured intermingling of situated relations to a female self. It uses fragments of the now axiomatically popular medieval song from Martin Codax, 'Ondas do mar de Vigo', in which a Galician fisherman's wife longs for her husband, yet to return from sea. Other text is triggered by inmates accounts of the institutionalised, gendered abuse dished out at the Hay Institution for Girls. More also conjures forth the voice of Anneliese Michel, a young German woman who died exhausted and malnourished as a result of exorcisms carried out in 1976, in counterpoint to the voices of the Catholic priests who tormented and tortured her.

As we move through this world of symbols, we come alive in quick-fire flashes of attention across the boundaries between sense and non-sense. The vocal subject of More is a fractured human who is one moment hysterical, the next quietly authoritative. She appears briefly as if a cantor intoning some ritual, the next a glossolalic savage enacting the physical process of internalising a punishing oppression. More foregrounds the ontological violence of experiences for which we have no language. The work is an etude on the excesses of body, text, flesh and feeling, under whose tangled net we labor to make meaning out of the meaningless. We are already full to bursting and still we cannot get - nor be - enough. The most ordered voice of the work repeatedly commands: 'still more'." - Natasha Anderson and Jessica Aszodi

Amanda Feery - *Lua* (2013) (Requires tape playback)

Poet: Amanda Feery

Ba-loo
Our yellow bellies can barely trace
Your ivory spine
We can hear you churn
And curve and coil
Peninsulas of foam coat our feet
And you pull at our ankles
Will we be shipped to the moon
Before this must end

"This piece is like a deconstructed lullaby, with two opposing forces at work. It interests me that some lullabies have an air of the macabre about them - the melodies seem to be asynchronous with the text, which tries to communicate a 'mind how you go' feeling. Musically, they are an attempt to soothe a child, whilst textually, there is an implication that harm's way is never far away. The piece moves through repetitive, cooing, infant-directed-speech into text that I originally wrote to confront something. Once set to the melodies, and embedded in the overall piece, it gives the impression of a lulling comfort, but with that air of warning lying beneath." - Amanda Feery

LJ White - *Labor Day* (2011)

Poet: Erika Meitner

The way we sleep together is locational,
seasonal -- the way
you can buy useful things off
the roadside here in
summer passing through: peaches,
heirloom tomatoes,
squash, sweet corn, bait, antiques, rugs,

tie-dye, fireworks, guns --
your hand around the back of
my neck in the dark
above the covers the way
you'd hold a beer can,
near empty, out on the porch
before tossing it.

Katherine Pukinskis - *The Sea Cow* (2018)

Poet: M.C. St John

How now sea cow, swimming in celestial waters,
grazing on motes of light and seaweed, Murmuring
across the depths. You play the hide and seek
of ghost-gray submarines, your flippers propel
you into the deepest secret spots, though
I suspect you want to be found.

The lonely susurrations from your snout
are drops in the sonar rippling out and out and
Out to stir the kelp, inspire the coral, and lap
against unknown shores.

Sea cow, how now you are another creature
wondering where it's drifting and singing and why,
for the waters are vast and strange for a string
of notes no one will hear or remember.
Yet you sing.

Sometimes keen, yes, other times moan,
your brow wrinkled and whiskers twitched
for your voice to carry into the shadows
where years are the fine silt sediment from life
only to build more blind and silent reefs.

Now how, sea cow, are you compelled to send
such battered lullabies into the big drink
to be swallowed by the uncaring waves?

Pausing in your call, you hear the response--
It is tinny and faint, a frequency from a far-off throat.
The song is one you know well.
And the ocean shrinks that much more
with the comfort of a chart to follow.

Georges Aperghis - *Pub I* (2002)

As the text for *Pub I* employs a mix of words and nonsense syllables in quick succession, perhaps it is more useful to understand that the words used all seem to be taken from a box of breakfast cereal. . . I have included a list of ingredients below as a possible example:

Kellogg's Tresor Chocolat Noisettes - the EU equivalent of Kellogg's Krave

Farines de céréales (avoine, riz, blé), sucre, huile végétale, noisettes (4,5%), chocolat (4,5%)(sucre, pâte de cacao, cacao maigre en poudre, arôme), cacao maigre en poudre, poudre de lait écrémé, lactose, sel, amandes, colorants (caroténoïdes, rocou), émulsifiant (lécithine de tournesol), antioxygènes (palmitate d'ascorbyle, alpha-tocophérol), vitamines (PP, B6, B2, B1, B9, B12), fer.

Cereal flours (oats, rice, corn), sugar, plant oil, hazelnuts (4,5%), chocolate (4,5%) (sugar, cocoa paste, thin powder cocoa, flavor), thin cocoa powders some, skimmed dried milk, lactose, salt, almonds, dyes (carotenoid, rocou), emulsifier (lecithin of sunflower), antioxidant (palmitate of ascorbyle, alpha-tocopherol), vitamins (Niacin, B6, B2, B1, B9, B12), iron.

Christopher Burns - selections from *number opera* (2018)

I. "Aria da capo (Euler's Formula)"

e to the i theta equals cosine theta plus i sine theta

[The formula which relates trigonometry and complex exponential functions. If you graph Euler's Formula in the complex plane, it traces a circle - hence the aria da capo quality. When the value of theta is set equal to pi, the formula evaluates to "e to the i times pi minus one equals zero." This is commonly referred to as "the most beautiful equation in mathematics," because it succinctly connects the fundamental numbers zero, one, e, i , and pi, the fundamental operations of addition, multiplication, and exponentiation, and the relation of equality.]

IV. "Aria del sonno (frequency modulation)"

The instantaneous amplitude of a frequency-modulated carrier is a function of time t equal to the peak amplitude multiplied by the sine of the sum of the carrier frequency multiplied by t and the ratio of the peak frequency deviation to the modulating frequency multiplied by the sine of the modulating frequency multiplied by t .

[The equation describing vibrato.]

VI. "Aria infuriata (Newton's Second Law of Motion)"

Force equals mass times acceleration.

VII. "Aria di lamento (escape velocity)"

Escape velocity from a planetary-size body is calculated as the square root of two times the universal gravitational constant times the mass of the body over the distance between the escaping object and the center of mass of the body.

Louis Andriessen - *Shopping list of a Poisoner* (2000)

I would tell you all the things on the list, but then I'd have to...well, you know.

The original text is in Dutch (translated to English by Nicoline Gatehouse), and features somewhat deranged humor through repetition, unexpected use of texts (most of which are not often words that are "sung"...): references to a huge range of poison plants, various implements both sinister and mundane, and a few inexplicable diversions. What else would one expect from a poisoner's shopping list? (Next question - where might one *acquire* everything on the list?)