

THE CROSSING
DONALD NALLY, CONDUCTOR

Reprise 2

FEBRUARY 14, 2016 | 4PM
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHESTNUT HILL

Reprise 2

PROGRAM

Where flames a word[†]

written for The Celan Project, 2009

Kile Smith

Rigwreck

written for The Gulf (between you and me), 2013

Gabriel Jackson

INTERMISSION

I live in pain[§]

a gift to The Crossing from the composer, 2011

David Lang

It is Time[†]

written in 2008 for The Celan Project, 2009

David Shapiro

Privilege (2009)

first sung by The Crossing October 20, 2012

Ted Hearne

Pre-concert talk @ 3pm in Burleigh Cruikshank Memorial Chapel.

Please join us in Widener Hall for a reception to greet composers David Shapiro and Kile Smith.

This concert is being recorded for broadcast by our partner WRTI, 90.1FM, Philadelphia's Classical and Jazz Public Radio.

[†] available on our recording *It is Time*

[§] available on our recording *I live in pain*

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NOTES + TEXTS

Where flames a word

Kile Smith (b. 1956)

Our program note from the premiere, Friday, June 5, 2009:

Kile's combination of lyric melody and lush, repetitive harmonies guide us through Celan's moving, sometimes elusive, images – “wandering as a loner” in music that marches forward with anticipation, quietly contemplating our lives (through pronouns) as we “walk in the mountains” (the only setting of prose in our Celan Project premieres), and searching for meaning in a final, luxurious hymn, with the strikingly brave words, “I know you.”

We may open a small window into Celan's creative life through his comments to a fellow poet:

“...to that in your work which did not – or not yet – open up to my comprehension, I responded with respect and by waiting: one can never pretend to comprehend completely – that would be disrespect in the face of the Unknown that inhabits – or comes to inhabit – the poet: that would be to forget that poetry is something one breathes; that poetry breathes you in.”

Kile's close, crunching harmonies (central to his expressive language), his clear, pure moments of joy, and the quiet, simple exchanges he creates between men and women courageously venture into Celan's Unknown; both author and composer make art that is about and around a topic, being in and without the subject, and yet being the subject, as heard in the penultimate sentence – “where flames a word.” If there is finality in this work, it is the finality of resignation – of finding peace in the endless struggle between “real” and “delusion.”

1. *Before your late face*

Before your late face,
a loner
wandering between
nights that change me too,
something came to stand,
which was with us once already, un-
touched by thoughts.

2. *Conversation in the Mountains*

The stones, too, were silent.

And it was quiet in the mountains where they walked, one and the other.

“You’ve come a long way, have come all the way here...”

“I have. I’ve come, like you.”

“I know.”

“You know. You know and see: The earth folded up here, folded once and twice and three times, and opened up in the middle, and in the middle there is water, and the water is green, and the green is white, and the white comes from even farther up, from the glaciers, and one could say, but one shouldn’t, that this is the language that counts here, the green with the white in it, a language not for you and not for me—because, I ask you, for whom is it meant, the earth, not for you, I say, is it meant, and not for me—a language, well, without I and without You nothing but He, nothing but It, you understand, and She, nothing but that.”

“I understand, I do. After all, I’ve come a long way, I’ve come like you.”

“I know.”

3. *I know you, you are the deeply bowed*

(I know you, you are the deeply bowed,

I the transpierced, am subject to you.

Where flames a word, would testify for us both?

You—all, all real. I—all delusion.)

—Paul Celan; 1. and 3. From *Breathturn*, trans. by Pierre Joris, Sun and Moon Press, 1995; 2. From *Collected Prose*, trans. by Rosemarie Waldrop, The Sheep Meadow Press, 1986.

Rigwreck

Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962)

The composer writes:

Pierre Joris’s poem is, for me, both petrified and dynamic. I have tried to reflect that in the setting, which is somewhat halting at first, acquiring greater momentum towards the end. The internal repetitions of the text, its assonances and alliterations, its complex wordplay are, I hope, given their musical due without being overly schematic. Some words or phrases are always set to the same music; sometimes the resonances are more allusive. In some ways the word “love” is the most important; it is certainly given the most expansive musical treatment, for that is, surely, as it should be.

A THROW

what do we know, what can we know?

OF THE DICE

of science, of love?

only the facts, that is to say

only effects

NEVER

can this happen

NEVER even if, can this happen

in science, in love

EVEN WHEN CAST

Indra's net of love,

EVEN WHEN CAST

money's net of stone

what do we know, what can we know?

What has caused this gulf

between water & oil, you & me

IN ETERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES

(no circumstances are eternal,

AT THE HEART OF

of this rigwreck

What will we know?

We know only effects / have to choose

the causes

A SHIPWRECK at the heart that the

gulf widens

between water & oil, you & me

fish & water, me & you

that the

Abyss

between water & water, you & you

me & me, oil & fish

widened then whitened

there is slack growing

raging underwater in the heart

underheart in the water

on the brain

what we know is oil & water don't mix

what we know is fish & oil don't mix

what we know is you & I have to mix

what we know is you & I have to live

under an incline
clinamen of a warming clime
an angle not an angel tells us
me & you want to live
even if despair desperately soars
& gets an angry rise
form the phantom pain of its own planet's sore
broken wing
a second-hand angel singing Ecce Homo,
Ecce Homo, though not so Sapiens,
conscious liar,
beforehand relapsed, liar, liar, not released from wrongly steering
the flight of this planetary love affair
no use repressing the outbursts
of this lethal love affair
cleaving the bounds
of this oily love affair
at the root of greed
set the rig afloat
a ship finally a ship
the impossible change
for deep inside weighs the admission of impending disaster
the shadow hidden in the depth
by this by this arrogance this arrogance
at the root of greed this arrogance
at the root of arrogance
this love this love for more
a more always spelled out in money
blows the rig up this morning
will blow the world up tomorrow
there is no alternate sail
ship earth in space / space ship earth
the only raft for dumb sapiens
who has to learn to love
this imperfect raft
there is no alternate sail
dumb sapiens has to learn love
has to learn to adjust

Luckily I found a translation of some of her texts into Italian, which I also don't really speak or read, but which I know at least well enough to push me in the direction of the text I finally made.

I live in pain
For someone I once had,
For someone I once wanted
For someone I once knew
For someone I once loved, without measure.
I see now that he left me
Because I did not give him all my love
I see now I was wrong
And now I sleep alone

I want to hold him
In my naked arms
I want to lie beside him
In my bed
I want him more
Than any long-forgotten lovers ever loved before
I want to give him everything

My heart
My love
My senses
My sight
My life
Good friend, kind friend, fearless friend
When will I have you?
When will you lie beside me?
When will I give you my love?
You know how much I want you.
Promise me
You will do what I say
Please.
Do what I say.

-David Lang, after Contessa de Dia (late 12th century, Provence)

Our program note from the premiere, January 4, 2009:

David works with Celan's poem as if it were wrought iron, bending it around curves and planes to reveal what may be underneath or within. (In fact, Shapiro's music often sounds as if it is turning a corner only to discover another corner to be turned.) It is an elusive poem – the last Celan wrote before leaving Vienna in 1948 for Paris, where he would remain the rest of his life. Vienna at the time was an uncomfortable place for a Jewish camp survivor, yet Celan's poetry speaks of love and only hints at the past and its potential for personal apocalypse: "then time returns to the shell." (Shapiro employs this phrase as a kind of refrain, giving structure to his work; through its repetition, it becomes self-fulfilling and takes on new meaning, of repose and introspection.) Time is the topic; the fragile "poppy" of forgetting, the hope of memory – of "recollection" – and the wish that the power of love may move us beyond all this. All lead to the stark simplicity of Celan's closing, "It is time it were time. It is time." – an image the poet discovered first in Rilke, who wrote in *Autumn Day* of 1902, "Lord: it is time, the summer was immense" and "the leaves are falling, falling distantly..." Here, Celan forges complex images of truth, of love, and, to Shapiro, the climactic wish that "the stone [make] an effort to bloom." From this apex, springing from the stone – so central to Celan's poetry (he shoveled rocks in wartime work camps) – Shapiro slowly releases Time's linear hold on the music as we recede back into a place only music can describe.

Autumn eats its leaf out of my hand: we are friends.
From the nuts we shell time and we teach it to walk:
then time returns to the shell.
In the mirror it's Sunday,
in dream there is room for sleeping,
our mouths speak the truth.

My eye moves down to the sex of my loved one:
we look at each other,
we exchange dark words,
we love each other like poppy and recollection,
we sleep like wine in the conches,
like the sea in the moon's blood ray.

We stand by the window embracing, and people
look up from the street:
it is time they knew!
It is time the stone made an effort to bloom,

time unrest had a beating heart.

It is time it were time.

It is time.

–Paul Celan (1920-1970), “Corona” from *Poppy and Memory* (1952) in *Poems of Paul Celan*, trans. by Michael Hamburger, Persea Books, 1995.

Privilege

Ted Hearne (b. 1982)

The composer writes:

Privilege is a collection of five short pieces. The first and third movements are both little snapshots of a contemporary privileged life, set to texts written by a contemporary privileged person (me). “motive/mission” captures the thought-stream of an ambitious and conscientious individual, at the moment those thoughts are interrupted with a circumstance that begs uncomfortable comparisons: “How much of my life is given? How much is earned?” “burning TV song” is a love letter to the comfort found in a modern media apparatus whose output so alluringly confirms our visions of ourselves.

The second and fourth movements are set to portions of an interview with David Simon (creator of HBO’s *The Wire*) by journalist Bill Moyers, which aired in April 2009 on PBS. Casino sets Simon’s response to Moyers’ question: “Why do you think that we tolerate such gaps between rich and poor?” “they get it” addresses the idea that there is a large segment of our population - Simon guesses ten to fifteen percent - whose existence is unnecessary to the American economy, especially those who are “undereducated, that have been ill served by the inner city school system, that have been unprepared for the technocracy of the modern economy.” Until there is a place for them in the American ideal, Simon posits, drug trafficking and other illegal activity will provide a more viable financial option.

The final movement, “we cannot leave,” is set to the translation of *As’ Kwaz’ uKuhamba*, a black South African anti-apartheid song, the original words of which are in Xhosa (the native language of Nelson Mandela). South Africa has a strong tradition of music being used as a tool to fight societal oppression and inequality. The setting is a tribute to that practice.

1. *motive/mission*

motive/mission

you were always fair

you were almost always kind

weren't you?
you always reached out your hand
you almost always refused to lie
didn't you?
you wouldn't shut your shining eyes
would you?
-Ted Hearne

2. *casino*

it's almost like a casino
you're looking at the guy winning,
you're looking at the guy who pulled the lever
and all the bells go off
and all the coins are coming
out of a one-armed bandit
and you're thinking
that could be me.
i'll play by those rules.
-David Simon

3. *burning tv song*

flashing window
empty street
burning tv song
flashing window
empty street
burning tv song
flashing window
empty street
burning tv song
stay
-Ted Hearne

4. *they get it*

we pretend to need them
we pretend to educate the kids
but we don't
and they're not foolish
they get it
-David Simon

5. *we cannot leave*

we cannot leave

this land of our ancestors

on this earth

we are being killed by the monster^s

on this earth

shuku shuku[†]

oh, mother, it's leaving me behind!

i want to get on the train

to get on the train in the morning

i want

oh, mother, it's leaving me behind!

-trad. Xhosa, trans. by Patiswa Nombona and Mollie Stone

^s the monster = apartheid

[†] this is the sound of the train to freedom

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