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THE CAPILANO REVIEW



Collaborations

Ohhh
let's pray
for some dissss-
order.

—TOM CONE

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DESIGN CONSULTANT	Jan Westendorp
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EVERYBODY ON THE SIDEWALK: A Conversation with Tom Cone

Tom Cone is a Vancouver playwright, librettist, lecturer, impresario, curator and promoter of cultural hybrids, and nurturer of the avant-garde; he is a key figure behind Vancouver's experimental music and theatre scene. His many plays include *Herringbone*, *Stargazing*, *Love at Last Sight*, and *True Mummy*; his adaptations of classic plays include Molière's *The Miser* and Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters* that premiered at the Stratford Festival where he was a writer-in-residence; his librettos include *The Architect* composed by David MacIntyre for Vancouver Opera, *The Gang* composed by Peter Hannan for Vancouver New Music, and *Game Misconduct* composed by Leslie Uyeda for Festival Vancouver. Tom is co-founder of experimental arts projects such as *song room*—a salon for new song collaborations—and a co-producer for CABINET, Interdisciplinary Collaborations. He is finishing a new play, *Donald and Lenore*. Tom was *The Capilano Review* writer-in-residence in February/March 2007 during which he initiated the 5-minute play project, a collaboration between Creative Writing and Theatre students at Capilano College.

Andrew Klobucar and Jenny Penberthy recorded the following conversation with Tom while sitting on his front porch in June 2007.

ANDREW: Let's begin with that theme of collaboration in your work. When I see your new material I'm very conscious of the development of the work through the '70s in Vancouver. When I look at the '70s from my own very dilettantish perspective it seems a really exciting period, whether because a lot of experimentation or a lot of questions being asked. What was your take on the '70s theatre in Vancouver, and how do you see that actually affecting your work aesthetically?

TOM: I think the first thing that happened in Canada that has not been written about to any extent whatsoever is the effect of LIP [Local Initiatives Program]. It was as big and as far-reaching as the WPA [Work Projects Administration] in the States. Every theatre group, every new music group, every dance group, publishers that we know... many began through LIP.

JENNY: Like Talonbooks.

TOM: Talonbooks was through LIP. Vancouver East Cultural Centre, where I had my first play produced in 1972, was built by carpenters who were paid the same amount of money as I was every week. We were all paid a hundred and forty bucks.

ANDREW: Is that *There* you're talking about?

TOM: Yes, *There* and *The Organiser*; they were written when I was a graduate student at SFU in the Communications Department. They had in that department Murray Schafer, who ran the World Soundscape Project. Schafer's Soundscape project was huge here and in the United States. And at Simon Fraser—well, one of the heads of the department was a political philosopher who was very close to Che and to Castro. And students would go with him to Cuba from SFU to see Castro and to work. There was Hildegard Westerkamp, now, amongst other things, writing scores for Gus Van Sant and Barry Truax. That department was really influential in collaboration for me, in that I could be taking behavioural courses, I could be taking political science courses, I could be taking a course from Murray Schafer. My MA thesis was my first full-length play, and I incorporated work from B. F. Skinner. The play was called *Skinner Alive*. I took a Skinner box and set it on the vertical—this premiered at SFU. The work that I was educated in, communications, had to do with Skinner, and the work that I had already gone through up until that point—I had graduated from Florida State University in 1970 with a degree in English and a minor in Philosophy,

and I had already done work in Art History. By the time I had finished all that and I was one amongst millions of students who were politically active, reading Marcuse and Fanon like mad, and reading all the existentialists.

But to go back even further, when my parents moved to Miami in the late '40s, they were amongst a large group of the Jewish community who were in their early 30s. Thousands of young Jewish couples from all over America were drawn there because you could start a new life there, and it was cheap and beautiful. I was caught in a world where my father's family, who I was close to, were from Nashville, Tennessee. And southern, really, very southern. And my mother was from New England. Her family assimilated very fast, was proud of their assimilation. I suppose in my father's family it took a very long time. And my grandmother never spoke English. I grew up in a combination of real South and Jewish culture. In high school and in college—I graduated in '65—Miami was a winter home to writers, for example, the director that we had in children's theatre in Miami, was very close to Tennessee Williams. He came there during that period. He was my biggest hero. Key West was a great haven for writers.

My father was a well-known amateur actor, and I grew up doing lines with him. He was always learning lines. He was doing things like *You Can't Take it With You* or *Golden Boy*. I had to take Cotillion and public speaking and all those kinds of things. But I was already an actor at five. I was already on stage with Yul Brynner performing *The King and I*—I was one of the many children. We were all bald. I have pictures of that! And at the same time I had to take public speaking and learn how to speak and the teacher was—around here I'm fourteen—the teacher was a very close friend of Robert Frost's daughter. Robert Frost used to live near us in the winter. I didn't know him, but I had already met Carl Sandburg by then because I had also spent five summers in North Carolina. And in public speaking, I had to learn all his poems. The most important thing that happened to me then, that has affected everything that I see and do and write, was to understand the English language in terms of the texture of syllables. And from there if you jump all the way to William Carlos Williams; for me it was like a revelation. He was everything that I had learned about how to speak. He was the ultimate for me. Williams was the writer that I connected all that with, Williams and Pound, of the *ABC of Reading*.

So what those directors taught me as a child, and what the high school teacher taught me about how to speak, led me to Whitman and led me to Williams. That was huge for me, because I felt at that age like I understood Williams like no one else did. I knew the breakdown of his syllables, and what he was after was what everyone was trying to learn in theatre—and I'd never seen that comparison, which is to write in an American idiom, and with an American inflection. And get away from England. And it wasn't really until O'Neill that that happened.

ANDREW: Williams wasn't really well read until the early '60s, right?

TOM: The early '60s. But I didn't encounter him until I was in college, or at the end of high school. The biggest book for my contemporaries was Donald Allen's book. That was the book that changed it. You could start to see that people were writing like they were talking.

And my mother had studied art with Hans Hoffman, who was one of the great abstract expressionists, and she was a student at the Art Students League. So visual art was in our home a lot. I had a very multi-talented father who—who no one could live up to. We moved to Miami because my father bought the Florida Sun Sox, which became the Miami Marlins. Several members of my family were involved in American baseball, and my father was the owner of the Florida Sun Sox, the Triple-A team, but he also was a very well-known fast sketch artist. At nineteen he was the one who would do Amelia Earhart or Tallulah Bankhead—they would bring them in and he would be sitting up in the hotel room with them for forty-five minutes and he would draw them because in the '30s there was more cachet to having a drawing of a celebrity than a photograph. The combination of his preoccupation with realism—it was almost demonic in a way—and my mother's appreciation of abstraction ... that kind of tension in the house was always troubling and in the end I moved to where she was, which was more abstract.

Then my father owned a fairly well-known black nightclub in Miami when I was in high school, and so me and three friends were referred to as "white niggers" because everybody was into the Beach Boys and we were into soul music. And we would go and see these guys in the black ghettos. My father also owned a fight bar, which was one of the greatest bars you could ever be in. These were only for boxers and their

entourages. You couldn't see each other because it was so dark. And it always had to be freezing, and you couldn't see each other in the bar.

JENNY: Why did it have to be cold?

TOM: Because they were all injured...

You probably know the film about the All-American Girls, the baseball team, *A League of Their Own*? In the United States when World War II happened all the men went off to war and all these women were brought to Chicago—and Canada and The Dominican Republic—to organize a professional baseball league called the All-American Girls. My uncle and my aunt helped created that league. And these women were amazing. But eventually they were demolished. They were asked publicly to give back their balls and bats. On the field! It was humiliating. The film was a whitewash of it.

But really, in terms of getting all the way to the '70s, what happened here was very unusual. In every Canadian city you had LIP. I can't tell you how important that is.

JENNY: I think we should explain...

TOM: Local Initiatives Program. Funded by the Federal Government. It was to put artists and artisans to work—to foster an environment of creation. This was 1972. I don't know the impetus but it was one of the great things that Trudeau did. Because every publishing house that we know of, all the poetry, came out of LIP. It just put everybody to work, and I think that what they found—it was after Expo, Montreal, the Olympics were happening, Canada Council was created—you could do anything. You could get a grant for \$140 a week for eight weeks and make new forms of blowing bubbles. Or you could create serious theatre. I was in a guerilla theatre here in Vancouver, wandering around Granville Street and Robson popping into restaurants and coffee shops and the library and making interventions about theatre, about topics that were going on either provincially or locally. At the same time I was working at the race track. And I was here for the first election that the NDP won. I'm in the box seat with the jacket and the bowtie and it's all the [Bill] Bennett boys who own all the horses, and when [Dave] Barrett won the entire box seats were showered in beer cans. There were spontaneous parades up Hastings. Thousands of people. It was just spontaneous when Barrett won in '72. It was unbelievable.

So that was the atmosphere. And I started really writing and getting produced around '73 and '74. But we were the first generation in Canada. All these playwrights from Vancouver to Halifax, we were the first generation of playwrights in the country.

ANDREW: Just to go back—\$140 a week in 1972—that sounds quite fair!

TOM: We were living like kings. It was fantastic. And everybody was getting the same amount whether you were a visual artist or you were making pottery or you were an actor or a playwright.

JENNY: So artists and writers simply had to apply?

TOM: It seemed like everybody got it. It was beautiful because—well it was always satirized because there would always be some weird project, someone doing something that was stupid and getting \$140 a week. But it released, I can tell you right off the top of my head, maybe eight to ten choreographers who all have companies in Canada now, and it all came from LIP. All the theatre companies were on LIP. It was unbelievable. So many companies today from various disciplines can be traced to LIP. And one other component was radio. In Vancouver there were two producers who did experimental radio—one specifically, Don Mowatt. So you had experimental radio drama, and you were getting \$140 a week from LIP grants, and you could write experimental drama whether it was fifteen minutes or fifty-five minutes for the CBC and get really decent money. After four or five years that began to dry up, but the environment...

That's what started the first DuMaurier Festival of New Plays and the New Play Centre—now called the Playwrights' Theatre Centre, which is the oldest centre for developing plays in Canada. But Pamela Hawthorn, who was the artistic director, her first festival in '73—it was fantastic. But so many writers—all the writers that are being studied across the country now—all came out during that period, from Michel Tremblay to Tom Walmsley to.... And here was an unusual group of people that didn't write like each other at all. There was no school of thought. It was just that there were playwrights like Margaret Hollingsworth who had recently come from England, or you had Tom Walmsley who really had something to say outside of his poetry done by the Osborne brothers over at Arsenal—they were called Pulp Press then. Or Sheldon Rosen, Dennis Foon or John Lazarus—everybody was really different from each other. It was an unusual atmosphere—we weren't competitive with each other. There were

clusters of playwrights in Toronto and Vancouver and later in the smaller cities. We were the first generation of writers working together. LIP helped like crazy and radio—you could do experimental radio. From an aesthetic point of view, there was no commercial theatre, no film, no TV—voice predominated.

By 1978 everybody started leaving. Careers were made like mad within five years. I had television specials, I had national tours, I represented British Columbia at the Olympics in Montreal, and I'm not speaking like I—but many of us had this great success. And then people wanted more, so a lot of people migrated to Toronto in '78 and I left for San Francisco, which was a mistake. And then I became Playwright-in-Residence at the Stratford Festival from '78 to '80, where I premiered my play *Stargazing*. That's also where I met my agent Joyce Ketay, whom I've been with for 30 years. And a play that I did there, an adaptation of Goldoni, literally has been continuously produced since June of '80.

JENNY: It's *the* adaptation.

TOM: The *Servant of Two Masters*, yes, the Goldoni.

But in the '70s the weirdest thing was that you were the first. It was bizarre. There was no one before you. It was like a discipline that had no history in the country. It was totally frontier land. It gave everybody this great—"Oh, I want to write in my imagination," or "I want to write about drug addiction" or "I want to write about..."

ANDREW: But rather than forming a permanent community, or theatre community groups, here in Vancouver, it actually instigated a kind of mass dispersal. People actually left Vancouver.

TOM: You could only go so far here. It was pre-film and pre-television. Every writer and actor and director wanted to go to that next level, and that had to be Toronto because there was much more work being produced and much more opportunity. It was the centre for television and radio. A lot of people who were my contemporaries were racing for television by '78 and '80.

But in Vancouver during that period the relationship between poets and visual art was the relationship. There was no relationship with theatre or dance. It was like it is now. It was very segregated. But there was more of a relationship between writing

and visual art. And really I would say the most important person in terms of collaboration in this city, in its history of collaboration, is Tony Emery, a former director of the Vancouver Art Gallery, when it was on Georgia Street. And it was in there that you saw everybody. I saw Yvonne Rainer. I saw every great writer in the country. I saw everything. It was in the lobby. I saw all the Murray Schafer quartets. It was outrageous. Emery reached out in the best way.

ANDREW: This was a reconfiguration of the VAG as more than an art gallery. It had become a community centre.

TOM: It was a community centre. We'd say "Shit! At five o'clock so and so is on at the VAG!" and we'd run over there for forty minutes and sit on the floor with 200 others and listen. I saw so many people there. Emory reached out in the best way, and out of that came—what's his name—Goldberg, Michael Goldberg. He started Intermedia. It was a collaborative centre. It became, not a model, but maybe an early impetus for Western Front.

JENNY: That's interesting about the VAG—and it was such a modest building compared with the kind of monumental structure now.

TOM: This was the courts when I was here, the building they're in now. But next door to the VAG was the NFB! So the three of us would go watch so-and-so and then we'd go catch a Godard film next door at 9 o'clock. So it kept everybody on the sidewalk.

Always, early on, I was very much involved with—I just loved the visual arts and music. And I started collecting here in 1975.

JENNY: Can I ask you fill in a gap? You got your undergraduate degree in Florida—then what brought you to Vancouver?

TOM: Initially I was a draft dodger. I had number 147, which was the cut off number in the first lottery. I assumed I was lucky, and then I received the notice for a physical, which I had to go and take because I still lived in the States, but I was already a member of SDS then, Students for a Democratic Society. And I was already on my way to Boston for a big conference at Harvard Stadium for all SDSers—everybody was coming to Cambridge, this summer of 1970. And then my parents said well, you've got your physical notice, you've taken your physical...and then I decided I

would leave. I would not wait. The great singer who was part of the extended family of The Band—his name was Jesse Winchester—he's a wonderful singer—and he was in Toronto early on. A lot of The Band were. He was our point person. So if you were running from the States you would go to Montreal and you would see him, and then he would get you a place to sleep. Then he shipped all of us—hundreds—to Morin Heights, about fifty miles north of Montreal, that summer. And then you realized you could go back to the States, or you couldn't. We must remember that Trudeau literally said "Fuck you!" to Nixon and 100,000 Americans came across the border and many were absorbed into the existing cultural climate and in turn became part of the LIP project.

But Vancouver was the lure for me because I had already read the *Georgia Straight Supplement*, I knew that Creeley and Duncan were here, I knew that Basil Bunting was coming. The first day I arrived here I ran to UBC. It was still closed; it was Labour Day and I got into the building and I was looking for Basil Bunting. I didn't know what he looked like, I just knew I had to meet him. A guy named Seymour Levitan—he was a most wonderful teacher at UBC—he was the teacher of the year and he was having poetry readings on Friday nights and he introduced me to Bunting, and then I met Warren Tallman. And Stan Persky was my sponsor. He was editor of the *Georgia Straight Supplement* and he'd hired me as an assistant. I had to go back to the States and formally apply to return, so I went to Portland and met my friend, filled out all the forms and drove back up. When I got to the border they refused me entry and asked if I knew who Stan Persky was. They said, "He's a homosexual rebel!" They allowed me forty-eight hours to retain a lawyer in Vancouver. My lawyer beat the hell out of them.

So when I came here in '70 the biggest person for me was Williams. I was twenty-two. I was coming here and I was shocked, completely shocked, speechless, when I met Duncan and Creeley. I didn't think that they were really human! I was meeting everybody that I had been reading about. And Blaser was already here. I remember going to Blaser's place out in West Van and showing him all these poems and saying "I want to write like Josef Albers paints"—I found that Albers was really tied in certain ways to Williams in my imagination. Blaser was really fantastic. He was very encouraging. And then I got pulled back into theatre when I was at SFU.

JENNY: How would you explain the influence of Williams on your plays?

TOM: Well, I'm not an over-writer. I found more was less, from the structural point of view. From the intonation and the meaning of words ... and Williams, for a lot of people, I think playwrights as well as poets, is a great example of how to deal with exposition. And cut it out. He taught me a lot that way. And then Creeley, you know, the same. Whereas Duncan and Blaser, I wasn't drawn to that type of work so much, although I respected it like crazy, I love it, but in terms of the style—and you're copying styles at that age—I wanted to be Pinter and I wanted to be Creeley. I remember telling Creeley that my last year in high school I wore an eye patch because I wanted to be him!

JENNY: I'm curious about your background in music...

TOM: I took piano as a kid and was always around some kind of music, but it really wasn't until I came here that my tastes became more sophisticated and more informed. I was learning like mad. One of the best things I ever did was to subscribe to *Friends of Chamber Music*. I found that chamber music related to Williams much more than symphonic work. I listened like mad. I set goals for myself—I was reading three plays a day. I knew that I would read more than one thousand plays over a year. I really wanted to get educated in that way. It was that period around Stein and Satie and Ravel that I first got really excited because of the social communities and all the collaboration that was happening. I found it kind of overwhelming, the idea that Diaghilev and Stravinsky and Cocteau were doing *Parade*. That was my dream, to be able to bring those kinds of forces together. There's always music in my plays, somehow—in my plays *Cubistique*, *Herringbone*, *Beautiful Tigers*. And then the idea that you could write lyrics, you know. A lot of the music of the day that my parents liked, like Sinatra—you learn a lot from Sinatra too. And Ella—about language. About intention...

JENNY: And about line breaks...

TOM: Yes! I was always listening to new works. The Purcell String Quartet was huge here. They were the locals. They educated a phenomenal lot of people, and they commissioned new work and I just couldn't get enough of it. I really loved it. But I saw something that I wanted that articulated a dream I never could have imagined. And

what happened for me was that more new music writers, composers, were starting to say more about the world than many playwrights were doing.

JENNY: You did a lot of writing through the '70s and then between 1980 and 1990 there's less...

TOM: I decided to try to change my direction. I moved to New York in '81, and I really wanted to do more experimentation. At the same time I was living in a world that was very involved—New York was—in a heavily commercial theatre scene. And the experimental groups were becoming less and less. I spent a long time working on a feature film for an independent film producer that I walked away from. Then I turned that into a musical, and then I walked away from it. I wrote *Mecca By The Balls*, which was produced here and somewhere else and was translated into French and I think done in Paris, and then I put it away; I didn't think it was very good. Then I went on this binge where I wrote three operas. The first called *The Architect*, with composer David MacIntyre, done by Vancouver Opera, sold more tickets than any new Canadian opera—it sold five thousand tickets, in 1994. It was a huge hit. And then I did *The Gang* with Peter Hannan in '97/'98 (Vancouver New Music and Autumn Leaf Productions in Toronto), and then *Game Misconduct* with Lesley Uyeda for Festival Vancouver. And then I'd had my fill. *True Mummy* was in the midst of that.

ANDREW: What had it been about opera that inspired you to move in that direction?

TOM: I became more and more attached to music and opera; it opened every direction you wanted to go. There weren't any preconceived notions about opera except musically, if you wanted to go with a more traditional form. It was very complicated to work in—very difficult. I think it's the most difficult art form in terms of collaboration. It's much harder than film.

ANDREW: It is collaboration—the beginning of the total work.

TOM: But for a playwright who had already had plays produced and this and that, the idea that you had to be second banana was crazy. I was always fighting with people just for equal billing and I got caught up in that crazy world of fighting for your credibility. But the form, I thought, was fantastic.

And then I wrote another opera, which took me to 2000, and then I started working on a new play and that took me three years and I put it away. And three years ago I started working on another play which I'm just finishing now. So it took me longer and longer to complete work, and I became more and more unhappy with the type of work I was writing.

ANDREW: Is that because you were setting different objectives for yourself?

TOM: Well, first of all, I really hated my critical eye being ahead of my ability. I didn't like being able to say, you know, "You need a deeper character in your play"—when I probably needed that too. It's fair to make that exchange, but I felt I wasn't writing up to the standard that I should have. So *True Mummy* was sort of the end of that experimental phase where I was writing more around ideas.

ANDREW: Just going back to that dilemma with established theatre... Could you say a few words about what kind of established theatre there was in Vancouver? What were you up against?

TOM: That's a really good question. It has big national significance, that question. What you have to imagine is most of the regional theatres were run by English directors. Remember the CBC had that kind of English wave?

ANDREW: It was modeled in some ways after the BBC.

TOM: Right. So none of us could get work in the regional theatres. Wow, to be at the Playhouse or the Citadel or all these big regional houses—every province has regional theatres, like Calgary and Edmonton or Ottawa and Toronto. So there were no new plays. But we were active and political, and we formed the guild. We couldn't form a union but we formed an artist-run guild of playwrights. We created the standard contracts for playwrights that still exist today. We forced—via the Canada Council—every regional theatre in the country to adopt these contracts so that they couldn't get money unless they developed and produced Canadian work. We formed a publishing house called Playwrights Canada, which still exists, and we lobbied the Canada Council. This was a great achievement. And I still have to speak on that achievement when I speak at music conferences—which was that playwrights got together and forced the Canada Council, by utilizing the council's own mandate, to agree that they

couldn't fund any more regional theatres unless they had money there for developing and producing new work. And that finally happened. That's when Second Stages occurred. What I have been trying to do for the past ten years or more, maybe twelve years, is to get that to happen to opera. So that they can't produce opera here unless they're workshopping and producing new work every year.

A good example would be the Arts Club in the mid-1970s (when it was on Seymour Street) so you were seeing—yes, you were seeing Noel Coward and so and so, but you were seeing Canadian plays, you were seeing Beckett—it was fantastic.

ANDREW: Is it *Herringbone* you've just seen in Boston?

TOM: Yes, it's running at the Williamstown Theatre Festival starring B.D. Wong. The play was originally written as a one-act play with occasional songs in it. It had an abrupt and outrageous kind of success. It premiered at the New Play Centre's DuMaurier Festival of New Plays, at the VECC, which was the place that we all had our plays done. And then *Herringbone* represented British Columbia at the Olympics and did a national tour. There was a TV special. And then I decided that I had always wanted to make it a full-length work. So I had a try-out—it went to a couple of cities. And then I decided that what I really needed was for it to be through-composed, rather than a play that just had anecdotal music. That it needed to make the jump. Really, that was the first time I ever had to give up control. I retained the large portion of it. But probably one of America's greatest actresses in the history of American theatre is Colleen Dewhurst, who is Canadian, in fact, and she did some of the great productions that are unbelievably memorable. Many of O'Neill's and Albee. And she decided that she wanted to produce this play while at the same time directing Sheldon Rosen's *Ned and Jack* for Broadway—*Ned and Jack* had been premiered by the New Play Centre. I was in the midst of a separation and she said, "I'm going to bring you to New York and you're going to meet a composer and a lyricist and a director and we're going to pay you to live in New York"—that would be the summer of '81. And I said, "My separation is so horrible that if you really want to do my play you have to fly me out of here in three days." And there was a ticket at the airport in three days and I never came back until nine or ten years later.

JENNY: This transformation from the play to the musical—what did that involve?

TOM: That was very hard, because you're turning dynamic scenes into a combination of book—the play—you're turning them into actives. My whole litmus test was that every song had to move the narrative forward; we couldn't just take time out to sing a song. So that was the challenge. And it was very hard. I must say I've worked with a lot of composers, but I don't think there's a more difficult artist to collaborate with than a composer. They live in a more abstract world than yours. And they articulate drama differently than you do. For them to come up with the language is very hard, in terms of word versus note. For me it should create a third entity. Of all best possible worlds. The note and the syllable. It shouldn't just support it. So that means that both writers need to give up something that's hopefully magic that they have created, but they're equal partners. It's not one or the other. It was so painful working with a composer to transform *Herringbone* that once the composer said to me in his living room after endless workshops—endless meetings and making the transformation—he was screaming at the top of his lungs that I was going to send him out the window, that I was going to be responsible for his death. This is very typical of composers. And I said to him, “You're gonna pay. I'm going to immortalize your narcissism. I'm going to open and close my play with your death. And I'm going to have you jump out the window at the end.”

It's really hard to be in the theatre in New York, even though it's off-Broadway, it's very commercially bound. And when you're in New York your magazine is *The New Yorker*. Your paper is the *Times*. And those launch careers. Just a mention of being in the papers helps get a job or a recognition. I never liked being in the commercial public world. It was a time when I was working with a music theatre company on the beginnings of transforming Williams' *Paterson* into a musical theatre piece and I thought, “Wow, I could leave now,” I could move to a more experimental, contained world like poetry. Lose that desire to be Harold Pinter. I didn't. And in the interim I didn't produce the play that I hung in for. Up to now I continue hoping that I will. I have certain parameters that I know I want to hit.

It's hard to talk about playwriting in this context without looking at the kind of world that we live in with theatre and what theatre means to people in this day and age. Why people go. It's different with people here or in other cities. Most of the people

that I associate with in Vancouver do not go to the theatre. A lot of the people don't even know my work.

JENNY: When you say you never liked being in the commercial public world, does that account for your return to Vancouver? That's a choice you made. You talked about a lot of people going to Toronto, and yet ...

TOM: The years in New York—or the first part of New York—were terrific for me. I had a number of productions going on, in different cities, everybody seemed to be doing *Servant of Two Masters*, *Stargazing*, *Herringbone* (music Skip Kennon, lyrics Ellen Fitzhugh) was getting on, I had a play called *Cubistique* that was always being produced somewhere. And I was welcomed by certain theatre companies. And then—I don't know what happened. I wanted to change and I didn't know how and I was trying and it wasn't successful, so I ended up turning this disaster of a film project into a musical about the All-American Girls. And I was on that for about two years and then it went down. I had this huge hole. And then I started writing another experimental play that I felt more happy about, and then I had that episode in New York which allowed me to come here to recuperate and I went into immediate therapy to overcome the shock of a near murder. And it was a good place to recuperate.

ANDREW: It's tempting to see your exodus from New York as part of what New York did to art in the '80s. That's a story in itself. When I hear you talk about New York I also think about that incredible period, historically, where the art markets in America really took off in a way that was unparalleled since the 1950s, and there are quite a few Vancouverites that are now back in Vancouver having been in New York for some time. What inspired you to return? You could have gone anywhere ...

TOM: I think that what really influenced me was re-integrating with new music and the visual art world. I'd always collected work, in a very modest way, but there were all these living artists and I was very much interested in their music. I'd been involved, as an audience member, in New York. When I came here I started going to a lot of new music concerts, and really the aesthetics were different, the sources were different from the '70s to the '80s. From the '70s, I was guided by all the principles I had learned from poetry, so they were embedded in me. In the '80s the influence moved more to music and visual art. I really connected with the discourse on concep-

tual art, and what was happening in new music started to say more to me about the world I was living in. So I was caught between two worlds, and I wanted both. I loved it that plays could go everywhere...

But I think some of my criticism is where sometimes the plays are chasing a theory or a concept. Some people have found that in *True Mummy*. There are things I like about that play and things I don't like about it, but it has always caused some kind of controversy whenever it's performed. It's going to be performed in Portland this year and I'm curious about what it will be like. There's always audiences that are going to react quite terribly whenever it's produced. I'm not sure why. When the guy throws his father's ashes in his mouth, you know. There's a lot of desecration.

This play that I'm working on now is a very different play. I'm really trying to hang onto, as I said earlier, hang onto my critical eye, and that's why it's taken so long. Habits die hard. So to try to make a change at sixty years old and your process and the archaeology of allowing characters to surface... I don't write with any pre-notions of what—I don't know *what* I'm going to write about. It makes me claustrophobic. I wish I did. I love those playwrights who know what they're going to do. They know the roadmap to begin with and how they're going to fill it in. But for me the process is allowing things to come, and sometimes it takes longer. You know...

JENNY: It sounds like Michael Ondaatje, talking about his method...

TOM: And I envy him! I know that about him because one of my directors works with him, and I often desire to be able to indulge in that process and write fiction. For a playwright, the idea of having a narrator, no matter what person, first- or third-, is luxurious, you know—that you just run it off there, off the one voice, rather than being in the present, dynamically in the present because you're on stage and it *better* be moving along.

What the stage holds for me is still more magic than any other discipline because the possibilities are endless and there's nothing like live theatre when it's working. I mean, it's as unique as any other art form, but where I feel my strongest is as an audience member. Certain performances really transformed me. I often couldn't believe what I was watching.

JENNY: You distinguish between theatre that tackles the condition and theatre that tackles the topic...

TOM: I was talking about the work that I enjoy working on. A lot of people are writing about topics. But that's fantastic—there's a lot of them. Canada once had a reputation—probably for about ten years—it seemed that every Canadian play had some sort of child abuse in it. And there were really great playwrights, like Judith Thompson and others, who were involved in making that a popular topic. But I think there are other things to write about. I think it's hard to figure out—that's what I meant about a focus on "condition" sounding pretentious, but I don't know how else to describe what interests me about how we live. To deal with social, moral, political issues of the day, whatever they might be, in ways that can be very moving to an audience and elicit real discussion. A really good example would be the Mamet play about the professor and the student—what was it called?

JENNY: *Oleanna*.

TOM: Thank you. *Oleanna*. So a lot of discussion about that topic when that came out. It was a popular one, professors were getting taken to task for it, et cetera. And Mamet was smart to make it so ambiguous as to cause a lot of discussion. It was good. But there's a different form of discussion when you take it off the topic. I don't know how else to articulate it, but I think you can find that things are more abstract. Theatre can achieve that and be very exciting. There's plenty of history for it. Certainly with Beckett. Now what's really popular—Frank Langella won best actor the other night for the *Frost/Nixon* play, a re-creation of those wonderful interviews that Frost did with Nixon. It's a kind of documentary theatre.

But wanting to be in a more abstract form led me to music and the visual arts. I needed it; I felt freer. That's what led Karen Matthews and I, without realizing it, to decide on these philanthropic initiatives that would be for anyone to participate in. The first one was *The Acoustic Panel* that we did for the new music ensemble Standing Wave. And it was the first time since Handel that the audience directly commissioned the composer without King or Pope or Canada Council or City of Vancouver.

JENNY: How was the audience able to do that?

TOM: We organized an initiative called *The Acoustic Panel* where we went to fifty or sixty people and said, “We’re going to eliminate the middle man”—for composers have too long a line up—“and we’re going to give the money to Standing Wave and they can choose their own composer.” Bradshaw Pack was their first composer. It was shocking to those people who did it because for a hundred bucks they owned that piece. They’re all credited.

The idea of the audience buying into a living work was huge. We made it so that anyone could participate with that hundred dollars. Only one would get the receipt, but three people could go in and they all got credited.

JENNY: It’s a brilliant idea. How did you come up with this?

TOM: I said I think we should get everybody together and create a new form of philanthropy for anybody. For people who normally can’t afford it. The thing that made it work was not just that people loved the music, but that musicians and composers were contributing to each other’s work. And then we did this for visual art—it’s called *Location*. A roving collective for the acquisition of visual art for permanent collections. We got fifty cheques together, many artists going threes on one cheque—thirty-three bucks apiece—and we bought Antonia Hirsch’s video installation “String Theory” for the VAG, the one that goes in the floor. It was a huge hit. We’re onto our third now.

ANDREW: So that type of revisionary aspect to your work, this philanthropic element, reminds me of how I imagine radical arts in the ’70s here in Vancouver, even with the artist-run centres. These attempts to cut out the market sentiment or to narrow its influence in order preserve a more populist, community oriented approach to the arts in Canada.

TOM: Right. And this led to CABINET. For years I’d wanted to do interdisciplinary work. Things evolved into this foursome, Marie Lopes, Karen Love, David Pay and me—and we began by putting together visual art and music, and we produced *Projections* in the 07 PuSh Festival. And then we were involved in the video commission of Stan Douglas’s adaptation of *Lulu*. Another opera.

But serious song literature or experimental song literature—it wasn't happening in the country. It was happening for composers, but it wasn't happening for writers. The form was in a fallow period; there was almost none of it in town. So Karen Matthews, David Pay, and I decided to create *song room*. When we bought this house—how tempting to allow the house to become a venue, take this whole business of collaboration and living within it and take it into another world. Originally *song room* was going to be like a song festival, but actually we invited writers first. We wanted to introduce writers to composers, but it had to be a living writer, it had to be a true collaboration, and it had to be new. That was very exciting for us. By January 2008 we will have produced seven *song room* concerts and we'll have over a hundred and forty musicians and writers and composers on top of that.

ANDREW: One of the things I found really surprising about the project was that you stipulated from the very beginning that you didn't want it to be promoted. You didn't want it to take off—to have any sort of commercial prospects.

TOM: No. To protect the work.

ANDREW: That I find—from my experience, that was one of the first times I saw that attitude being taken. Even the most avant-garde or experimental writers usually have some eye on promotion—*How is this actually going to improve my name, my career?* There's a sense of professionalism. But that's what I found completely shocking about your project.

JENNY: You said you wanted “to protect the work”?

TOM: Yes. So it would not be judged—there would be no reviews. It'd just be people who were here and saw it. And out of those collaborations now have actually formed professional relationships, like MacIntyre and Blaser for instance, and other people have met each other and it's worked out. And it did what I wanted it to do. It lifted the value of language in composers' ears, and that was really important.

ANDREW: Have the experiments taught you anything specifically new about writing and music? This is obviously a lifetime quest as far as your work is concerned...

TOM: The biggest surprise for me was that the work had a more improvisatory nature to it. Music I can accept because I've seen so much improvisation in music, but where

the language came in—there was a lot of looseness and space to improvise. I didn't realize how that would work and some of it was really successful.

JENNY: Maybe you could also talk about the project you initiated at Cap College?

TOM: Andrew Klobucar approached me about the TCR Writer-in-Residence program... and I told him that if all of you could choose six students, three women and three men, to write a five-minute play each, that they would have to be willing to go the route in a very intense period. So we ended up with six wonderful writers who all wrote very heavy-going plays, from early pregnancy, ostracization, violence, drug addiction—God! Someone actually did put a poem in the play—at the end of hers, while she was in jail, she read her lover's poem—but it's important to know that you can pull that off within a play, within a five-minute form, that you'd be able to do that. So it was great. I really enjoyed it. In many ways it began with Andrew and I talking about "What do these students want out of their lives when they come here?" So they want X, Y and Z, but why aren't they interested in this, and what's going on with them? Everyone I know has the same conversation. So we let the challenge of the topic be what was going on in their lives. What were the concerns they had in their culture or their community or their family? And I think that's what released the authenticity of the six five-minute plays.

JENNY: Can we talk about this project at Cap in the context of other projects that you've initiated?

TOM: Well it's been the same thing as any collaborative project bringing good writers and theatre people together. And those Theatre students training—those actors and directors—got to meet writers. Theatre students don't often get to meet playwrights. That's very unusual.

JENNY: Right, and this allowed them to witness the process from the start. Typically students would come in part way through the process, with the play printed and ready to go. But I think it's an extraordinary privilege to be able to go that much further back.

TOM: One of the things that I think made it really great was getting them to read the Pinter Nobel lecture. Thinking about the world they live in. I really liked it a lot that we organized it that way.

ANDREW: I was quite excited for the students because they were seeing that you presented the work as a life project. *And I thought, My God, Tom is trying to create a movement!* and I got excited because—first of all, I wanted to join it—and I thought the students were lucky, because in a lot of my classes I describe really important moments in art and literature that begin with similar interests like this. People coming in and saying, “We’ve got to create something new so let’s drop everything, and we have to start *really* working with each other, and I mean really working with each other,” you know. And that’s something that I think students have a very distinct distance from. I don’t think they’ve been seeing many examples of collaboration in their own lives, social or private. Would that have seemed completely bizarre to them? Did any of them say, “I’m not into this”? I mean, the intensity of the collaboration...

JENNY: I think that partly it came out of the need to make something happen in a very short space of time. So there’s a kind of urgency that I’m sure had a galvanizing effect.

TOM: It’s going back to this conversation about what they wanted—what was going on in their lives—because to answer your question about the intensity and the personal aspect—it was very long before they were telling me all sorts of things about their private lives. The writers were very—“Yeah, yeah, yeah, a couple of nights in the tank,” and that guy calling me up and asking, “Can I use cancer as a character?” That’s so great—how do you beat that, you know? And generally everybody hung in.

JENNY: At the end of each of those performances they looked entirely comfortable with each other.

ANDREW: It was definitely a really important moment for them. To one extent it shows at a structural level, and I guess at a cultural level, the difficulty of forming a company because in a sense that’s what they were doing. I doubt very much that at that age and in a theatre program forming a company is really on their minds, so that must have been very brave for them too.

TOM: What I tried to teach those six writers was “OK, you’re the boss. It begins with you. Without you there’s zero. I don’t care how talented the actors are—without you they’re nothing. They’d have nothing to perform.” So to get writers in collaborative

models, interpretive models, to know that they can sit in the driver's seat, is crucial. So you see in a lot of theatre, even here—it's writing by group.

JENNY: Can you talk a bit about your new play?

TOM: It's called *Donald and Lenore*. It's set in the Tahitian Room at the Holiday Inn. Donald plays keyboards, Lenore plays drums. This is their tenth anniversary and there's no one there. So we begin with irrelevance. We begin there, on stage, alone. I was more interested in writing about the condition than about the topic. So that's taking me all the way back to Pinter. For a topic—I can turn CNN on. Show me a play that's going to compete with all the blood and guts and all the topical issues that they produce. I've found that where we are now is confusion. It's different, the elements of the confusion are different but one period that articulated its dilemmas was between World War I and II. The art that was created in that period, whether it be visual art or music or poetry, we all know what happened in that period... all the -isms, Berg, Schoenberg, Ionesco, Pirandello, Camus, Kafka, et cetera—it didn't seem to be about a topic to me. It seemed that they were writing about some kind of conditional ripple that people were experiencing and grappling with. The horrors of being sandwiched between those two wars. It was an opportunity to look at behaviour.

One of the hard things for me was moving from the poetry world, which was more of an insular world and built in through academia, to going to a much more public discipline. I found that even though I'm a gregarious person—actually that's always been a big struggle for me. I like the attention but I hate the attention, and that kind of thing. And work goes out there that you've been working on for three years and someone else is interpreting the work, not you. So you're always in other people's hands as opposed to just you and that page and the reader. But nothing can compare with the intensity of a living actor on the stage.

Tom's house
June 2007

from **song room**

song room is an evening of new songs created by writers and composers. Since its debut in 2005 *song room* has premiered forty-four new works.

song room was created out of a desire to build song literature and out of a desire amongst many writers and composers to collaborate on new work for voice. In response to this we created a no-cost, non-hierarchical salon where risks are taken, experimentation is encouraged, and there is no success or failure.

In the fall of 2005 we invited thirty composers and writers interested in collaborations to join us for a meeting to set the rules for creation and performance. The format came to include a basic theme and mandatory rehearsals and sound checks to ensure that each collaboration has the best chance of being well realized. Each team sets their own agenda for how their collaboration will unfold, and the pieces are finished one week in advance of the premiere. Songs are recorded for archival purposes. The themes explored during the first six *song rooms* were “urgency,” “mystere/mystery/what we can’t see,” “science/alchemy,” “in betweenness,” “absence,” and “indiscretion.”

song room is also a party, a word of mouth salon that reaches capacity at 125 guests. The collaboration extends to the audience who each bring a sweet or savory to share, something to drink, and a ten dollar donation that goes to the performers. The engagement of the audience with the *song room* creators and performers continues throughout the evening. Out of these post-performance discussions many new collaborations have evolved.

The salon environment has allowed *song room* to explore all types of music and performance from classical to experimental improv, electronics, jazz, hip hop, and folk. The performance in a home environment has allowed for sound to emanate from different rooms throughout the house and the walls and ceiling to be used for projections. The casual environment allows the audience to become critically engaged in the art rather than being critical of the performance. A number of songs have continued to have lives after the event, and although this is rewarding for all of us, it is neither essential to the process nor our goal. Although the performative aspect is important, in the end *song room* is about creation and collaboration.

We want to thank Jenny Penberthy and *The Capilano Review* for the sampling archive of *song room* 1-6, available in the back pocket of this issue. On January 26, 2008, *song room* 7 premiered six new songs based on the theme of “occupation.”

Tom Cone, David Pay, Karen Matthews



song room

1

Saturday, February 12, 2005

in between James B. Maxwell & Alex Ferguson
Siri Olesen, soprano | Melanie Adams, mezzo-soprano

Half-measures Neil Weisensel & Colin Browne
Susanna Browne, soprano | Neil Weisensel, keyboards

Lucy Page Gaston Jeff Corness & Vincent de Tourdonnet
*Peter Hurst, vocals & samples | Ted Hamilton, guitar |
Coat Cooke, woodwinds*

—short break—

Unselected Works Stefan Smulovitz, Viviane Houle &
Andrew Klobucar
*Viviane Houle, vocals | Stefan Smulovitz, laptop |
Andrew Klobucar, content producer*

Homeschool Andrea Young & Michael Turner
four channel sound design

all the lovers David MacIntyre & Robin Blaser
*Siri Olesen, soprano | Melanie Adams, mezzo-soprano |
Troy Topnik, tenor*

Hosts: Karen Matthews & Tom Cone
Curator: David Pay

song room

2

Saturday, June 18, 2005

(the) Rose Andreas Kahre & my name is scot
Carol Sawyer, Andreas Kahre, my name is scot, vocals

In the Cold Distance Martin Gotfrit & Marc Diamond
Martin Gotfrit, vocals & fretless guitar

Superstition Tom Dobrzanski & Zachary Gray (from
Lotus Child), & Arowbe
Tom Dobrzanski, guitar, keyboards & vocals |
Zachary Gray, keyboards, guitar, vocals | Arowbe, vocals

—short break—

Cold Trip Jacqueline Leggatt, Catriona Strang
& Nancy Shaw
Jacqueline Leggatt, Nancy Shaw, Catriona Strang, performers

Brighter Than Before Colin MacDonald & Judith Penner
Andrea MacDonald, soprano | Colin MacDonald, soprano
saxophone | Finn Manniche, cello

My Orange Thong Jocelyn Morlock & Tom Cone
Karin Konoval, vocals

song room

3

Saturday, October 22, 2005

Horse Opera

Al Neil

Recorded 1967.

Al Neil, improvised text | Richard Anstey, bass |

Gregg Simpson, turntable & percussion

Just Before Taking Jude Stephen Bagnell, Clyde Reed,

Out For Breakfast On A Carol Sawyer & John Lent

Sunny Spring Sunday

In Summerland, Thirty *Carol Sawyer, vocals |*

Years After God *Clyde Reed, bass | Stephen Bagnell, reeds*

The Song of the Dodo

Owen Underhill

& Meredith Quartermain

Siri Olesen, vocals | AK Coope, bass clarinet

Awakening

Marci Rabe & Leslie Hall Pinder

Marci Rabe, vocals | Jennifer Butler, flute

—short break—

Tekno Prisoners

Coat Cooke & John Sobol

Peter Hurst, vocals | Coat Cooke, electric guitar

Alchemy

Kate Hammett-Vaughan

& Ron Samworth

Kate Hammett-Vaughan, vocals | Ron Samworth, guitar

Lady Be Bad

Hank Bull & Kathy Acker

Hank Bull, keyboard & vocals

song room

4

Saturday, February 18, 2006

The Art Hung Quietly Marguerite Witvoet & Nicola Cavendish

*Lisa Waines, spoken voice | Marguerite Witvoet, vocals &
midi keyboard | Joanna Chapman-Smith, guitar & vocals |
Peggy Lee, cello*

Couers d'Amitié Doug Smith & Peter Quartermain

*Evelyn Yngveson, soprano | Jonathan Gourley, clarinet |
Peggy Lee, cello*

Red Distance Viviane Houle & Margaret Hollingsworth

Viviane Houle, vocals & samples | Tommy Babin, bass

—short break—

Resolution Brent Belke & Mina Shum

*Kevin House, vocals & acoustic guitar | Peggy Lee, cello |
Brent Belke, electric guitar*

Music at the Heart of Jason de Couto & Fred Wah
Thinking One Oh Eight

Orith Fogel, vocals & bass | Jason de Couto, keyboard

bardo: note Robert Minden, Carla Hallett
& Daphne Marlatt

*Carla Hallett, vocals & bass waterphone | Daphne Marlatt,
narrator | Robert Minden, waterphone & musical saw*

song room

5

Saturday, June 17, 2006

absence, the abyss Fiona Bowie & Joy James
of presence

*Stephen Taylor, trombone | Jim Peers, drums |
Fiona Bowie, digital instruments*

Phedra is a cougar DJ Audiowhore & Clint Burnham
*Clint Burnham, not spoken voice |
DJ Audiowhore, turntables & electronics*

The Attic Ben Wilson & Tom Cone
Doris: Viviane Houle | Art: Ben Wilson

—short break—

The Deluge Steve Bagnell & Stewart Brinton
*Alita Dupray, vocals | Dominique Brunchmann, vibraphone |
Steve Bagnell, percussion*

The Calling Neil Weisensel & Rachel Landrecht
Rachel Landrecht, vocals | CD

Celebrities Are Benevolent Ken Aldcroft & Kris Elgstrand
And Just Gods
*Ron Samworth, vocals & guitar | John Korsurd, trumpet |
Dennis Esson, trombone*

The God Relation Tom Dobrzanski & Zach Gray (from
(The Golden Ratio) *Lotus Child*), & Robert Bolton
*Arowbe, vocals | Tom Dobrzanski, keyboards & vocals |
Zachary Gray, guitar, vocals*

song room

6

Saturday, February 10, 2007

Squeezebox Song

Marguerite Witvoet & Kathleen Oliver

Heloise & Titano

Dear Mildred

Soressa Gardner & Adriana Barton

Soressa Gardner, voice | Karma Sohn, accordion |

Adriana Barton, cuica & spoken voice

Anniversary Toast

Leslie Uyeda & Brenda Brooks

Heather Pawsey, soprano | Kathryn Cernauskas, flute/bass flute |

Susan Round, cello

decatalogue 3

Carol Sawyer, Shanto Bhattacharya
& Rajinderpal Pal

Rajinderpal Pal, spoken voice | Carol Sawyer, voice |

Shanto Bhattacharya, cello

Love Too Dear

Kori Miyanishi & Leah Abramson

Dyad

Kori Miyanishi, fiddle & voice | Leah Abramson, voice |

Shiho Mizumoto, fiddle

ANDREW KLOBUCAR, VIVIANE HOULE, & STEFAN SMULOVITZ / Unselected Works

3-minute improvisation for vocalist and sound collage

This improvisatory work pursues a specific engagement with language where the lyrics are generated and assembled into verse live before an audience at the very beginning of the performance. The generation of text is not random, but instead algorithmic, based upon a software program able to parse texts semantically according to common word associations. For example, if the program detects two words like “canary” and “yellow” in the same text, regardless of where they appear, it is able to relate them together semantically, where the adjective “yellow” is understood as a quality of the noun “canary.” Linguists tend to describe this type of relationship as ontological, suggesting various linguistic aspects of human knowledge. In general terms, an ontology is any formal set of objects or concepts linked together via different semantic relationships.

At the beginning of the performance a source text is chosen from which the software constructs a specific semantic ontology. The ontology is then used to generate all verses for the song. If we think of the ontology as a type of “restricted” semantic environment, the verses might be considered new utterances expressed from a very confined world of meaning. Within this environment, new words can be constructed, new expressions formed, but their capacity to communicate is always limited to the semantic relationships already in play.

The inspiration behind this software derived partly from an interest in the relationship between language structures and our respective abilities as individuals to construct new social meanings and knowledges. It follows an ongoing set of creative and critical works on poetry and the augmentation of meaning through formal restrictions in signification, as derived from vocabulary, sentence structure or visual/spatial modes of representation. The actual program was written with the help of writer and computer programmer, David Ayre, in the summer of 2004 at the Banff Centre.

The music to fit this work must be spontaneously composed. The vocalist at the very moment of seeing these words must choose how to present them. A bach-

ing sound collage is then created on the spot to provide contrast and/or support to the words and the music of the vocalist. To manipulate the sound into a collage a software entitled Kenaxis is used. This has been programmed, tweaked and used by Stefan Smulovitz over the last five years.

VIVIANE HOULE, vocals

STEFAN SMULOVITZ, laptop

ANDREW KLOBUCAR, content producer

premiered at *song room 1* on Saturday, February 12, 2005

song room CD | track one

MICHAEL TURNER & ANDREA YOUNG /Homeschool

Homeschool (2005)

Ours is not a traditional author=words, composer=music collaboration, but one that began as a conversation about music and how music is used as an educational tool, specifically in rote learning.

Examples of rote learning exist early in youth, through skipping or clapping songs. Military boot camps provide later examples, in the form of marching cadences.

The skipping and clapping song lyrics were taken from *homeschool.uk*, the marching song lyrics from *basic.armystudyguide.com*. They were entered into an algorithmic software program, a kind of associative re-writing machine, and the results were sung, recorded, and, alongside additional sources (such as skipping ropes and jack boots), became the sound our instrument made.

The piece is 4:41 long and is mixed for quadraphonic sound.

Below are the results of three songs (“Little Dutch Girl” from the *homeschool.uk* site, and “G.I. Jane” and “U.S. Rangers” from *basic.armystudyguide.com*), with different random-with-weights on the text. Some repetition of articles and conjunctions were removed. We then selected certain lines for singing—lines which worked well over pre-written rhythmic figures, with others generating new figures.

my fit

my we

will you infantry

mama is naughty

packing lean submarine

fought the not

I to I

5.560

the mama
that hard mother white we onto

my twenty-four I
mother
see white
army in show never see

* * *

you down
if salt did your queen
to yours not
in

mean not hot al-qaeda
did in back
the twenty-four
red
dressed

I the mama
you till the infantry

* * *

mama mama mama don't
forget the queen

* * *

your baby fought hard and died
mama mama can't take more!

she busts onto the scene
with her m-16
she's a lean mean fighting machine!
oh! G.I.! J-A!
N-E!

not last night but
the night before
twenty-four dutch girls came knocking at my door
little dutch girls came knocking at my door

little dutch girl dressed in blue to
show the world that
we are the army
the dedicated army
see al-qaeda dressed in black with
my e-tool in his back

I'm the one
she would say
naughty girl to disobey
I'm the one he did not see
airborne ranger infantry

mama mama
don't you see
I'm the one
he did not see

...

airborne ranger infantry
see al-qaeda dressed in black
with my e-tool in a lean mean fighting machine!
oh!

not last night but the night before
twenty-four dutch girls came knocking at my door
little dutch girls
all dressed in blue
to show the world
we're fit to fight

* * *

little dutch girls all dressed in blue
here are the things they told me to do
set the table
don't forget the red hot label
shake the salt
and shake the pepper
who will be the highest stepper?

mother mother
knocking at my door
his gypsies
the head one
ain't night airborne

the force rough they cry
the back dressed scene
hot he low al-qaeda

* * *

cry the hardcore
the dedicated call
pepper she black he G.I.!

black ranger mama
the ill salt ain't did mother
see infantry
the with are white

airborne the infantry
over to the things
little white that pepper back al-qaeda

la la la
zoop la
la la zoop
hey la
hey
la
la la zoop

la
la zoop la
hey
la
zoop
la la la
la zoop zoop la zoop



four channel sound design
premiered at *song room 1* on Saturday, February 12, 2005

song room CD | track two

ROBIN BLASER & DAVID MACINTYRE / all the lovers

all the lovers

music: David MacIntyre
words: Robin Blaser

$\text{♩} = 72$ with quiet urgency

mp *poco rit* *a tempo*

Soprano: What would you do?

Alto: *mp* What would you do?

Tenor: *mp* What would you do? *mf* What would you

6 *mf* *poco rit* *mp* A *a tempo, marcato, in three*

S: What would you do? What would you do? If all the

A: *mf* What would you do? *mp* What would you do? If all the

T: do? *mp* What would you do? If all the

12 *mf*

S: lov-ers of your years passed by at mid - night? Dressed in the

A: *mf* lov-ers of your years passed by at mid - night? Dressed in the

T: *mf* lov-ers of your years passed by at mid - night? Dressed in the

18

S *f* *mf* *mp* *p*
flesh they wore when you last loved them, loved them, loved them?

A *f* *mf* *mp* *p*
flesh they wore when you last loved them, loved them, loved them?

T *f* *mf* *mp* *p*
flesh they wore when you last loved them, loved them, loved them?

24

B *f*
S What would you do? If all the lov - ers of your years passed

A *f*
What would you do? If all the lov - ers of your years passed

T *f*
What would you do? If all the lov - ers of your years passed

30

S *mp* *legato* *mf*
by at mid - night? Dressed in the flesh they

A *mp* *legato* *mf*
by at mid - night? Dressed in the flesh in the flesh they

T *mp* *legato* *mf*
by at mid - night? Dressed in the flesh they

36 *espressivo* *f* *mf* *mp* *p*

S wore when you last loved them, loved them, loved them?

A wore when you last loved them, loved them, loved them?

T wore when you last loved them, loved them, loved them?

42 *f* *agitato* *♩ = 68*

S What do I do? What do I say? What do I do? What do I say? What do I do?

A What do I do? What do I say? What do I do? What do I do?

T What do I do? What do I say? What do I do? What do I say? What do I do?

47 *ff* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *tenderly* *piu mosso* *♩ = 84*

S What do I say? I loved you, I loved you.

A What do I say? I loved you,

T What do I say? I loved you, I loved you

53

S I loved you, I loved you then, *p* touch you, *mp* I touch you.

A I loved you, I loved you then, *mp* I touch you.

T then, *p* touch you, *mp* I touch you.

58

S I touch you, I touch you now *meno mosso* *mp* *dolce* with all the glow *rit.* you

A I touch you, I touch you now *meno mosso* *mp* *dolce* with all the glow *rit.* you

T now *dolce* *mp* with all the glow *rit.* you

63

E *primo tempo* *mp*

S left in the palm of my hands in the

A left in the palm of my hands *mp*

T left in the palm of my hands *mp* in the palm of my

69 *mf*
S palm of my hands in the palm of my hands
A in the palm of my hands in the palm of my hands
T hands in the palm of my hands

75 *dolce p* *mp molto rit*
S the glow you
A the glow you
T *falsetto p* the glow you

81 *slowly mp*
S left in the palm of my hands
A left in the palm of my hands
T left in the palm of my hands

05/01/05
Vancouver, Canada

SIRI OLESEN, soprano
MELANIE ADAMS, mezzo-soprano
TROY TOPNIK, tenor
premiered at song room 1 on Saturday, February 12, 2005

song room CD | track three

my name is scot & ANDREAS KAHRE / (the) Rose

intro

SCOT (*sung into recording device then looped*): some say love...

ANDREAS (*sung in german into rec. dev. then looped*): this rose will never die, this rose will never die...

CAROL (*spoken*): summer's come and gone drifting under the dream clouds past
the broken sun did it take long to find me?

1st chant

SCOT: I won't moan and I won't beg my hands my mouth my legs my eyes what's my sex what's my name? maybe I can recall the way I used to be before you (came) whoa where do you go when you want no-one to know?

CAROL: you sat up all the night and watched me to see who in the world I might be I got a name and I carry it with me it's important to me that you know that you are free I find it hard to hold on (to) me it's a sad (sad) song I'm singing hey man don't lean on me man

2nd chant

SCOT – your head is humming and it won't (let) go in case you don't know and did you know our shadows taller than our soul no right no wrong kisses for ev'ryone

hear my song now sing along oh hey man don't lean on me man

so you think you'll take another piece of me to satisfy your intellectual need you're as cold as ice isn't that the way some people cry and some people die

I know ev'ry body's sin sing for the laughter sing for the tears hey man don't lean on me man

spoken litany

ANDREAS:

I wont have to work no more
I wont have to walk any more
I wont have to cry no more
I wont have to talk
I've been running a long time
I've been waiting a long time
I've been living a long time
I've been moving a long time
I gave my last chance to you

chanted litany

SCOT:

and the boy looked on when he came to his end you must take what you need if you
value your hide and never understand

they say he returns all alone to a place hidden deep and its pretty well known who
buried her in the snow

he found her a place on the side of a hill and it wasn't very long till she closed

her eyes and he wrapped her in a robe then he run like the wind

never had a friend when he died by the rope there was blood on the floor then he spit
on the floor there was blood on the floor

twenty one years since the body disappeared where he run to nobody knows

boy wasn't big but he hauled up the stone to the grave on the hill above early in the
spring he was seen coming down

in the fall of the year I'm leaving tonight and I never will return

CAROL (*sung softly over and over*): ...some say love...some say love...

all together, the big finish

ANDREAS (*chanted*):

I swam up on the devil's lake but never never never I'll never make the same mistake(again) miles from nowhere guess I'll take my time my body has been a good friend but I wont need it when I reach the end

SCOT (*chanted*):

your skin has turned to white your skin has turned to white you have made your world mine there's an empty space inside me now a wasteland deep beneath the snow words just words don't know words take you nowhere time leaves you nothing at all a year had passed and ev'ry thing was just as it was a year before

I don't need to touch your face to know you're gonna wind up where you started from

CAROL (*chanted*):

to the ones who loved in vain if you bin down too long I don't wanna know ev'rything you done try to defy what you feel inside tomorrow could get better than today nothin' left but promises nothin' much is certain she will not surrender to the likes of us but then she must I don't remember where she said she would be I don't remember where she said she would go back in the city or on the high straight for the highway or down the low if you want to know for certain what is hidden in my soul

finale (*all sung*)

...(some say love...it is a flower...that in spring...becomes the rose...)

CAROL SAWYER, ANDREAS KAHRE, MY NAME IS SCOT, vocals
premiered at *song room 2* on Saturday, June 18, 2005

song room CD | track four

ROBERT BOLTON, TOM DOBRZANSKI, & ZACHARY GRAY (FROM LOTUS CHILD) / Superstition

My way out

See me,

I'm singing;

if I don't die standing I'll die thinking

close my blind eyes. see not seeing.

undo sense and being

I'm smoked out the last of my presence

I broke out at last I'm imprisoned

I've played the game too. And when the moment presents itself, I won't make any choices. I'll sit drinking from my cup of god, narrating something. The revolution has never been so far away.

improvise and die, write a poem about it

A dirty limerick

there's a perfect sinister

merchant vender

lurking everywhere

just read the fine print

in my script, there is a silver threaded spine spent spinning time and value and tying things and finding kings in palaces, housed in battles in and around their own shallowness, living around their own cowardice, avoiding their hopeful power, hopeful, sleeping soundly, deeply grounded over my way out and this is enough right now.

so I disappoint you

no i can't save your miserable soul

Old souled

sold and aged

not wise,
but jaded beyond my years

Been accepted death not feared
nor expected. Checked in and dreamt it.
slept and reflected. unwedded, unwept.
swept in with the reckless.
Not a poet,
just jotted down our
good conversations.

closet schizophrenic
narcissism for my many selves... connected

So deep in the holy street lights
and so heavy in the metaphysics of game

3:00 am – Meetings at Spadina
where Silent Sam greets General Tao
and other teenage immortals
fooled by their fortune cookies.

My general Tao seeping out with
the sweet and smoky scent of a pin-striped button-up.
Been spent, spread thin-lined writings up.
Writer, Right or not, as One I found meaning in everything.
Selves living everywhere,
knowing everyone
reveling in their own omniscience.
rebellling in their own instances.
together only out of coincidence.
friends only out of convenience.
dissimilar templates and
resemblance in that fragrance.

oh there's a famine in the countryside
so so the gulags are shipping

lean sweet cuts of meat off the bodies of banished poets.

I give a dap with snap and a pound
they clap when I rap for the crowd
then I bow and im back to the ground I emerged
return to the earth and its pureness
the world is a circus
and I know (and I know)
that you know (that you know)
we don't care (we don't care)
we pretend to but then we go home and forget it with everything else and etc etc etc

nobody looks, nobody sees, everybody wants, nobody needs it
soul inner peace, hoping for peace, everyone speaks, no one achieves it
pope and a chief, dope-man and fiend, broke on their knees, smoke for the screen
I woke in a dream, arose in a scene, so what of me, a rose in concrete
incomplete

easy on the bibles and Buddhas
and Entertainment Weeklys
I don't like to subscribe to anything
but everything happens for a reason
and I hate that
not true, just a positive view
I don't believe in it
no astrology, no apologies
always finding meaning, I just took to it
I've got a book full of meaning and no you can't look through it
Stevie Wonder's writing on the walls and the devils on its way
superstition undefined like 3.14159...continuous.

TOM DOBRZANSKI, guitar, keyboards & vocals

ZACHARY GRAY, keyboards, guitar, vocals

ROBERT BOLTON (AKA AROWBE), vocals

premiered at *song room* 2 on Saturday, June 18, 2005

TOM CONE & JOCELYN MORLOCK / My Orange Thong

My orange thong works
like a charm,
like a four-leaf clover.
Ohhh
let's pray
for some dissss-
order.

My orange thong
works best
when I'm
wearing
my silk skirt.
Swish, swish
goes the skirt.
Ooooh goes the skin.
Ahhh goes the brain.
No panty line.
No hint
of anything
but my soft mo-tion,
my soft mo-tion.

My soft mo-tion
fans the flame of
an
e-pi-der-mo-log-i-cal
e-pi-der-mo-log-i-cal
flash,
goosebumps
on my ass.

My orange thong works
like a charm,
like a four-leaf clover.
Ohhh
let's pray
for some dissss-
order.
Ooooh
goes my skin.
Ahhh goes my brain.
I love my orange thong.
It helps the pain.

It began with names.
And what they mean.
Then dates.
And history.
Then, the occasional face
dissipating
right before my eyes.
Then
nouns.
To my surprise.
My soft motion,
my soft motion,
my soft motion,
keep walking.
Ooooh.
Keep walking.
Ooooh
goes my skin.
Aaaah
goes my brain.

Keep walking.
No panty line.
Keep walking.
No hint
of anything
but my
yeah
but my
yeah
soft motion,
soft motion,
soft motion.
It helps the pain.
Keep walking.

KARIN KONOVAL, vocals
premiered at *song room 2* on Saturday, June 18, 2005

song room CD | track six

JOHN LENT, STEPHEN BAGNELL, CLYDE REED, & CAROL SAWYER / Just Before Taking Jude Out For Breakfast On A Sunny Spring Sunday In Summerland, Thirty Years After God

O God of my lost Catholic childhood, hiding in whatever dark corner of those edgy years I flung myself into so flatly out there on my sidewalks it's a wonder there's anything *left*, and even knowing you will never assume the form you once had in my smiling, earnest years, that trust just above the freckles and loose grin, and admitting my world transformed into this one here, the one I'm in now, the one my body loves, and though I never quite did this body any favors—even so, even *that*—I still think of that wheel of time, that revolution down those clanging, dusty, Edmonton streets, hustling down Whyte Avenue in a February wind, swanning down to Uncle Albert's Pancake House—before franchises, before enclosed shopping malls—our first introduction to sophistication maybe (we thought), going out to a restaurant on a Sunday morning, Christine clutching my left hand, our faces fresh from Mass at St. Joseph's Chapel on the campus, Father Pendergast in full, soft flight behind us now, the two of us mincing down Whyte Avenue in a cool wind, as young as we would ever be, our bodies slim willows moist in a vague pre-Spring it seems looking back now, our thin shadows cast in front of us on the pale but sunned cement, us trying to interpret those forms dancing in front of us against the grey, who those people might become in their lives, dark kisses stretching before us, back-lit by a Catholic God above and behind us whose long, thin fingers spun fragile threads connected to our hearts and minds, shortly to be severed as we spun alternately away from both our selves and that soil we'd been planted in, away into this room here, its white walls, its peace, its loony longing to go back to those streets sometimes, but its firm smile that *this* is enough, *this* its own vertical light, no

strings, no fingers, just a heart beating
in a dark it can take most of the time—
but even so, O God of my long lost
Catholic childhood, *listen*:
lift off the layers of hate that descend upon
us like cages, lift this sour angry light off the
streets so there is no shadow, so we
walk in a flat, translucent dignity
down our streets of gold, then re-
turn to the moist, dark soil we
came from, the real soil,
Enough.

CAROL SAWYER, vocals

CLYDE REED, bass

STEPHEN BAGNELL, reeds

premiered at *song room 3* on Saturday, October 22, 2005

song room CD | track seven

MEREDITH QUARTERMAIN & OWEN UNDERHILL / The Song of the Dodo

Oh humanus, remember my song
Columbus is my family—
from the east I flew to island paradise
herds of turtles, dugongs in lagoons
and rainbows of herons, parrots, cormorants.
Paradise had no monkey, bear or lion
no jaws that bite, or claws that catch;
and Calvaria fruit gave me easy pickings

Oh humanus, remember my song
Columba is my family—
evolution never thinks, will she need wings;
I trusted the sailors; they called me stupid and sluggish,
and ate all my sisters, brothers, lovers

Oh humanus, remember my song
Columba is my family—
I'm from the tribe of pigeons and doves.
Sailors left monkeys, rats and pigs
who ate all my eggs; too late I learned to run,
but never fast enough.
The sailors made me history; then men knew
what they could do in paradise—
Oh humanus, remember my song
Columba is my family

SIRI OLESEN, vocals
AK COOPE, bass clarinet
premiered at *song room 3* on Saturday, October 22, 2005

song room CD | track eight

LESLIE HALL PINDER & MARCI RABE / Awakening

I have made myself into a shape
that fits inside a cage
and the door grows small.

MARCI RABE, vocals
JENNIFER BUTLER, flute
premiered at *song room 3* on Saturday, October 22, 2005

song room CD | track nine

NICOLA CAVENDISH & MARGUERITE WITVOET / The Art Hung Quietly

The art hung quietly for the better part of December
and the fire burned on inside her heart.

She felt the familiar thickness, something dark and heavy, an ancient memory
pressing down on her.

Swim, she thought, swim hard, and she left the door open behind her.

She pondered the chop of the lake, the bare trees, the grey sky dreaming
of azure.

She wished for moonlight but there was none.

From the shore she heard the piano begin again.

The house with its books and red carpets and overstuffed couches irritated her.

She looked at the lake.

She looked at the house.

She looked at the moonless sky.

She slipped out of her shoes and began to run, her bare arms stinging
with the cold and the blood coming up in the back of her throat.

She ran blindly, lungs searing, feet burning, as snow gave way to slippery ice and rock
underfoot.

She stumbled, nearly fell – then caught herself, keeping her furious pace
until she reached the ancient apricot trees.

She looked back at the house across the lake.

She thought of the painting.

She imagined it, waiting patiently for her, casting its cool blues and greens across the
room like a fresh sheet tossed over a bed.

Suddenly the desire to gaze upon the canvas overcame her.

She started back.

Beneath her feet the ground fell away.

She paused, picked up her shoes and stepped inside.

She closed the door behind her.

LISA WAINES, spoken voice

MARGUERITE WITVOET, vocals & midi keyboard

JOANNA CHAPMAN-SMITH, guitar & vocals

PEGGY LEE, cello

premiered at *song room 4* on Saturday, February 18th, 2006

song room CD | track eleven

HADLEY+MAXWELL / (The Rest is Missing)

A student of John Cage once said, “When an artist learns his craft too well, he makes goals instead of footballs.” For *(The Rest is Missing)* we wanted to make something to play with: an explicit imperative for players and audience alike to take time.

In collaboration with composer Stefan Smulovitz we were working self-consciously with the rarified experience of live musical performance, and what this means for video as one of the instruments in an ensemble. From the very beginning we wanted to address the conventions of this form of performance. The first step was to set the players in a line facing the audience, changing the conventional dynamics, aural and physical, of a chamber music setting. This line became our theme, and we thought of it as the thing that connects point (a) to point (b) in time-based media, a musical line, but also on another axis as a boundary, a cut, or a decision. The line through the work uses a musical logic of perpetual transformation wherein the composer designs a series of tasks for the players to carry out, eventually escorting the audience to the end of the composition. We carry out a similar logic in the video to ridiculous ends, beginning with a “composer” who has to carry a series of instruments. The movement of the composer—from left to right on the projection screen—is translated onto the static plane of painting. This is used as a pattern to make a series of cuts in the instrument cases, which in turn are sutured together into mutated forms that provide the material with which to start the process over again. The hours of footage recording tasks performed for the camera become the material on which we perform similar tasks common to video: projecting, collecting, editing, dissolving to white, cutting and combining.

Our favourite scene in *Cremaster 3* features Matthew Barney, as the Apprentice, filling the elevator of the Chrysler building with cement. We watched this mundane, but eccentric, activity play out with a perverse joy; the means are freed from the ends when the ends are of uncertain or contested value. We go to see live music because we love to watch the strange efforts of the players and their timeliness together. They exhibit

mediality, particularly if they are unable to keep their faces from twitching or their cheeks from puffing out. We're beginning to think that the popular phenomenon of reality television is not driven by a search for an authentic drama, but instead by a desire to witness the labour of humans, the labour of mediation itself in *an uncertain relation to use*. Labour has become a phantom part of our experience of objects in the age of technological reproduction—a horrific part in the case of mass production—that we prefer to repress. Yet it returns as an element of relation that continues without rest. We search out the means to exercise a restless, obscene, labour, as a sensible expression of human experience.

How does form govern the way we work together? How does the football design the game? A line, as both time and material process, is the measure against which each singular agent—from the video projection to the musicians and from instrument cases to audience members—each part of the ensemble is tested. (*The Rest is Missing*) draws out a line that marks the sovereign decision between complicity and dissent in the collective labour of the performance. What appears as sensible operates in relation to this line, and the rest is missing.

HADLEY + MAXWELL, *December 2007*

Stills from (*The Rest is Missing*)

STEFAN SMULOVITZ, composer

HADLEY + MAXWELL, visual artists

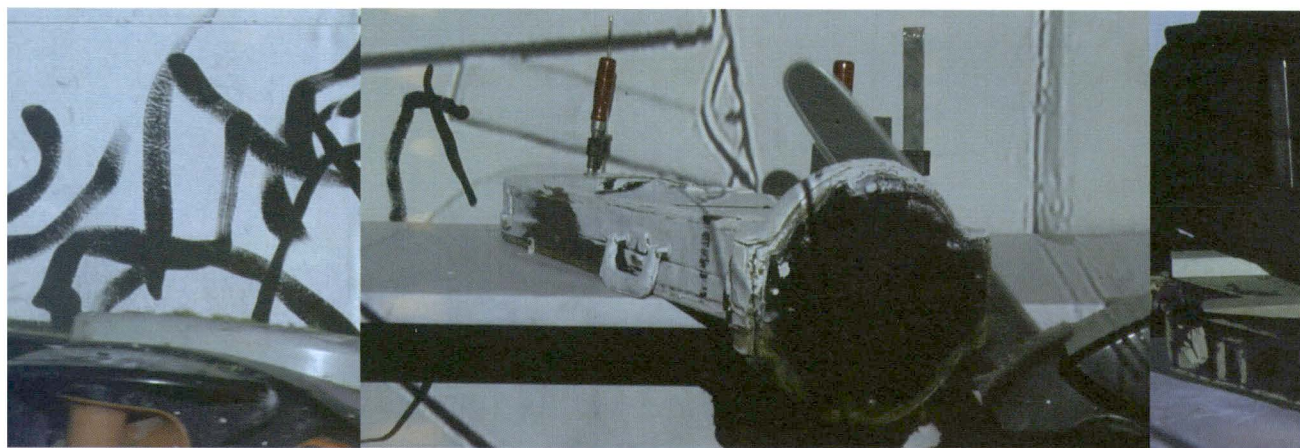
23:09 (plus variable intermission loops)

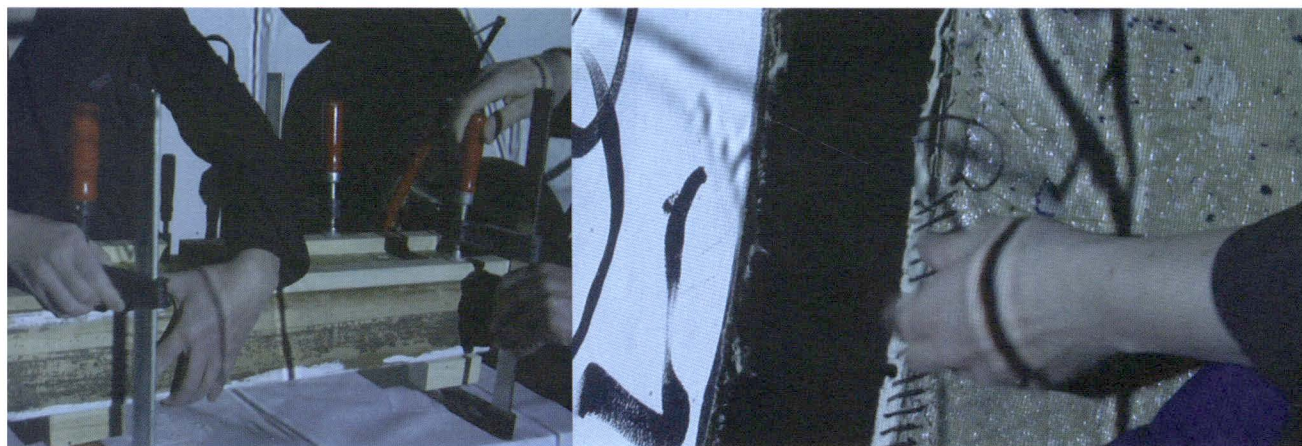
Single channel video, projector, 2 computers, 8 speakers,
4 woodwinds, 7 brass, 4 percussionists, 1 keyboard

(*The Rest is Missing*) was commissioned by CABINET: Interdisciplinary Collaborations and premiered as a part of the program *Projections*, January, 2007, at the Roundhouse Theatre in Vancouver, under the musical direction of Owen Underhill with Turning Point Ensemble.

















LARISSA LAI & RITA WONG / from **Sybil Unrest**

part three

is manic to mantic
the leap from opium to snow?
read the flakes, crystals
take dirt, imperfections, to form
face precarious balaclavas
against weather &
the heart's flaws
futile or fugitive, might melt
with one strong beam

from miniscule origins
to mysterious ends
condensation nuclei
defy the odds
& even the temper's blows

tempest in a tea party
hatters rave ecstatic
mercury tips mescaline along weft of
soul's fabric, absorbs chemical effect
moral fibre seeks weave
and bob

a martial stance sublimated
to grace in motion
coup de coeur
or state of the union
not for the taint of heart

let others tell.
i am told. out

s/he shot my perfect apple out
asundered me
my mouthy core
melts sound
down to the why, or tries
to make a chinese apple
into infinite pi

*and you want to travel with heir
and you want to travel blind*

decimal points in several directions
reason's cul de sac
the address of champions
we make our home in the air
pie in the sky
captain of my stark
raven my naked nest
snowing black feathers
the over of others
eggs me on

face it.
ain't over till

the embryo shows

the fetus sings

destiny prompts selenology:
chang o moans vows
as the eggs'

monthly release
reminds aerial letters'

recipients how
blood comes
earthly insistence
meteor or metaphor
it fortifies

universal recipient admits alphabet
a's denial glances
b's pathology
the story of o: to give is not to take
french kiss
standardized by e. u. regulations
her all-accepting lack
antibodies this seismic shudder
waves a shock of crust and mantle

b positive, wish the gift
economy into b-ing
miss L and E, ooh la la
c u cumming for
to carry me home
in the anguish of language
slave to _ov_ or in or to or through
predisposition from sanguine to the face
ov music:
redden my cheeks when the earth shakes
forth:
a socialist blush an anarchist bloom
communal cravings don't subside
though capital incarcerates, distracts & distorts
the i-owe-you's have it: oui, vive l'amour

louis westernizes la revolucion
materializes conditions
for breakfast club
soft poached or over easy
prepositions deposit
movement silted in short vowels
readers digest instant message
smiley's icons plant worms
symbiotic systems feedback
labels loophole
"this way out"
the garden isn't gone
it was never there
utopia's ipod serenades regardless
want stands in for want
to whom it may concern

back in lack
tilt the glass so that
it's half full &
hail the composting hero
determined to cultivate her garden
have hens lay gorgon eggs
modus operandi:
infiltrate as cells
as model citizens
row house by row house
median by median
traffic in lavender,
sage, edible weeds retake
the city in which i lull you
out of consumerism
into loving the alien labour

o chicky
 dance if you want to
 leave your friends' hatchings
 grasshopper's aunt's all relative
 unzoned night hills throb insect talk
 mirror's defect plagues infection
 swarm from dull reverse
 liminal or vegetable?

collective forms sentient incident
 to sing is no trouble
 scrape leftovers to pattern
 maze of fresh detritus

the jobbly gene giant stomps out
 the maize
 thunders over gaia's song

but tantrum all he wants
 she's still larger than his life
 a scale of metonymy substitutes mineral for carnivore
 babies' chickpea stomachs grow to walnuts then oranges
 sunkist & sunkicked
 from the cooperative's orchards
 into the farmers' markets

grain elevates pooling peeps
 collective hunger stills nomadic urge
 monsanto clause
 ruptured cell cooperates
 temp rising to new balance
 runner's stretch warrior one
 give lip or slip flip
 dirty bird on colonel's modified wing
 middle digitizes rhetoric's mediatized message
 mutter ship

calling for alien avian
to pidgin home

dirges burn on kernel's mogrified whim
muddle diligent returns, material missives
mauling crypts
crawling for agrarian liens
to piscines clone
ostrich preen or congee's sheen
cells die for the greater ghoul –
it's antibio's trick
to treat us all, the shame

sham's enhancement entrances
real thing coaxing the coats off our hacks
naked chefs saucing
modification to favour multiple unpredictable enchantments
apprentice's hubris floods mickey's drunken floor
dizzy master dons emperor's clothes
chance winces
accepts roll of die
verses' loss scripts wisdom of habitat
weather's thermometer swells meltwater our floes current ice
gulfs wages ages nurture forces froth
to tip the shale

a vowel disappears or disappoints, veers & bobs up & down: i i i i i i
balls get jiggled & juggled, fish off or flush luck
prongs, sproings, sprints towards the finish line: multiple i's & multiple o's
from classic to zero, dirty calories preserve the family joules
more polar bears drown as glaciers disappear, repeats back to u, hand job or heart throb:
we're all blowing in the wind, fissile missives hit home: even loughheed calls a

moratorium for what it is, nude bitumen to lewd crude will be the last big gasp unless we
learn to sage know

ego waffles each indent engulfs its jam
 howl of the ow before o
ugh of the spew before u a slick solution
 to dregs instead
personal is maniacal wants breakfast at the pump
 lump sum consumption limited by seven sisters
avoiding flood of excess crude accusing terror as tactic
to limit traffic on pipe lining silk road
 persia to china the love that dare not speak its gain
every environ atoms its national interest gush to push fast on fascism
 while fumbling for a joy that sticks

it to the man: give eye teeth
or canine howl
for house of pomegranates
art in its own right & left, drapes a
long now
unfurls from seeds in the jelly
raspberry to rasputin
invoke a jammy whammy special
take a commodity vacation
as shares rise with desperate bids
gambling queens, dancing fiends
spin the mad machine
folie a deux, trois, quatre...
algorithm of the agon prism whirs

infinity ships fools
transit's madness trumps logic of cards
poker face slots cherry's choice
taxonomy redefines pluto's planetary status
if you don't play
you're still playing
king spades souls guarded by detention's club
or clover
crimson lie bathes
operatives' bloodlust
and diamonds dog child soldiers
hearts broken before they're grown
equation calculates even compassion
the rule of live and let cry

shuffle the tech
joker hoaxter pushes
rude buddhas & middle class barbarians
into the same soul train
sweatin' with the masses
on the metro race and gender clashes
ideals against crude awakenings
get off at the next stop
or keep riding in the hopes
of solar, wind, renewable courses
infinite transport & honest centres call
odds without ends

lama spams compassion
stance rations resist to go with the flow
is a slow slog moxie boxed
about the ears there's always a ringing
church bells ignite low swells of sad and had

sand and hand slipped a shucking knife
before oyster can muster
moon solidarity here comes the tide
 too late to save slit muscle
grit and gristle adorning flayed flesh

 thrash and pray? strapped and frayed
 patients wait so disinfectant and needles do their work
hope for moxibustion herbs & smart deductions but spit & spite prevail
 upon the cloister as groundwater dries up & red tide creeps, drops
 the water table below space age couple's maverick muscles
 what song could dispel fire and strafe, unholy waste?
 plant your feet on this earth and flex your sandy toes to the sky
 stay alert to remain handy
 night trippy & day tricky

 palmers cruise mother-of-pearl
long conquest precedes travel package's all-inclusive jamaica and roma
my pall to your mall your john to my con no one escapes air
 nikes and psyches busted by the charm of karma
 one-way ticket's vocation
 homeless returns
 prison house of language materializes
for non-speakers awake in the iron box
subaltern yowls against cat callers
 construction sites viral replication of creeks and counties
 enjoy the falsies
 when the truth is too holey
 for confidence men
 hens lay eggs in the fox's den

dub elbows you, the world, into film reversions
throwback to blowback
head & breath through the heart
rejuice & reverberate
as you wait for kuwait
stay awake for the stakes
no monopoly & properly kissed
make it purr make it mew
make the bridge as you walk
back & forth, scratch & score
the page for more
murrelets, mycorrhizal mats
hail all blue wails
to walk strangers home

tree catches windfall
anxious spin wins unexpected gift
head bonked by the wonk of subterranean support
hat turns community chest
slopes hope through avenues mediterranean, baltic, oriental
incidental thimble dogs chance for tax rebate on hotel construction
past go
every waterfront's memory of contact
hailed by jail
just visiting bereft
in the weft while warp goes on
stating ownership of web's reading railway
late of exception martyred & bartered
on security's earthly plane

red
suits
clowns and
criminals who aren't
papered in money's authority
venture capitalists park free forget
to thank fungal earth regenerating beneath asphalt
china creek disturbs the streets summons ancestral tunnels
immigration holds angel islands, handcuffs & bibles abound & go round
might missionaries harbour unexpected returns? some poisoned presents
can't be refused, just reused, exorcised, retooled for new
generations to instant message the future cell by cell
microbe by mycelia, vertebra by xylem
zygote by eukaryote, carapace
by axial stalk
critical mass
amends

pharmakon's carry-on contains accidental gel trips reassuring ritual
clients' false comfort after uniform forces dumping of toothpaste and hand cream
under the radar and
over the rainbow
coalition floats
nut too good to be true
karyotic mobility propelled
by cytoplasmic projections
all protections rejected by the animal within the animal
the mushroom in the restroom
spores mycorrhizal love across international airspace

a mammal kisses enamel
get down on your knees and spray
lotion in motion
enamoured of stranger and strangers
time-space travel from urinals to Utah
ejaculates across the jetty
fill your empty thermos with seeds for tomorrow
spiral dance or viral pranks
who can spill the difference?

hamburger today supersizes arable waste
harbours staphylococcus, salmonella, e. coli and friends
antibody becomes antigen
immunoglobulin's internal rehearsal mirrors
external encounter
déjà-vu au-delà
in democracy-to-come
difference tests muddy water of same
seeks ion out of place
on the lightning field metal rods tender quiver
testing electrical air for second strike

an unlucky strike might lunge
into open pit mines, arsenic & cyanide tailings
dry fingers tap tap on keys that flushed nitrates into rivers
wet fingers pat raw meat into place, grilled & served with pickles
this little piggie in the mirror stages butchered ritual
mistakes the part for the hole in the earth
discarded computers get on a slow boat to china where
disemboweled circuit boards pile up, give gold bits & cancer to the villagers
can't drink the acid flowing along the shores?
unpack cartons, suck poison from the sky
nicotine fits the addiction to devour
what's missing from this picture

the girl in the picture

not

missing exactly

not there

napalm naked

the one who speaks is not the girl in the picture she is every fish
the acid river coughs up every eater of fish every arsenic atom pulsing or poisoning every
breath you take every piggy every burger hamming for the man every mushroom every
murrelet every mycorrhizal mat every lightning strike

in the cameras of the world

every every

and nothing but the lens's envy handing us our own hearts

battered on platters

shattered in stairwells

the girls know

they add what they know to what

they don't know what they feel

to what they don't feel

what they have to what

they don't have what they are

to what they are not

village in black smoke

motherfather terror

running

not the picture

the thing

not the thing

the moment

not the moment past

the moment present

not the moment present

not not

not

never

that

mercury & memory circulate faster as global tempo rises:

that

dow sold napalm

bought union carbide

that dow

belongs to these icons:

bhopal baby girl face unburied

naked vietnamese girl

running

bring that dow to market

to court

before thousands of unseen bodies who lived in the earth

cu chi tunnels outran the invaders

cavernous kitchens, dormitories, underground theatres

rice paddies & rubber trees grow back after the american war

kiosks sprout

t-shirts and silent hurts

what remains to be seen: redress

red dress swans brilliant feathers

victor charlie

warps mutation to meet woof of return

confiscation refusal detainment

slides democratic protest shakes author's corpse to life

from dust to delight

wiggles truth's gleaming tooth

kernal precedes kinetic modification

embedded love goddesses

miracle sapodilla, durian, lotus leaf, rambutan, eggfruit, custard apple

swell from earth

rim before roll aches future content

enters breath

floods atmosphere

buoys air

silk unravels

red redresses duress

undresses

recovers

cell culture's defiant drag

modifies mitochondria

joy ride to synthetic natural

parachute catches air to hold human aloft

NANCY SHAW & CATRIONA STRANG / Lamentarama

for Henry Purcell

no explanation no heat no light
—Samuel Beckett

Overture

All easily escaped
past grasp, past date

and still I, the grating go-
ound beloved, all moonshone
like the grey sweet reaching
liver-all, the impossible
crisp-foot air

Lamentarama: Act 1

Enter Belinda and Dido

BELINDA: A ring, a rope, a rush

DIDO: Now a grim number grits
 the light-shed
 (no wafting here)
 and no echoes

Enter the All-Girls Chorus

BELINDA: All these women coming to
 afflict us, me among them,
 thronged and armed

all bearing down and milk-
sprayed rising
and descending!

CHORUS: But fleshier and encroaching:
every cut, bruise, and scar
each stitch and every fucking bomb—all unrecorded
we now sing:
(*they sing*)
and the arms still like mad
encroach we to the fair
each cloud increases
complaint, but looks admit
no disclosure there—which storm
attains again? We know lux
rarely permits (and here you also
smile—the pleasure, the property)

a gust in us would tender
or skull, like an entered one
just as the strong's history rocks with misfortune

so peace and we are foreigners

DIDO: Is this was me?
I've learned to
have, so rationally my breast
can lend a hand.
I'd just as well allow a melt
like you (poor
unhappy softly)
but just now I can't hear you.

BELINDA: (*becoming repeatedly part of the choir*)

As if to avenge but
not avenge, all furies
away—we now await
the unspoken, unrewarded
not even neglected: we are
alarmed, we will
not rise, our danger
lingers

(*enter Aeneas, glittering*)

AENEAS: My likes only
like you, I
never, never worry:
girl, this life is
your way, with
flowers igniting—
meets become met
oh proceed the
sound yard!

Dancing.

BELINDA (*to Dido*): See that, how
divine form is!

DIDO: If could would please me, I—
Me with I—
I'm in love with a worried county

AENEAS (*to Dido*): You have
no exit, let me
smile, you cut

causes, little
chases of destiny

CHORUS: (*elbowing in*)

Love transfers
the only point
rings mention (that is
terrible in the
heart) and she
of this cannot
but feast

AENEAS: A case of the hero
happens once again!
not in despair
the facts get off

Dances. A Glittering Cacophony.

CHORUS: Rumours disappear
The day is
his own. Here we
rock and beauty lets in
order to the last little
chasers. The conquest
continues to love
itself.

Dance.

CHORUS: And the new
well-shadowed triumph
of love and
beauty at last

lets us in
litter coursers
little cuts
you little chasers.

DIDO: If it could only
please me; still I'm in
love with worry.

CHORUS: Love only transfers
points; our existence rips
material (oh terrible
heat) and she
cannot but.

AENEAS: My sympathies. Anyhow,
the fact you're desperate
gets me off. This Trojan
happens once again!

Dance.

BELINDA: The conquest continues
to love the language
that denies it.

Refrain: Act 1

THE TORMENTERS: one possessed colour
a thousand deep shafts
their hair disorder

THE EXILES: boomed back
allow us to settle here
cold flanks our
blood stained ribbons
summon up in
speeches of fear
and shaky locks

THE TORMENTERS: our theory of the dead
flocking drifts
a glorious wretch
rolling in surf
honey cakes
hacked face snatching

THE EXILES: you mutilated our testimony
the way ahead
now divided
suffer fraudulent
flames of war
the fleet skirmished
raggy crock

THE TORMENTORS: The Latins, The Fates
infected our purpose
purchased black locks
kindred bolts
triple plumed gold

crisp lace
howling for blood
against a tall needle
of flint

THE EXILES: drummed a dusty plain
 the Trojans flee
 Arcadia's brute
 and glinted shore
 of arduous bones

Act 2: Lamentarama

DIDO: did I express my astonishment
 when struck and swarmed
 though the instance
 could be easily verified
 in treatises

AENEAS: I cannot recount with discretion
 or prove in a series of facts
 accounting for
 the origin of our pleasantries
 yet I am forced to yield
 a deadly morsel
 my meager diet
 prescribed in vain

DIDO: Thus I mimic
 Is it not strange
 the act of cutting
 invested with
 tender touches
 given unannounced

AENEAS: tonic conquers all
soaked admirably
suited and
held dear

DIDO: my use does not stop
in the ruins of
souls sold at
staggering figures
as a pound grounded
on a pedestal pierced
with little holes

AENEAS: I took on a similar weight
my admirable charity
ground, milled
in glimmering maintenance

Lamentarama: Act 3

DIDO'S SOLILOQUY: a denial of fortune
deliberately vow
without doubt
or plead to
the contrary
in overtones

verbal dares
epistolary
conundrums
the gradual
dismantling
of ballads

I remember
the old days
spread with
delicate flesh

wipe down
and wipe
down again

celebrate for
weeks, eyes
proud in
dismembered
triumph, prepped
skinned
and branded

I keep company
among the
favored seed
sober brine
peeled in solicitude
a still pricey
analysis
the marriage
is clearly politic

Lamentarama: Act 4

DIDO: (*now especially precarious*)

I'll parry for all those offered
up disconsolate derailed
consolation – I dare
you, shiny – *this is*
the last time
I can speak
of it:
fraudulent care (a politic
mirage), all those unjustly
grieving—a hundred
deep—the hacked
and mutilated, the
subjugated, the glory
that lies, so few
return, I have
very little to lose

BELINDA: She's adrift
in no homeland
arms outstretched, secure,
foaming, bold,
and resolute, here there's
no return: since when
do the fraudulent
care?

DIDO: No hope
No homeland
No security

AENEAS: I can't bear
to leave her
there

CHORUS: We can't bear
to leave here and there

Lamentarama: Act 4
Refrain:

THE FURIES: for an emphasis on freedom
take the unilateral road
as a bleak coast
skittish caste
not immune
to tabled
panic

as mire spreads
basic sermons are tailored
couched always
on the stage of inaugurals
no banquet will last forever

THE FATES: vain bitterness saves
fettered morals
the inconvenience
their dissention
their historical sweep
is not so modest
the calculation
hammered

THE FURIES: those who have shown
devotion to death
somewhere
defy
net expectations
sacrifice swiftly
advancing doubt
who can be against this?

THE FATES: the first pundit to loose in a season
locked out,
slammed
a ditch wake
looming thaw
budge
stalked
dwindling gape
an even fraction
in dispute of a
ring
with spite

Lamentarama: The Final Act

AENEAS: (*musings*) Yet I am
my own radius.

DIDO: Pony! In my remembered
courage I announce
lodge-dirge and
rudder-rails (my erratic
coil's cordial)
but no more. I,

I'm a cramped
storm-agent, a belted
exit I'm sick
at the thought of
"Now Magistrate"
and swiftly stitch-legislate (remember:
courage) so here's
my question: can we
turn and yet
still remember?

CHORUS: (*in the way of an echo*)
One practical, the other much too terrible
for this open air.

BELINDA: these hills, this
flavour, I'm fair
game, I could flame
exactly to the sport
of recovery. Here
Aeneas found his
destination, exerted it
—exactly—
and afterwards continued.

AENEAS: You ought to see them
after-state, in my wake.
I have, in fact,
too much delayed.

The Dancing of Dido

DIDO: Can any sound recommend
this mass of vein
and complaint? Motion
must follow our storm, sorrow's
sorrow's matrix. See, women,
where the lake bereft
appears: such a prince
of the left-away cast-off shreds
as the death of a fly.

BELINDA: Box me in here and
remember, even wings
forget falling, softly
softening, but I
remember what I remaindered
from this soil.

Lamentarama: Epilogue

THE MISERIES: the conspiracy is nearly as vast
as the crackling of entrails

AN UNDERWRITER: the numbers crisp
a few flicks hasten
ten years of contact

THE MISERIES: what of those who
decide too rapidly
planked with glowering tally
are you fast enough

AN UNDERWRITER: are you
a month behind
run the names
don't be fooled
by their locution
shipping torture
tapered lard

THE MISERIES: imagine everything seared and shoddy
skin side down
like fine drops on foliage
rendered fat
manic bristle
mastering accents

AN UNDERWRITER: I would have to say
contrary to your
sentimental account

OANA AVASILICHIOAEI & ERÍN MOURE / PRANK!

The Roost, translated by E.S. from Nichita Stănescu

1

I was out in the field.
My pen stopped working.
I had to write with a straw.

2

Where they'd torn up the rails
behind the sewing factory, I found a field.
In the field, when wind rises,
the grass clangs.

3

I sat down on a concrete boulder in the field.
A mouse treads to the lip of its tunnel
and pushes my boot.

And the sky is a roost
for birds.

It now appears that, in the 1990s, Elisa Sampedrín spent time in Romania, where she came in contact with the poems of Nichita Stănescu, and attempted, though she knew no Romanian, to translate them herself into English, which she was also unfamiliar with. The result was immediately, and later, unpublishable.

Now that Stănescu's poems have made their home in Canada in excellent English versions (in *Occupational Sickness* from BuschekBooks, tr. Oana Avasilichioaei), it at last makes sense to unearth some of Sampedrín's poems.

Erín Moure, a Canadian poet who previously collected Sampedrín's statements on theatres in her own *Little Theatres*, has examined these translations in the light of Sampedrín's known history, and insists it is impossible that they be hers.

We attribute them to her anyhow, believing Moure wrong in her archaeography.

A critic had this to say about Sampedrín's attempts at translation: "The line, the poetic line, confounds geometry. It becomes *lineage*, which is to say, older and younger at once."

Prajina/Cotețul, restored to Romanian by O.A., from the English of E.S.

1

Eram pe teren.
Stiloul n-a mai vrut să scrie.
Am fost silit să scriu cu un pai.

2

Unde au smuls șinele
după uzina de textile, am găsit un câmp.
Pe câmp, când vântul se întetește,
iarba dangăna.

3

M-am așezat în câmp, pe un bolovan de beton.
Un șoarece calcă până la marginea tunelului sau
și-mi împinge cisma.

Și cerul e un coteț de vrăbii.

Because Elisa Sampedrín erroneously translated, in the previous piece, a poem by Nichita Stănescu that had not been written in the first place, Oana Avasilichioaei, Stănescu's Canadian translator, was obliged to translate backward, and create the original Stănescu poem we have here.

Coatful, tr. E.S. from the Romanian of O.A.

1

I felt my foot.
Silhouette at the root of a scream.
Frost silting its scream with a stick.

2

Where smoke signals
dupe the textile factory, there's gas in a camp.
The camp's foot, when its vantage point interests you,
dangles grasses.

3

Me, I'm seized up in camp, one foot a block of cement.
A soreness in cloth socks tunnels sour margarine
while the chiasm impinges.

I'm sealed in a coat of rage.

The problem with Avasilichioaei's translation backward in time into the original Romanian of Sampedrín's translation entitled "The Roost" is that it renders Sampedrín's purported translation *accurate*. And we all know that Sampedrín does not know Romanian.

Fortunately, Sampedrín herself appears to have remedied this here, by translating the now-original Romanian of Avasilichioaei-Stănescu.

Prank/1:45, by E.M.

1

Put your best foot forward.
Stilettos in the hand are as good as a saw.
False stilettos, scraping the planks.

2

You can make a small city
in a textile factory, cook with camp gas.
In the camp, a huge pot of intestines,
stirred with a spoon.

3

Quick, put your foot in the door, and get your bets in.
Calcium and magnesium make the bones soar,
over the abyss.

And the sky—a car crassh.

Maintaining her insistence that Sampedrín's translations are impossible, and are in fact not hers, Moure claims this to be the original poem, and refutes any resemblance to Stănescu's work, though allows for the possibility of coincidence between her original poem and Avasilichioaei's translation of the translation of Stănescu's poem. Avasilichioaei, for her part, asserts this to be an accurate translation into English of Stănescu's Romanian, and not an original poem as Moure claims. Avasilichioaei offers, in defense of her view, only that a car crash means a roost for birds.

Jocul/1:45, tr. O.A. from the English of E.M.

1

Pune-ți piciorul perfect înainte.
În mână, pantofii cui sânt la fel ca un fierăstrău.
Falși, pantofii cui zgârie podeaua.

2

Poți construi un mic oraș
în uzina de textile, găti la foc de tabără.
În tabără, o lingură amestecă
intestinele într-o oală uriașă.

3

Grabește-te, proptește piciorul în ușă, și fă pariu.
Calciu și magneziu silesc oasele să zboară
deasupra abisului.

Și cerul—o pocnitură de mașini.

Avasilichioaei distrusts the notion that an original ever existed or could exist, but admits, when pressed, that a translation is an original, and that she has access to the only true translation of Moure's poem, which she attempts here to restore into the language of Stănescu. At least we now have this original, and are relieved.

Jocularity #145, tr. E.S. from the Romanian of O.A.

1

You put me in the perfect instant.
This morning my slipper with its saint felt, out the window.
False, the slipper with its egrarious footstep.

2

Maybe you built a wee oar
in a text factory, the cat tiptoed on the table.
On the table, language mixed
intestinal between all that curiosity.

3

Grab it, protest pictorial in america, if it so appears.
Calcium and magnesium are silly flavours
leaping the abyss.

And unruly—imagine it, ouch! The rattle of machines.

The original of the copy is here originated in translation by Elisa Sampedrín, who still does not know any Romanian but won't desist. We don't know how E.S. got hold of the work of O.A., unless she found it in a book by Stănescu, where it hadn't, at that moment, been written. Yet.

If the Shoe Fits, Scare It. (*a revision of Jocularit*y #145 by E.S.)

1

You put me in the perfect instant.
I felt my foot.
My slipper with its saint felt, out the window.

2

False, the slipper with its egregious footstep,
a wee oar out of a text factory.
On the table, language mixed
intestinal between all that curiosity,
no wonder the cat tiptoes,
silhouette at the root of a scream.

3

And the sky rose—a car crassh.

It is not clear here why Sampedrín felt compelled to revise “Jocularit

y.” As far as we can assess there was no need for such a revision. However, scribbled in the margin of Sampedrín’s notebook on the page where this poem is penned, we found this: “a rose is a rose is a rose is not repetition.”

Felt Hat Now, *tr. E.S. from the English of E.M.*

1

Stilettoes in the hand are as good as a saw.

She can tunnel in cloth socks

while the chasm impinges.

Quick, put her foot in the door,

get my bets in.

2

You could magnetize salt.

With your pulse I'm perfectly inane.

The tongue's just the far

end of the intestine, they're both

unruly, and what's between:

sly flavours leaping the abyss.

And the foot is the head—where's my felt hat now?

"We refute, we refute, we refute."

"What exactly?"

"This act, which makes the mouth hurt."

(Scribbled into the margins of Sampedrín's notebook.)

I inverted it.
I had to sit on a pen and write with a rock.
The crashing sky my roost.

3

Language of translation
roots in the factory textiling text.
Railway tracks cross uncross this junction.
Dangling legs over a cliff's abyss, children are innocent.

2

In the perfect instant language is a bridge.
You on the bridge
bird-soaring.

1

Are we game?

The sole poem worth reading in the original appears to be this one, a gaming lesson, by Oana Avasilichioaei. The rest of the poem is a prank.

TED BYRNE / from Duets

Sonnets : Louise Labé (from Set One)

20

(Pretty my foot the void firmament)

Predicted love and its description
Who'd a thunk it but I knew him when
he was hungry and it was my world

It took a push really on my part
but I got there where he was say love

Predicted love you'd think it would grow
but when I see this storm of love break
I think then of love contradicted

22

Happy shining Sun to always see
your lover's face shine back on you

Mars keeps Venus in view while Mercury
slips from one heaven to the next

and Jupiter finds pretext to retake
the places from which he's sent away

Such the harmony that binds them fast
within the law they cannot break

But just remove the object from their grasp
and they would err unhinged like me

23

Christ what good your sweet talk now you're gone
torment of my splendor left behind
what good your tears and imprecations

What the hell did you want anyway
To make me slave to your servitude

Pardon me mister if just this once
fucked up with despite mixed up with ire
I wish that wherever you might be
you're just as buggered as you left me

24

Don't blame me I was beside myself
burnt worked bitten timed out and weepy

And don't say that I was weak or bad
Or maybe I was but it still hurts
So don't salt my wounds Think about it

Love prosecutor always on point
could condemn you just as easily
even if your man's no Adonis
could stoke a heat more vulgar than mine

Sonnets : Louise Labé (from Set Two : Reading With)

4

Only a god this awful presence
this boy a gift that corrodes the soul
burning from within our pain this core
decaying numbered but never trapped

For the deeper he seeds his poison
the sharper the teeth of his harrow
the stronger and harder we grow

Each day both we and the gods are tried

(Rilke)

13

Only if if enfolded wrapped
not dying but turning in your grasp
desire allowed me all my short days
if only against me dear friend you
hold fast promise neither storm nor tide
could tear us from Europe from this shore
our embrace this pole our happy death
if only your lips my spirit steal
away from here in bliss only if

(Tom Conley)

Sonnets : Guido Cavalcanti (from Set One)

13

Through the eyes a subtle spirit enters
and draws from sleep a spirit of the mind,
from which then a love-born spirit issues
ennobling spirits of a lesser kind.

This spirit,
 gonfalonier of passion,
quickens a spirit that consumes the heart;
yet another spirit follows that one
rending spirit from thought and flesh apart:

a fierce spirit destroying who and why,
for in its heat all other spirits die.

(1977)

1

You by these eyes transfix taught muscle
wake a dormant mind my anxious life
destroyed Love's deep precious cut sends
weaker spirits weakened running
Bereft face and voice make dumb show of grief

You command the demon archer's shot
a glance a bull's eye so quick and deep
my trembling soul leaps up and shouts
seeing my heart drop dead in its cage

Your eyes heartless love impoverish me
harsh noisy squint splits my resistance
and if you didn't smile once in awhile
my voice my guile would abandon me
and love would nail me to the door
with spikes of the imaginary

From above the corner of her mouth
the little wicked winged thought
climbs in my ear lugging the real

**LEA GRAHAM & rob mclennan / metric,
a collaboration**

composed March 24 & 26, 2006, in Ottawa at Pubwell's, 96 Preston Street

nashville

eight car hours border,
border some

lets go to
in the meantime, baby

cry nashville,
& a paper twang

drawling pen,
& finger inflections

where few & fewer
great white hopes

or memphis heated
dreams

letter to cooley

drifters we are
planted

a range of foreign points
to estevan menace

moonling words zip over lines
spent spiraled west

& further, coulee hill
& drift

from the america of olsons kingfisher
& a capital of trees

duncans fields—
to dance a game of creation

the clutter of it all

an open field would manitoba dust
unsettle

to watch my sharpened sleep

a head lowered, picked out tongues from her hometown
& based a religion on the entrails

we read future between the large
& small intestine

do you recall the gray; she edits the wind
w/ fingers

punctuate the dark; revise each morning

outbreak

to succeed an oscillation, wildly
& sing in her forever song

confluence & vault of feeling

an archaeology patchwork cars
& plastic hula dancing

this message on the husk,
downstream & wanting

an address in which
we send out further meaning

meaning what?
the fixed, wriggling

out of us like sweat

letter to allegrezza

a confluence of chicago words work out
cultural, a factory sense

of you, buona serra, buona notte
& sun at lake edge, your face another language

write away, the length & breadth of her conclusions,
out sweetly, utterably

into this south—a thursday blue of trains,
the scent of strawberry sun

the poem in which
you tell me alternate histories of elvis, america

in water & name,
refracting

into paper fact

letter to brockwell

to embrace the bullet; three drinks make four, the
hair of the dog

“all possible shapes,”
in amazing recall, a trip or trick, strange gifting

unnamable martinis, sedentary thick

a reverence in fog,
we all wish to be

when we cant pull—

chicago

within or above
lake shore drives the open world

michigan lakes big shoulders, stone
& arc; the object to *avoid*

lights & turns—
or the west is west is the billy goat tavern

that the sun

or meet me, focal point
a gateway; 100 years the worlds fair

reminisced, egg & slip mornings, farm

& where intent; drive, she said
or are you now

border crossings

if as the crow flies, two birds once
what railroad tracks

turn verbiage, a scheme

a hut & hut & duty hut, the
duty-free; entire zone

that is neither but

between concepts
or

a world

& what is still a single; patch of earth
could never own

flat fields of color,
power lines surround us, join

ottawa-gatineau

breed a cat hair condo breath
on provincial bridge the sunny side

chaudiere falls
mornings cauldron, rush & sun

wait for the punctual

this goddamn—
after talking jackson

street wise wear
& wears

caught up in drive

among preston
geometry, a bright sun day

the line goes under, out

metric

confluence of paper, prayer, an echo
distant hills, a measure

what failed in 78
divides

from town to Ontario town, a signature
soft against

“una medida”
a different line, the southern cross & cacti

would paper scheme

pen poise & gaze—
an arc, scalene

or inch but slow; behind

EMILY CARR / from **If She Draws a Door (about the size
and shape of a sparrow) Only She Can Pass Through It**

bathtub (v.)

after Daphne Marlatt, Robert Kroetsch, Robert Creeley, & Lisa Robertson

elide the boundary
(false, therefore instructive):
stippo grass,

shadow, evasion,
resignation, net for drowning

fish, fore-front for a hospital
for the insane,
a whirlpool holding

the leaf in its brief, dizzying
embrace *as if italicized* &

ambulating, a miracle
of shoelaces, of nature's catlike
& careless

neglect, of garnish,
swag & garland, a picnic

rhetoric not at all
dangerous & much simpler
than it looks, like blue fog

or relativity, like mortal,
therefore loved, like white

washbasin, clear tear.

grit (n.)

after Brenda Hillman, Juliana Spahr, Frank Bidart, & Carla Harryman

starved on vegetarian
food & seeking

a desk, a window &
a computer, with its wide

connections. through this,
& this, a sightline,

the shift from feel
like to subject, from tunnel

vision to telephone,

doesn't work aren't
doing *slam*

resorts to *this is true*.
over six major faults,

the backs of three
passive verbs

Mrs. Grapefruits jumps
out the hole in the screen

the hole, a there.
older than who, how, this

(*fault*. alright, plot. alright,
happens. let the edges be

edges, the casual outpour
of words (*this is real nice*)

puts poetry to shame.
the cat mews to get in,

get out.
nullified by having been

seen eating (bread,
butter & macaroni)

one ordinary period
of lying, here

everybody, let go,
touch, be happy, die)

piano (n.)

after Louis Zukofsky & Nicole Brossard

therapy? a piece of furniture,
beautifully shaped.

has soft & hard
parts like a body. under, in:

a great storage space.
an aquarium. the sudden realization

of being
just better sandwiched.

childhood & lens/ nothing
without a bench/ might have been

caressing a prior a stroke
against a stem spluttering

on the far end of
a lever: obbligato, acceleration,

fermata, counterpoint,
encore. iffy octaves worry fingers

spilt something had to
dissimulate it may as well

have been I

skyscraper (n.)

after Mark Doty, Erin Moure, Leslie Scalapino, Robert Creeley, & Yusek Komunyakaa

what's more frankly actual?
delirious, earth-bound, a huge, mechanical tribute
to longing
that hopeful monster
has no existence, except as repetition
a fox overflows from his hole
above a hairpin curve, nervous, absurd, elusive
angles argue with God
the earthworm dances in honour of...

sparrow (v.)

after Larry Levis & C.D. Wright

condemned to sing the angel
down.

has faith. has faith.

that's right.

it is not in their nature,
you understand,

to regret the mornings
& evenings fixed between

seed-littered heavens.

show me.

a bad sparrow, for example.
I mean a really morally corrupted
sparrow.

here.

we didn't wait, we didn't want
to hear...

fire & chatter,
chrysanthemum, flowerpot,
fountain.

flintspark & dazzle.

that space, saved

tiara (n.)

after C.D. Wright, Lisa Robertson, Mark Cox, & William Carlos Williams

heraldic, subjective,
glamouring.

(grammar's
etymological daughter).

cock-kingdom-come-crow.

matter got up in
a costume of itself.

any wounding, slap
in the face, lightning bolt,
gains character

from what it touches
in the world:

a young housewife
in a negligee tucking in
stray ends of hair.

the sparrow of childhood.

half-stript trees Christ
they haven't any sense to

stay out of the rain.

tongue & groove (n.)

after Nicole Brossard & Lyn Hejinian

all irregular shapes, as in the human body, have a moment of inertia.

in other words, tuck in your arms & let gravity do the rest.

sling-shot, like the rain flung against the roof's silver slant. tin roof. rain ping-pinging.
impinging. each this, & there, thought, staccatoet.

the fact is gravity & inertial are of a similar nature & often indistinguishable.

we married on a mountain. a man fell down a mountain. the hill kind of mountain,
a dis-gorged parabola. more sun than snow, & humming-birded. earth tree-speared,
fresh with hurricane.

there is leaving the mountain & then there is *leaving* the mountain.

there is the special relativity of the inertial state, capable only of opposing. for
example, if he falls down the mountain, then I have to stop him.

but I am already falling down the mountain & he is falling after, he is determined
to save us but his mass only quadruples my moment of inertia & the mountain
accelerates.

I know when I say mountain, you think Sisyphus. but when I say mountain, I mean
Emily. like whenever the poets say *as Emily said*, I think they mean me.

& I always agree, relieved a little less myself.

the further apart we fall, the slower the descent. get it over with, I say.

this time as Emily. Emily Carr.

slipping over the smooth syllable of his name.

slipping into her ghostliness, my square shape inside her roundness, this moment
become mass

Contributors' Notes

OANA AVASILICHIOAEI & ERÍN MOURE:

Oana Avasilichioaei is a Montreal poet and translator. She coordinates the Atwater Poetry Project reading series and teaches creative writing at Dawson College. Her collection of poems *Abandon* (Wolsak & Wynn, 2005) was translated into Spanish and will be published as *Abandono* by Tinta Nueva (Mexico City) in 2008. She has also published a translation of Romanian poet Nichita Stănescu, *Occupational Sickness* (BuschekBooks, 2006), and her new book, *feria: a poempark*, will appear in 2009 from Wolsak & Wynn. Recent projects include writing poetry that engages the language of fairytales and inventing translations from work by Paul Celan.

Erín Moure's most recent book is *O Cadoiro* (2007). Her earlier *Little Theatres* was shortlisted for the Griffin Prize, Pat Lowther Memorial Award, and the GGs, won the AJM Klein Prize, made the Globe 100 for 2005, and was translated into Galician as *Teatriños* (Galaxia, 2007). As well: *O Cidadán* (2002), and *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person* (2001), a translation from the Portuguese of Alberto Caeiro/Fernando Pessoa. With Robert Majzels, Moure has also translated Nicole Brossard, most recently *Notebook of Roses and Civilization* (2007), finalist for a GG in Translation. Her translation of Galician poet Chus Pato's *Charenton* came out in 2007 from Shearsman (UK) and BuschekBooks (Ottawa). Moure is now translating Pato's *Hordas de Escritura* and working on a new book of poetry, *O Resplandor*.

Avasilichioaei and Moure have been collaborating since 2006. With Elisa Sampedrín, they are currently at work on a dialogic work involving translational and authorial impossibilities.

ROBIN BLASER, DAVID MACINTYRE, SIRI OLESEN, MELANIE ADAMS, & TROY TOPNIK:

Robin Blaser's poem "all the lovers" appears untitled with a first line of "what would you do?" in *The Holy Forest: Collected Poems of Robin Blaser* (University of California Press, 2007). The poem is published here with permission from the Regents of UC Press. Blaser wrote the libretto for the Harrison Birtwistle opera *The Last Supper* that premiered in Berlin in 2001.

Vancouver composer David MacIntyre writes opera, orchestral, chamber, and choral music and teaches courses on Collaboration in the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University.

Siri Olesen is a vocalist, pianist, and organist. She teaches piano through the Capilano College Community Music School.

Melanie Adams lives in New Westminster, BC, performs with the vocal ensemble *musica intima*, and is on faculty in the Musical Theatre Department at Capilano College.

Troy Topnik is a Tenor who has performed and recorded with various ensembles in London and Paris. Since returning to Vancouver he has sung with the Vancouver Opera Chorus, Vancouver Chamber Choir, musica intima, and in a variety of recitals and chamber music concerts.

ROBERT BOLTON, ZACHARY GRAY, & TOM DOBRZANSKI:

Robert Bolton (aka Arowbe) is an award-winning poet and recording artist. He has performed across Canada, Japan, and Cuba. He currently works and lives in Toronto.

Zachary Gray and Tom Dobrzanski are founding members of the art-rock group *Lotus Child*. They live in Vancouver and perform widely. Their latest record is *Gossip Diet*.

Bolton, Gray, and Dobrzanski have been occasional collaborators since 2004.

TED BYRNE AND LOUISE LABÉ's collaboration "was inevitable from our first encounter in the McMaster University library. It is said that Calvin called her a strumpet. I found her immodest, to be sure, but always decorous. She was bourgeois before it was respectable. Guillaume Paradin, a Catholic deacon, thought her 'virtuous, angelic of face, and with an understanding superior to her sex.' I loved the use she made of Ovid, Erasmus and Tibullus. In the short space of twenty-four sonnets, she turned Petrarch on his head and gave him a much anticipated spanking. I know it will be said that this is a work of paranoia and not of translation. I agree. There's a point at which one has to cross that line simply in order to reassure oneself of one's existence. And yet, from the bottom of my heart, I believe, because we worked so closely together, that these are faithful translations. I defy you to show us one error. Some of our collaborations have been published in *West Coast Line*, *W* and *The Gig*. I am just beginning to work with Guido Cavalcanti, trying to get back in touch with my masculine side. The less said about that the better."

EMILY CARR is a doctoral candidate at the University of Calgary studying contemporary poetics and performance studies. These poems are from her most recent manuscript *If She Draws a Door (about the size and shape of a sparrow) Only She Can Pass Through It*. Each poem is a collaboration with a variety of contemporary Canadian and American poets' voices, grammars, forms. "The only constraint was allowing single words and slices of language to drift into and re-shape my writing. The dictionary form thus becomes a performance of self expression through the shared experience of language."

NICOLA CAVENDISH, MARGUERITE WITVOET, LISA WAINES, JOANNA CHAPMAN-SMITH, & PEGGY LEE:

Nicola Cavendish is one of Vancouver's most celebrated actors.

Marguerite Witvoet is a pianist, vocalist, composer, sound designer, music director, and vocal coach— one of Vancouver's most creative and versatile musicians.

Lisa Waines is a Vancouver-based performer who has worked extensively with Marguerite Witvoet and is currently artist-in-residence at Vancouver New Stage.

Joanna Chapman-Smith is a Vancouver based singer/multi-instrumentalist (specializing in guitar, piano, clarinet, percussion) who writes and performs widely in contemporary, interdisciplinary, and popular forms. <www.joannacs.com>

Peggy Lee, cellist, is a frequent performer in Vancouver and abroad as a soloist and with ensembles such as Turning Point, Talking Pictures, the Tony Wilson Sextet, the New Orchestra Workshop, and others.

TOM CONE, JOCELYN MORLOCK, & KARIN KONOVAL:

Tom Cone's plays include *Herringbone*, *Stargazing*, *Love at Last Sight*, and *True Mummy*; his adaptations of classic plays include Molière's *The Miser* and Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters* that premiered at the Stratford Festival where he was a writer-in-residence; his librettos include *The Architect* composed by David MacIntyre for Vancouver Opera, *The Gang* composed by Peter Hannan for Vancouver New Music, and *Game Misconduct* composed by Leslie Uyeda for Festival Vancouver.

Jocelyn Morlock's compositions explore unusual timbres made possible by extended playing techniques, at times in combination with relatively tonal or modal idioms. She enjoys experimenting with music of many styles and eras.

Karin Konoval is a professional actor and singer who lives in Vancouver.

LEA GRAHAM & ROB MCLENNAN:

Lea Graham's poems, translations, reviews, and articles have been published in or are forthcoming in journals such as *Notre Dame Review*, *American Letters & Commentary*, *Mudlark*, *Shadow Train*, and *The Worcester Review*. Her work is in the recent anthology *The City Visible: Chicago Poetry in the 21st Century*. Her chapbook, *Calendar Girls*, was published in spring 2006 by above/ground Press in Ottawa. She is Assistant Professor of English at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, where she, otherwise, passes her time playing gin rummy, working on her triceps, and planning her next trip (the Galapagos!).

rob mclennan is the author of fourteen poetry collections in three countries, the novel *white*, and two books of non-fiction, *subverting the lyric: essays* and *Ottawa: The Unknown City*. He is the editor of an upcoming issue of *Open Letter* and he both edits and publishes above/ground press, Chaudiere Books, the online critical journal *Poetics.ca* (www.poetics.ca, with Stephen

Brockwell), and the poetry annual *ottawater* (www.ottawater.com). He posts reviews, essays, and other notices regularly at www.robmcclennan.blogspot.com, and is currently spending the winter in Edmonton as writer-in-residence at the University of Alberta

The collaborations between Graham and mcclennan were originally composed at Pubwells Restaurant on Preston Street in Ottawa on Friday, March 24, 2006.

HADLEY + MAXWELL have been working together since they started dating in 1997. They graduated from Emily Carr Institute in Vancouver the following year, and co-wrote a thesis on collaboration to receive their Masters in Communications from the European Graduate School, Switzerland, in 2004. Recent exhibitions involving music, video, and installation include *Deleted Scenes* at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, “*I want to show you somewhere*” with Lucien Samaha at the Cooley Gallery, Portland, and *1+1-1* at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. They have worked with dance, music, and opera productions, and exhibited and published work internationally, with upcoming projects in Canada, the United States, Germany and Taiwan. They are currently based in Berlin.

LESLIE HALL PINDER, MARCI RABE, & JENNIFER BUTLER:

Leslie Hall Pinder is a novelist, sometimes librettist, former lawyer. She has published two novels, *Under the House* (Talonbooks 1986) and *On Double Tracks* (Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990), the latter of which was nominated for a Governor General's Award.

Marci Rabe is a composer and singer whose work has been commissioned and presented by Vancouver New Music, Ensemble Contemporain de Montreal Music, Continuum Contemporary Music, and many others.

Jennifer Butler is a Vancouver based composer and performer. She is currently completing a Doctorate of Musical Arts in music composition at UBC. <www.jenniferbutler.ca>

ANDREAS KAHRE, MY NAME IS SCOT, & CAROL SAWYER:

Andreas Kahre, editor/curator of FRONT Magazine in Vancouver, is an interdisciplinary artist, designer, writer, and musician who has been involved in creating more than a hundred projects with theatre, dance, and music ensembles across Canada.

my name is scot is a Vancouver based artist who works with text, video, performance, and installation to explore issues of class, kindness, identity, and agency.

Carol Sawyer is a singer and visual artist living in Vancouver who makes improvised music, photographs, videos, and installations.

ANDREW KLOBUCAR, VIVIANE HOULE, & STEFAN SMULOVITZ:

Andrew Klobucar is a writer and lecturer in the English Department at Capilano College, North Vancouver.

Viviane Houle is a vocalist, improviser, and songwriter based out of Roberts Creek and Vancouver, BC. <www.vivianehoule.ca>

Stefan Smulovitz lives in the trees dreaming about music, code, and other fanciful things.

LARISSA LAI & RITA WONG:

Larissa Lai was born in La Jolla, California, grew up in Newfoundland, and lives and works in Vancouver. She is the author of two novels: *When Fox Is a Thousand* (Press Gang, 1995, Arsenal Pulp, 2004) and *Salt Fish Girl* (Thomas Allen, 2002). She was writer-in-residence at Simon Fraser University in 2006 and is an Assistant Professor in the English Department at the University of British Columbia.

Rita Wong's book of poems, *Forage*, was published by Nightwood Editions in 2007. Her first book, *monkeypuzzle* (Press Gang, 1998), received the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop Emerging Writer Award. Currently she is Assistant Professor in Critical and Cultural Studies at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver.

Lai and Wong began *Sybil Unrest* in a renga spirit in Hong Kong, spring 2003. The long poem was further catalysed by David Fujino and Aaron Vidaver's reading at the Kootenay School of Writing in July 2003, and continued over email for years.

JOHN LENT, STEPHEN BAGNELL, CLYDE REED, & CAROL SAWYER:

John Lent lives and writes in Vernon. He is a jazz singer in The Lent Fraser Wall Trio. His last two books were *So It Won't Go Away* and *Abundance* (with Robert Kroetsch).

Ion Zoo is one of Vancouver's premier improvising ensembles, featuring Carol Sawyer (voice), Clyde Reed (bass), Steve Bagnell (saxophone) and Lisa Miller (piano). They have just released their debut CD *Set Free* at The Cellar on the NOW Orchestra Records/Cellar Live label.

KAREN MATTHEWS is a costume designer for film, television, and stage.

DAVID PAY is Artistic Director of Music on Main, a contemporary and classical music series in Vancouver.

MEREDITH QUARTERMAIN, OWEN UNDERHILL, SIRI OLESEN, & AK COOPE:

Meredith Quartermain is a Vancouver poet and publisher of Nomados Books.

Owen Underhill is a composer, conductor, and professor of composition at Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts. He is an active presence in local and international new music.

Siri Olesen is a vocalist, pianist, and organist. She teaches piano through the Capilano College Community Music School.

AK Coope plays clarinet and bass clarinet with ensembles across the Lower Mainland, from the VSO to indie rock artists, and also tours nationally and internationally.

NANCY SHAW & CATRIONA STRANG:

The late Nancy Shaw is the author of *Scoptocratic* (ECW Press) and, with Catriona Strang, the coauthor of *Busted* (Coach House Press), *Cold Trip* (Nomados Press), and *Light Sweet Crude* (Line Books). She was an energetic curator, cultural critic, teacher, founding member of The Institute for Domestic Research, and devotee of the fiber arts. She is deeply missed.

Products of Catriona Strang's decade-long collaboration with Nancy Shaw include *Light Sweet Crude* (Line Books, 2008), *Cold Trip* (Nomados, 2006), and *Busted* (Coach House, 2001). Catriona co-founded The Institute for Domestic Research with Nancy Shaw and composer Jaqueline Leggatt. Catriona and her two children are active in the Vancouver home-learning community.

"Lamenterama" is a section from Nancy Shaw and Catriona Strang's book *Light Sweet Crude* (just published by Line Books).

MICHAEL TURNER & ANDREA YOUNG:

Michael Turner is a Vancouver based writer of fiction and art criticism.

Andrea Young is a composer/singer who recently completed a Masters degree at The Institute for Sonology at The Hague, Netherlands.

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Montreal poet and translator. Author of *Abandon* (2007)
and *feria: a poempark* (forthcoming, 2008).

January 24

JAMIE REID

Vancouver poet, editor, and cultural organizer.
Founding editor of *TISH*, and author of *I. Another. The Space Between* (2004)

February 12

CLAIRE HUOT AND ROBERT MAJZELS

Calgary and Montreal authors and translators.
Huot is the author of two books on Chinese culture, and a novel, *The Prison Tangram*.
Majzels' *Apikoros Sleuth* won the Alcuin Prize for Excellence in Book Design

February 21

LARISSA LAI

UBC Professor and author of
When Fox Is a Thousand (1995; 2004) and *Salt Fish Girl* (2002)

March 4

DONATO MANCINI

Vancouver critic, editor, and author of *Æthel* (2006) and *Ligatures* (2004)

March 13

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Prince George poet, UNBC professor, and author of *Finding Ft. George* (2007)

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—FRED WAH (February 2006)

Yr mail jarred me back to 1974 to Peregrine Books, where the first “books” I bought on moving to Vancouver were 3 issues or so of The Cap Review. Exciting, cover to cover reading, not the usual mag snoresville....I thought life had changed utterly!

—ERÍN MOURE (March 2006)

I have never felt so satisfied with the appearance of my work in a magazine. It has been beautifully laid out on the page, the page itself is beautiful (the paper), the typeface is beautiful. The company my poems keep in this issue is beautiful. For some reason, publishing these poems in The Capilano Review feels as enlivening as publishing an entire book of poems.

—JOHN BARTON

An image of the world as of now. Beautiful....I can see the extraordinary care with which each issue is handled, obviously a labour of love.

—WARREN TALLMAN



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