

# Translating Myself and Others

November 23, 2024 - 20:00

De Graaf, Gent

## The Yes &

Leilehua Lanzilotti (viola) & Gahlord Dewald (electronics)

—intermission—

## Extended Music Collective

Camilo Ángeles (flutes), Nina Vanhoenacker (cello) & Stef Van Vynckt (harp)

Marcos Balter - delete/control/option

Nico Muhly - The Street: Station VII. Jesus falls for the second time

Leilehua Lanzilotti -Translating myself and others (world premiere)

*made possible by a grant from the Fromm Music Foundation*

Benjamin Portzen & Marie Levêque - A map of all the places you could be, yet are not

Jason Eckardt - Between the sphinx and the bank vault, there is a taut thread that pierces the heart of all poor children (world premiere)

**We would like to thank the Fromm Music Foundation & stad Gent & STAP Roeselare**



CULTUUR GENT



## **Leilehua Lanzilotti**

**translating myself and others (2024)** is based on the book of the same name by Jhumpa Lahiri.

In asking questions such as, "who possesses a language, and why?" La-

hiri's book is in many ways about belonging and unbelonging. She writes, ". . . to translate is to alter one's linguistic coordinates, to grab on to what has slipped away, to cope with exile."

Throughout the book, Lahiri poses both different ways of looking at translation: "a series of doors," (p. 13), "a forest, a bridge, a child, a lover, a sweater, a building, a triangle" (p. 11), and different ways of what it means to be a translator / engage with the act of translation, "to develop another pair of eyes, to experiment with weakness," (p. 18), "to cope with exile," (p. 75, as above).

Each movement in this musical work takes one of those perspectives and investigates it sonically: opening and closing doors, experimenting with weakness, looking for ways of relating or connecting.

Musical transcription and arrangement are forms of translation—finding the essence of a recording and hoping to translate that onto another instrument not just in a literal reproduction, but looking to capture the nuance of one sound and its meaning with the unique abilities of another instrument's sound. The last movement is a translation of one of my own works that itself is a translation of a recording I made finding the resonance of a bronze bell.

Creation and development of the work was supported in part by residencies at Casa Wabi (Oaxaca, Mexico) and the Merwin Conservancy (Ha'ikū, Maui).

## **Jason Eckardt**

**Between the sphinx and the bank vault, there is a taut thread  
that pierces that heart of all poor children (2024)**

The title of this work is taken from two lines of Federico Garcia Lorca's poem "Dance of Death," inspired by a visit to New York City's Wall Street, just after a massive stock market crash in 1929. Lorca was undoubtedly shaken by the misery he witnessed at the center of America's financial failure, and was perhaps haunted by the rise of authoritarian power in his native Spain. The dark history of the street — so called due to a wall erected by the Dutch to protect their wealth from

Native Americans and the British – encapsulates the historic inequity and voracious greed of those “who drink a dead girl’s tears at the bank/or eat pyramids of dawn on tiny street corners.”

### **Marcos Balter**

#### **delete/control/option (2008)**

Part of a collection written between 2007 and 2009 named after computing syntax, delete/control/option is based on the incongruities between voluntary and involuntary actions. Its fragile and meditative surface disguises its quiet virtuosity in which sonic complexity is born not from the written idea but from the physical attempt at recreating it. delete/control/option was commissioned by Boston's New Gallery Music Series, and it is dedicated to Sarah Brady and Sarah Bob, with admiration and gratitude.

### **Benjamin Portzen & Marie Levêque**

#### **A map of all the places you could be, yet are not (2023, 2024)**

A map of all the places you could be, yet are not wonders how we might engage deeply and meaningfully with place through our creative praxes without shying away from the painful histories lived and living beneath our feet. Can moments of intentional sound and movement serve as a land acknowledgement when framed properly? What do we gain and lose through such work? Of what importance is language in this communication? I don't know, and I am grateful for the opportunity to ask these questions alongside such wonderful collaborators. A map of all the places you could be, yet are not was written for my dear friends, Extended Music Collective and Marie Levêque, and premiered at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity on the side of Sacred Buffalo Guardian Mountain in August of 2023. Both composition and choreography were collaborative efforts between Marie and myself, and it is especially worth acknowledging Marie's beautiful, original text which, read by her, echoes through the piece's first third. - Benjamin Portzen

### **Nico Muhly**

#### **The Street: Station VII. Jesus falls for the second time (2022)**

The Street is a set of meditations on the fourteen stations of the cross scored for solo harp. Each movement can, in some performances, be paired with plainchant, chosen to augment and in some cases provide counterpoint to the traditional narrative of Good Friday. The spark for each

movement is original texts by Alice Goodman — either read aloud or read in silence — which are simultaneously specific, evocative, mysterious, and poetic. Often, a single line will provide the starting-point for the music; when Jesus is condemned to death (Station I), Goodman describes the crowd shouting "crucify him": "the pitch dropping as it passes where you stand." The harp, in turn, plays a modern version of the same, a kind of digital-delay effect, where the pitch creeps down the scale. This two-note descending motif becomes the governing gesture of the piece.

"Remember the carpenter's work" (II) suggests an honest, folksy labor, work done with the hands; Mary, come to Jerusalem "to be seen in that first look between mother and child," hears the echo of a rocking-song from three decades before (IV). Veronica, looking at her sudarium (VI), notices that "He is printed in molecules of blood and sweat," and hears a chord, diffused and delicate, as if seen under a microscope. A narrator — all of us, perhaps — causes Jesus's second fall: "My fault. I put out my foot and tripped him. What can I say?" and the harp responds with a bullying, rhythmically intense unbroken set of shifting, stumbling gestures (VII).

Other stations of the cross take their musical cues from the attendant plainchant, most explicitly heard in station VIII, when Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem and we hear the chant *Filiæ Jerusalem* played by bell-like harp harmonics. Although Goodman's texts are never themselves sung, they often suggest lyrical writing which itself could be sung: the line "However low I fall, let me not fall far from you" (IX) engenders a little tune which haunts the final five movements.

The "rich, ferrous smell of blood" encourages the harp to play the instrument with a guitar pick: a small little hand-tool, brittle and sharp. After Jesus's death (XII), the music becomes simpler, almost businesslike; Goodman avoids the eclipses, rending of the veil of the temple and earthquakes, and asks: "Isn't it enough that he died?" As Joseph, Nicodemus, and Peter take down the body from the cross, and prepare the burial ritual, the music becomes simpler still, built on a simple drone on middle C: it's going through the motions, but somehow transformed into something uneasy. Goodman ends her meditations with the mourner's kaddish (XIV), performed just before the appearance of the first star in the sky (per Jewish law), and the harp, having played a kind of transformed cradle-song, fast forwards an hour, and ends with a vision of the night sky.

- Nico Muhly