



Saturday, November 19, 2016, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Myra Melford & Snowy Egret *Language of Dreams*

Conceived and composed by Myra Melford

Myra Melford's Snowy Egret

Myra Melford, *piano, melodica, and sampler*

Ron Miles, *cornet*

Liberty Ellman, *guitar*

Stomu Takeishi, *acoustic bass guitar*

Tyshawn Sorey, *drums*

David Szlasa, *video artist and lighting design*

Oguri, *dancer and choreography*

Sofia Rei, *narrator/spoken text*

Hans Wendl, *artistic direction and production*

Texts excerpted from
Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire (Memoria del Fuego)* trilogy:
Genesis (1982)
Faces and Masks (1984)
Century of the Wind (1986)

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the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, and a University of California Faculty Research Grant.

*Jazz residency and education activities generously underwritten
by the Thatcher-Meyerson Family.*



Myra Melford (far right) with Snowy Egret

Language of Dreams

I

Prelude

The Promised Land

Snow

The Kitchen

II

The Virgin of Guadalupe

A Musical Evening

For Love of Fruit/Ching Ching

III

Language

IV

Times of Sleep and Fate

Little Pockets/Everybody Pays Taxes

Market

The First Protest

V

Night of Sorrow

Day of the Dead

The Strawberry

VI

Reprise – The Virgin of Guadalupe

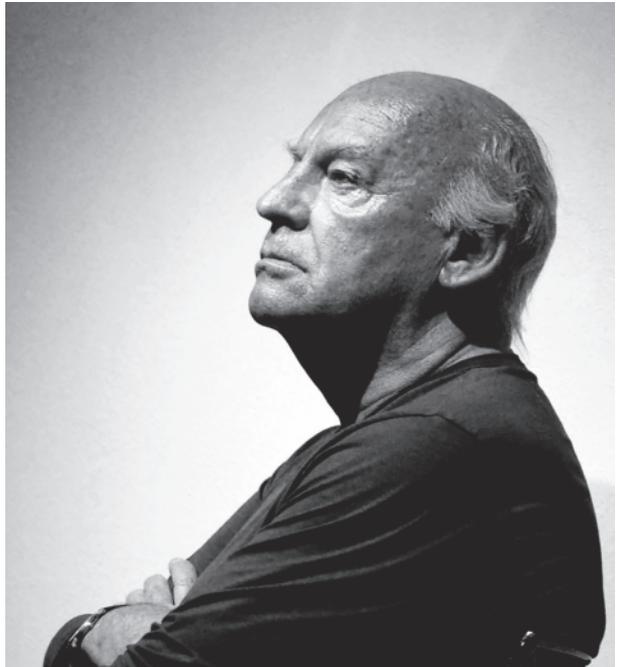
This performance will last approximately 75 minutes and will be performed without intermission.

About *Language of Dreams*

Language of Dreams, a new interdisciplinary work conceived by UC Berkeley music professor and award-winning musical adventurer Myra Melford, grew out of her fascination with *Genesis*, the first book in the *Memory of Fire* trilogy by Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano (b. 1940). *Genesis* shares a beautifully written history of the western hemisphere, stringing together short, seemingly disjointed bits of text that together form a powerful picture of life in the Americas pre- and post-European colonization. Through his prose, Galeano's philosophy of history emerges—that we can only get a true picture of the past through multiple points of view and stories. With a magic realism, Galeano's retellings of indigenous myths and European colonizer accounts each have their own quirky, colorful, and poetic rhythm or sensibility.

As a composer and improvising pianist, Melford continually searches for experimental ways to structure and create new work. Having first read Galeano's *Genesis* in 2005, she was immediately intrigued, wondering how she might translate his method of constructing narrative into music and performance. Following Galeano's example, *Language of Dreams* builds a suite from a collection of short compositions—approximately 15 pieces, each between three and eight minutes in length—which are inspired by texts from *Genesis* and augmented with selections from the other two books in the *Memory of Fire* trilogy, including stories from the contemporary Americas. Melford's new music is informed by vernacular American musical idioms such as blues, jazz, and Latin dance

rhythms, suggesting the music of the Americas while avoiding pastiche. Extending her love of improvisation into other disciplines, Melford's composed musical material serves as a point of departure for directed improvisation by not just the musicians, but also for the dancer, narrator, and videographer, with predetermined verbal directions serving as a kind of roadmap. By augmenting the musical narrative with spoken text, physical movement, and silent moving imagery, Melford seeks to convey a rich exposition of the many stories and relationships between peoples and communities, the land, indigenous traditions, and contemporary values that make up our world as Americans.



Jose Francisco Pinton, Wikimedia Commons

Writer Eduardo Galeano during a conference at the Librarsi bookshop in Vicenza, Italy.

The ensemble for this project is multigenerational and multiethnic, representing a diverse cross-section of the American experience. The sole lead artist, Myra Melford, will perform on piano, melodica, and sampler, as part of her Snowy Egret quintet, which includes Ron Miles

on trumpet, Liberty Ellman on acoustic guitar, Stomu Takeishi on acoustic bass guitar, and Tyshawn Sorey on drums and percussion. In addition, Melford has engaged three experts in other disciplines: a multilingual Spanish-English vocalist, Sofia Rei, to read excerpts from Galeano's writings; Japan-born, Los Angeles-based contemporary dancer/choreographer Oguri, to embody the emotional content of the work, responding to the music, the narrative, and the video with surrealistic movement; and videographer/filmmaker David Szlasa, to create a mix of abstracted moving imagery based on events and landscapes in Galeano's writings, making a kind of wall of light that suggests rather than prescribes narrative.

While the music will be central throughout, other media will be employed, with combinations of two or more disciplines occasionally playing simultaneously, creating a collage of expressions and perspectives and exploring what it means both to be alone and in community.

To create *Language of Dreams*, Melford draws on her years of experience as a composer, pianist, improviser, and educator in the emerging landscape where jazz, free music, world music, experimentalism, and improvisation intersect, as well as her past experience as a collaborator in mixed media performance work. She also draws on deeply moving experiences witnessing and participating in the wisdom tradition of the Huichol Indians of Mexico, using these personally transformative teachings and stories, rituals, and ceremonial music as inspiration for *Language of Dreams*.

Melford's vision is to create a beautiful, moving, and powerful multi-sensual experience for the audience that invokes reflection and provokes dialogue about our collective histories and path forward as "Americans" (in the broadest sense). Everything evoked through music, movement, text, and video imagery will be reflection of who and what we are, recognizing our diverse cultures, landscapes, events, and ways of life in the Americas. By being inclusive in our stories, we also create a whole in which each of these cultures exist, even as we allow for tension or conflict as well as harmony and resolution in the telling.

Myra Melford (*composer, piano, melodica, and sampler*) is a composer, performer, and Guggenheim fellow for whom the personal and the poetic have always been intimately connected. Raised in a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house, she grew up literally surrounded by art. Where most of us find the beauty in our childhood homes through the memories and associations we make within their four walls, Melford saw early on that aesthetic expression could both be built from and provide a structure for profound emotions.

For more than two decades, Melford has crafted a singular sound world, harmonizing the intricate and the expressive, the meditative and the assertive, the cerebral and the playful. Drawing inspiration from a vast spectrum of cultural and spiritual traditions and artistic disciplines, she has found a "spark of recognition" in sources as diverse as the writings of the 13th-century Persian poet Rumi and the Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano; the wisdom of Zen Buddhism and the Huichol Indians of Mexico; and the music of mentors like Jaki Byard, Don Pullen, and Henry Threadgill.

Her latest working group, Snowy Egret, is comprised of some of creative music's most inventive and individual voices: cornetist Ron Miles, guitarist Liberty Ellman, bassist Stomu Takeishi, and drummer Tyshawn Sorey. Melford's spacious, contemplative, exploratory compositions have long attracted, and almost demanded, such forward-thinking artists; her other ensembles have included Cuong Vu, Dave Douglas, Chris Speed, Erik Friedlander, and Kenny Wolleson. Snowy Egret's critically acclaimed debut recording was released in 2015 by Enja/Yellowbird.

Melford is also one-third of the collective Trio M with bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Matt Wilson, and performs in the duo Dialogue with clarinetist Ben Goldberg. She released her first solo album in 2013, a collection of work inspired by the paintings of the late visual artist Don Reich.

Melford's spiritual journey has led her to study Aikido, Siddha Yoga, and the Huichol people of Mexico, a quest expressed sonically via her wide-ranging musical palette, which ex-



Brian Murray

Myra Melford

pands from the piano to the harmonium and electronic keyboards or to amplifying barely audible sounds in the piano's interior. Her playing can build from the blissful and lyrical to the intense and angular, with accents from Indian, African, Cuban, and Middle Eastern musics or the cerebral abstraction of European and American jazz and classical experimentalism.

In 2013, Melford was named a Guggenheim Fellow and received both the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Performing Artist Award and a Doris Duke Residency to Build Demand for the Arts for her efforts to re-imagine the jazz program at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. She was also the winner of the 2012 Alpert Award in the Arts for Music. She has been honored numerous times in *DownBeat's* Critics Poll since 1991 and was nominated by the Jazz Journalists Association as Pianist of the Year in 2008 and 2009, and Composer of the Year in 2004; Snowy Egret was named best mid-sized ensemble for 2016.

David Szlasa (*video artist and lighting design*) is a video artist, curator, and producer, and the recipient of the Gerbode Award, Future

Aesthetics Artist Award, and Lighting Artists in Dance Award for innovative use of video in performance. In his solo work and collaborative projects, Szlasa creates investigative art to deconstruct and reconstruct popular narrative. Collaborators include Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Joanna Haigood, Rennie Harris, Hope Mohr, Deb Margolin, Bill Shannon, Michael John Garcés, Sara Shelton Mann, and others. His work has been exhibited in theaters and galleries worldwide, including at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Walker Arts Center, Chicago MCA, the de Young Museum, The Humana Festival, Sydney Opera House, Oakland Art Gallery, Harare International Festival of the Arts, BAM, and TSeKh Moscow.

Oguri (*dancer and choreography*) is a native of Japan. In 1985, he joined the Mai-Juku dance group founded by the internationally renowned dancer/choreographer Min Tanaka. For the following five years, Oguri toured internationally and was a founding member of Body Weather Farm, where the group lived and hosted annual international arts/dance festivals. Described by Victoria Looseleaf of the *Los Angeles Times* as a

“treasure,” Oguri has lived in Southern California for the past 20 years and is a recognized force in the community. He has been producing and creating dance with his partner Roxanne Steinberg (founder of Body Weather Laboratory in Los Angeles). He has danced extensively in California, nationally, and internationally in Europe, South Africa, Australia, the Middle East, and Japan. Oguri maintains relationships with the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, Grand Performances, Highways Performance Space, the REDCAT, the Metabolic Studio, and dancers, artists, and musicians including Min Tanaka, Anna Halprin, Hirokazu Kosaka, Paul Chavez, Yuval Ron, Adam Rudolph, Wadada Leo Smith, Joseph Jerman, James Newton, Myra Melford, Nels Cline, Alex Cline, and G.E. Stinson.

Sofia Rea (*narrator/spoken text*), originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina, is a groundbreaking world music/jazz artist, considered one of the most passionate, charismatic, and inventive vocalists on the New York music scene. Her work explores connections between the various traditions of South American folklore, jazz, and electronic sounds. Rea possesses more than the depth and fullness of a riveting voice, combining diverse influences in a presentation full of rhythmic complexity and a melodic purity that haunts even as it uplifts. Rea has collaborated with artists such as Maria Schneider, Bobby McFerrin, Frank London, and John Zorn (currently with Mycale and the Song Project). Her debut album, *Ojala*, has received wide critical acclaim and was chosen as a top-ten album of 2006 by the Jazz Journalists Association. She has also received the Best Latin Jazz Vocalist Award (2009) from the Latin Jazz Corner. *Sube Azul*, her second album as a leader, was released in the US and Europe by the World Village (Harmonia Mundi) label, and received an Independent Music Award in the world beat category. Her collaboration with Geoffrey Keezer in *Aurea* received a Grammy nomination for Best Latin Jazz Album in 2009. And her third release as a leader, *De Tierra y Oro*, has recently won two Independent Music Awards. Rea is currently a faculty member of

Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory. She has toured Europe and North and South America, singing at renowned festivals and venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Village Vanguard (New York City), Kennedy Center (Washington DC), the Festival Internacional del Cajon (Peru), the Festival Iberoamericano de las Artes (Puerto Rico), Cité de la Musique (Paris, France), the Festival de Jazz de Barcelona and Festival Grec (Spain), North Sea Jazz Festival (Netherlands), Gent Jazz Festival (Belgium), Montreal Jazz Festival (Canada), the Lapataia Jazz and World Music Festival (Uruguay), and the Buenos Aires International Jazz Festival (Argentina).

Ron Miles (*cornet*), a Denver-based trumpeter and cornetist, is much in demand for his unique sound and artistry and has appeared with performers as diverse as Bill Frisell, The Bad Plus, Joshua Redman, Don Byron, Wayne Horvitz, Matt Wilson, Myra Melford, Ben Goldberg, Ginger Baker, Madeleine Peyroux, Fred Hess' Boulder Creative Music Ensemble, and the Ellington Orchestra. His longstanding relationship with guitarist Frisell began in 1996 and has resulted in countless collaborations, including their duo recording *Heaven* (2002), and Miles' own trio Circuit Rider with drummer Brian Blade, which has produced two acclaimed albums, *Circuit Rider* (2014) and *Quiver* (2012). He has been a member of Melford's Snowy Egret from the beginning and is featured on the band's recently released debut album. Miles is a music professor at the Metropolitan State University of Denver.

Liberty Ellman (*guitar*), a New York-based guitarist and composer, has performed and recorded with a host of remarkable artists, including Joe Lovano, Myra Melford, Wadada Leo Smith, Butch Morris, Vijay Iyer, Steve Lehman, Greg Osby, Rudresh Mahanthappa, Steve Coleman, Nels Cline, Somi, Matana Roberts, Ledisi, Michele Roseworn, Adam Rudolph, Josh Roseman, Barney McAll, Okkyung Lee, and Jason Moran.

Ellman is perhaps best known for his long tenure in Henry Threadgill's groundbreaking

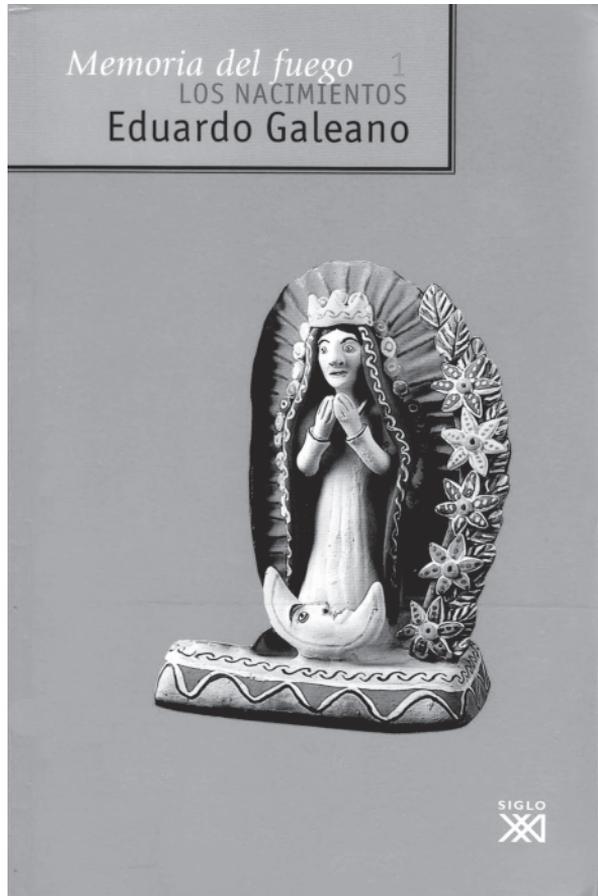
Zoid ensemble. The group has recorded several critically praised albums; their most recent recording, *In For A Penny, In For A Pound*, earned a Pulitzer Prize for Threadgill. In addition to playing guitar, Ellman is credited as producer and mixing engineer on that recording. He has mixed and mastered many other recordings as well, including Gregory Porter's *Be Good*, which was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Ellman has released four of his own critically acclaimed albums: *Orthodoxy*, *Tactiles*, *Ophiuchus Butterfly*, and *Radiate* on Pi Recordings. His compositional style has been described as "at once highly controlled and recklessly inventive," and the *Wall Street Journal* wrote: "Ellman, along with his peers, is helping to define post millennial jazz." Voted the top Rising Star Guitarist in the 2016 *Downbeat* Critics Poll, Ellman was also named in the 2015 *Jazz Times* critics poll as one of the four Guitarists of the Year alongside Bill Frisell, John Scofield, and Julian Lage.

Stomu Takeishi (*acoustic bass guitar*) is a Japanese jazz bass player who performs on fretless five-string electric bass guitar, as well as a Klein five-string acoustic bass guitar. He often uses looping or other electronic techniques to enhance the sound of his instrument.

Takeishi began as a *koto* player. He came to the United States in 1983 to attend the Berklee College of Music in Massachusetts. After completing his degree in 1986, he moved to Manhattan to continue his studies at The New School and he has lived in New York City ever since. In the 1990s he began to achieve prominence as an innovative New York jazz bass

player, and critics have noted both his adventurous playing and sensitivity to sound and timbre. He has played in many international jazz festivals and often performs at major venues throughout the United States and Europe.



Takeishi has performed and/or recorded with Don Cherry, Henry Threadgill, Butch Morris, Dave Liebman, Randy Brecker, Wynton Marsalis, Paul Motian, Myra Melford, Cuong Vu, Badal Roy, David Tronzo, Erik Friedlander, Brandon Ross, Lucia Pulido, and Pat Metheny. In *Downbeat's* Critics Poll in 2009, he was named the winner for the category of Electric Bass, Rising Star.



Donor Spotlight

Cal Performances Salutes the Thatcher Meyerson Family

This season, Cal Performances' jazz residency and education activities are generously underwritten by the Thatcher Meyerson Family. Their generous gift is inspired by—and in loving memory of—family heads David and Shirley Thatcher.

In 1946, David and Shirley met working on a Democratic campaign in Philadelphia. The couple married the following year, and Shirley always said that she fell for David partly because of his jazz record collection.

Shortly thereafter, the Thatchers moved to California to fulfill David's dream of attending UC Berkeley, where he eventually received his Ed.D. Enthusiastic swing dancers, and always actively engaged in community life, David and Shirley soon welcomed three children to the family. As the years passed, the two campaigned for local Democrats, marched against the Vietnam War, volunteered for the PTA, gave citizenship classes, and edited the *Peace and Justice* newsletter. And through it all, they always included jazz concerts, museum visits, films, and adventurous dining in their family activities.

David and Shirley's middle child, Maris Thatcher Meyerson, remembers coming to Zellerbach Hall with her parents shortly after it opened in 1968. Now serving on Cal Performances' board of trustees as co-chair of the Education and Community Outreach Committee, Maris is grateful to continue her parents' legacy of giving back to the community.

Tyshawn Sorey (*drums*) is a Newark-born multi-instrumentalist and composer celebrated for his incomparable virtuosity, effortless mastery and memorization of highly complex scores, and extraordinary ability to blend composition and improvisation in his work. He has performed nationally and internationally with his own ensembles, as well as with such artists as John Zorn, Vijay Iyer, Roscoe Mitchell, Muhal Richard Abrams, Wadada Leo Smith, Marilyn Crispell, Steve Lehman, Evan Parker, and Myra Melford. The *New York Times* has praised Sorey for his instrumental facility and aplomb: “he plays the drums not only with gale-force physicality, but also a sense of scale and equipoise”; and the *Wall Street Journal* has described him as “a composer of radical and seemingly boundless ideas.” The Jerome Foundation, the Shifting Foundation, Van Lier Fellowship, Spektral Quartet, and International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) have commissioned and have supported his genre-crossing work. Sorey also collaborates regularly with ICE as a percussionist and resident composer. As a leader, he has released four critically acclaimed recordings: *That/Not* (Firehouse 12), *Koan* (482 Music), and *Oblique I* and *Alloy* (Pi). In 2012 he was selected as one of nine composers for the Other Minds residency, where he exchanged ideas with such like-minded peers as Ikue Mori, Ken Ueno, and Harold Budd. In 2013 Jazz-Danmark invited him to serve as the Danish International Visiting Artist. Sorey has taught and lectured on composition and improvisation at Columbia University, The New School, The Banff Centre, Wesleyan University, International Realtime Music Symposium, Hochschule für Musik Köln, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, Berklee College of

Music, and the Danish Rhythmic Conservatory. His compositional work has been premiered at Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival, Walt Disney Hall, Roulette, Issue Project Room, and the Stone, among many other venues.

Hans Wendl is a music producer based here in Berkeley. He began his career in the mid-1970s with ECM Records in his hometown of Munich and was associated with the renowned German label for more than a dozen years before moving to the US. Wendl’s record productions with artists such as Charlie Haden, Don Byron, Bill Frisell, Ravi Shankar, Ron Miles, Peter Apfelbaum, and Tin Hat Trio have received numerous international prizes, including six Grammy nominations and a Grammy Award for Ravi Shankar’s *Full Circle: Carnegie Hall 2000*. His association with Myra Melford began in 1996 when he was label director for Gramavision Records and released her album *The Same River, Twice*. Wendl produced the 2015 debut album of Melford’s Snowy Egret quintet and Ron Miles’ most recent recordings, *Circuit Rider* (2014) and *Quiver* (2012).

Special Thanks

Myra Melford would like to thank Fred Frith for introducing her to Eduardo Galeano’s *Memory of Fire* trilogy; Jim Staley and Roulette Intermedium; Amy Cervini; Hans Wendl; Susan Bergholz; Alexandre Pierrepoint and the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris; Isabel Yrigoen, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Sandie Arnold, Roko Kawai, Jose Maria Francos, Claire Willey, and the other wonderful folks at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; the fantastic team at Cal Performances; and her colleagues in the UC Berkeley Department of Music.

**Excerpts from Eduardo Galeano's
Memory of Fire trilogy**

Words excerpted from *Memoria del fuego: Los nacimientos, Las caras y las máscaras, El siglo del viento/Memory of Fire: Genesis, Faces and Masks, Century of the Wind* by Eduardo Galeano. Copyright 1982, 1984, 1986 respectively by Eduardo Galeano. Translation copyright by Eduardo Galeano. Published in Spanish by Siglo XXI Editores, México, and in English by Nation Books. By permission of Susan Bergholz Literary Services, New York, NY and Lamy, NM. All rights reserved.

Language (Prelude/The Promised Land)

The First Father of the Guaranís rose in darkness lit by reflections from his own heart and created flames and thin mist. He created love and had nobody to give it to. He created language and had no one to listen to him.

Then he recommended to the gods that they should construct the world and take charge of fire, mist, rain, and wind. And he turned over to them the music and words of the sacred hymn so that they would give life to women and to men.

So love became communion, language took on life, and the First Father redeemed his solitude. Now he accompanies men and women who sing as they go:

*We're walking this earth,
We're walking this shining earth.*

—Genesis

An Iroquois Story (Snow)

It is snowing outside and in the center of the big house the old storyteller is talking, his face to the fire. Seated on animal skins, all listen as they sew clothing and repair weapons.

“The most splendid tree had grown in the sky,” says the old man. “It had four big white roots, which extended in four directions. From this tree all things were born...”

The good storyteller tells his story and makes it happen. The west wind is now blowing on the big house; it comes down the chimney, and smoke veils all the faces...

One of these mornings, the old storyteller will not wake up. But someone of those who heard his stories will tell them to others. And later this someone will also die, and the stories will stay alive as long as there are big houses and people gathered around the fire.

—Genesis

1799: Cumaná (The Kitchen)

Two Wise Men on a Mule

The New World is too big for the eyes of the two Europeans.... The port sparkles on the river, set aflame by the sun... and beyond, green sea, green land, the glowing bay...

Later Humboldt and Bonpland set out for the southern highlands.... They go on muleback, weighed down with equipment, the German with the black top hat and blue eyes and the Frenchman with the insatiable magnifying glass.

Perplexed, the forests and mountains of America open up to these two lunatics.

—Faces and Masks

**1775: Guatemala City
(The Virgin of Guadalupe)**

Sacraments

... For the Indians, accompanying step by step the corn's cycle of death and resurrection is a way of praying; and the earth, that immense temple, is their day-to-day testimony to the miracle of life being reborn. For them all earth is a church, all woods a sanctuary.

—Faces and Masks

Snow (A Musical Evening)

“I want you to fly,” said the master of the house, and the house took off and flew. It moved through the air in darkness, whistling as it went, until the master ordered, “I want you to stop here.” And the house stopped, suspended in the night and the falling snow.

—Genesis

Music (A Musical Evening)

While the spirit of Bopé-joku whistled a melody, corn rose out of the ground, unstoppable, luminous, and offered giant ears swollen with grains... Spirits express themselves by whistling. When the stars come out at night, that's how the spirits greet them. Each star responds to a note, which is its name.

—Genesis

**The Virgin of Guadalupe
(A Musical Evening)**

That light, does it rise from the earth or fall from the sky? Is it lightning bug or bright star? It doesn't leave the slopes of Tepeyac and in dead of night persists, shining on the stones and entangling itself in the branches.

—Genesis

**St. Martial Versus the Ants
(A Musical Evening)**

Rapacious ants continue to mortify people and undermine walls.

—Genesis

**Times of Sleep and Fate
(A Musical Evening)**

Simon de Torres, apothecary of Panama, would like to sleep but cannot take his eyes off the hole in the roof.

—Genesis

The Rain (A Musical Evening)

Whenever the little green frog sings from his tree, the thunderclaps gather and it rains upon the world.

—Genesis

**A Musical Evening at the Concepcion
Convent (A Musical Evening)**

In the convent garden Juana sings and plays the lute. Green light, green trees, green breeze. The air was dead until she touched it with her words and music... After a while, silence has a sound.

—Genesis

**The Far West
(Times of Sleep and Fate/Little Pockets)**

Is anyone really listening to the old Chief Seattle? The Indians are condemned, like the buffalo and the moose. The one that does not die by the bullet dies of hunger or sorrow. From the reservation where he languishes, old Chief Seattle talks in solitude about usurpations and exterminations and says who knows what things about the memory of his people flowing in the sap of the trees...

... Space exists for time to defeat, and time for progress to sacrifice on its altars.

Adolescent capitalism, stampeding and glut-tonous, transfigures what it touches. The forest exists for the ax to chop down and the desert for the train to cross; the river is worth bothering about if it contains gold, and the mountain if it shelters coal or iron. No one walks. All run, in a hurry, it's urgent, after the nomad shadow of wealth and power...

—Faces and Masks

**Street Cries in the Santiago de Chile Market
(Market)**

"Get this lovely bread, fresh from a woman's hands!"

"WA-A-ATERMELONS!"

—Faces and Masks

**A Day of Street Cries in Mexico City
(Market)**

"Candies! Coconut candies! Merr-i-i-ingues!"

"Tamales, little tamales!"

—Faces and Masks

Communion (First Protest)

... The smell of cut sugarcane inebriates the plantation air, and fires burn in the earth and in human breasts: the fire tempers the whips, drums rumble. The drums invoke the ancient gods, who fly to this land of exile in response to the voices of their lost children, enter them, make love to them, and, pulling music and howls from their mouths, give them back their broken life intact...

—*Faces and Masks*

You (Night of Sorrow)

Without turning your head, you bury yourself in exile. I see you, I am watching you: the Paraná slips by with the sluggishness of a lizard, and over there your flaming torn poncho fades into the distance at a horse's trot and is lost in the foliage.

You don't say goodbye to your land. She would not believe you. Or perhaps you still don't know that you're leaving for good...

Your land. Our land of the south. You will be very necessary to her, Don José. Every time the greedy hurt her and humiliate her, every time that fools believe her dumb or sterile, she will miss you. Because you, Don José Artigas, general of plain folk, are the best word she has spoken.

—*Faces and Masks*

1984: Mexico City (Day of the Dead)

The Resurrection of the Living

The Mexicans make a custom of eating death, a sugar or chocolate skeleton dripping with colored caramel. In addition to eating it, they sing it, dance it, drink it, and sleep it. Sometimes, to mock power and money, the people dress death in a monocle and frock coat, epaulettes and medals, but they prefer it stripped and naked, racy, a bit drunk, their companion on festive outings.

Day of the Living, this Day of the Dead should be called, although on reflection it's all the same, because whatever comes goes and whatever goes comes, and in the last analysis the beginning of what begins is always the end of what ends.

"My grandfather is so tiny because he was born after me," says a child who knows what he's talking about.

—*Century of the Wind*

1943: Port-au-Prince (The Strawberry)

Hands That Don't Lie

... In America's poorest country, wrung out by Europe, invaded by the United States, torn apart by wars and dictatorships, the people shout colors and no one can shut them up.

—*Century of the Wind*

1984: Bluefields

(Reprise – The Virgin of Guadalupe)

Flying

Deep root, lofty trunk, dense foliage: from the center of the world rises a thornless tree, one of those trees that know how to give themselves to the birds. Around the tree whirl dancing couples, navel to navel, undulating to a music that wakens stones and sets fire to ice. As they dance, they dress and undress the tree with streaming ribbons of every color. On this tormented, continuously invaded, continuously bombarded coast of Nicaragua, the Maypole fiesta is celebrated as usual.

The tree of life knows that, whatever happens, the warm music spinning around it will never stop. However much death may come, however much blood may flow, the music will dance men and women as long as the air breathes them and the land plows and loves them.

—*Century of the Wind*