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WITH the fast-approaching end of Fall Semester—and as we move towards the holidays—things are unusually busy on the UC Berkeley campus. The same can be said about Cal Performances, where—this weekend alone—we’ll enjoy visits by an array of world-class talent: the Bay Area’s beloved Kronos Quartet with special guest, Persian classical and world music vocalist and composer Mahsa Vahdat (Dec 2); musical polymath Damien Sneed with his delightful Joy to the World: A Christmas Musical Journey program (Dec 3); riveting performer of the 16-string đàn tranh (zither) Văn-Ánh Võ and her acclaimed Blood Moon Orchestra in an exciting world premiere (Dec 4); and two of the brightest lights of their generation—choreographer/dancer Caleb Teicher (and their amazing dance company) and pianist Conrad Tao in the Bay Area premiere of More Forever, a fresh, new music and dance collaboration. I’m so happy you could join us during what promises to be a memorable weekend; it’s wonderful that we can gather together again, enjoying great live performances under the same roof!

This robust activity is especially meaningful this year, following such a prolonged period of shutdown! When the pandemic forced Cal Performances to close its doors in March 2020, no one could have imagined what lay ahead. Since then, we’ve witnessed a worldwide health crisis unlike any experienced during our lifetimes, an extended period of political turmoil, recurring incidents of civil unrest and racially motivated violence, and a consciousness-raising human rights movement that has forever—and significantly—changed how each of us views social justice in our time.

Of course, the pandemic remains with us to this date and future challenges—including many adjustments to “normal” procedures and policies—can certainly be expected. I encourage you to check Cal Performances’ website regularly for the most current information regarding our COVID-19 response. First and foremost, I assure you that there is nothing more important to us than the health and safety of our audience, artists, and staff. (And I remind one and all that proof of vaccination is mandatory today, as is protective masking throughout the event.)

Our season continues later this month with an exciting return concert by jazz phenom Jazzmeia Horn, a hit on last year’s Cal Performances at Home streaming season (Dec 10); the ever-popular Canadian Brass with its festive Making Spirits Bright for 50 Years and Counting! holiday program (Dec 11); and the long-awaited return to Zellerbach Hall (the group’s favorite home-away-from home) by the great Mark Morris Dance Group (Dec 17–19). And our full 2021–22 calendar offers even more, packed with the kind of adventurous and ambitious programming you’ve come to expect from Cal Performances. In particular, I want to direct your attention to this year’s Illuminations: “Place and Displacement” programming, through which we’ll explore both loss and renewal, disempowerment and hope, while seeking paths forward for reclaiming and celebrating vital cultural connections that can fall victim to political and social upheaval.

Please take the opportunity to explore the complete schedule through our website and season brochure and begin planning your performance calendar; now is the perfect time to guarantee that you have the best seats for all the events you plan to attend.

Throughout history, the performing arts have survived incredible challenges: periods of war, economic collapse, and, yes, terrible disease. And if it will take time for us—collectively and individually—to process the events of the past 18 months, I’m certain that the arts have the power
Saturday, December 4, 2021, 8pm
Zellerbach Playhouse

Vân-Ánh Võ
and the Blood Moon Orchestra
Songs of Strength
(World Premiere)

Kev Choice, *lyrics and rap*
Joel Davel, *marimba lumina*
Kai Echkardt, *electric bass*
Tunjie, *breakdance and contemporary ballet*
Jimi Nakagawa, *percussions and taiko drums*
Mahsa Vahdat, *lyrics and vocals*
Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ,
*orchestra lead, zither, monochord, bamboo xylophone, lyrics, and vocals*

*This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Jerome and Thao Dodson.*
Songs of Strength
Music and Concept by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ

*Songs of Strength* highlights the animacy, creative vigor, and relevance of traditional music in the modern world. A Blood Moon Orchestra production, this collection brings into alignment various musical traditions and performance arts to emphasize the generative power of cross-genre and cross-culture collaborations.

*Songs of Strength* radically reimagines the past and offers a new vision for traditional music-making in a deeply interconnected world.

– The Songs –

*How About Us*
Composed by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ and Blood Moon Orchestra

*Lullaby*
Poem by Atabak Elyasi
Music and vocals by Mahsa Vahdat, based on *Bakhtiari Gooshe in Homayoun*
Arranged by Blood Moon Orchestra

*Born To Rise*
Composed by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
English lyrics by Kev Choice
Vietnamese lyrics by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Arranged by Blood Moon Orchestra

*The Five Nuances of Emotion (Luyện Năm Cung)*
Northern Vietnamese traditional folk composition (Chèo)
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ

*Fire*
Poems by Hồ Xuân Hương
Composed and arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Don’t Leave Me*
Poem by Rumi
Music and vocals by Mahsa Vahdat
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Vô

My Endless Treasure*
Poem by Rumi
Music and vocals by Mahsa Vahdat
Arranged by Nguyen Le

Gnossiennes No. 3 and “Purple Haze” Mash-up†
Gnossiennes No. 3 by Erik Santi
“Purple Haze” by Jimi Hendrix
Arranged by Blood Moon Orchestra

86,400*
Lyrics by Kev Choice and Vân-Ánh Vanessa Vô
Composed by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Vô
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Vô and Blood Moon Orchestra

On Sharing A Husband (Kiếp Chồng Chung)*
Poem by Hồ Xuân Hương
Composed by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Vô
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Vô and Blood Moon Orchestra

The Trouble (Xẩm Lưu Lạc)
Northern Vietnamese Traditional Folk Song (Xẩm)
Composed by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Vô
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Vô and Blood Moon Orchestra

*Written for Blood Moon Orchestra
† Arranged for Blood Moon Orchestra

Songs of Strength was made possible, in part, by grants from the MAP Fund, Center for Cultural Innovation, Zellerbach Family Foundation, and the Creative Work Fund, a program of the Walter and Elise Haas Fund also supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Please note: This performance will employ the use of strobe lights and a fog machine, and empty and harmless artillery shells will be used as gongs.
Ilmar Gavilán, *violin*
Aldo López-Gavilán, *piano*

The musician brothers Aldo López-Gavilán and Ilmar Gavilán—the subject of the 2020 documentary film *Los Hermanos*—form a duo like no other, defined by a sweetly delicate lyricism one moment, and an infectious rhythmic energy the next. They play compositions that weave together dreamy chamber sonorities with Afro-Cuban jazz and folk forms.

Jan 23
ZELLERBACH HALL

**Two Wings: The Music of Black America in Migration**

West Coast Premiere

Jason Moran and Alicia Hall Moran, *producers*
Jason Moran, *piano*
Alicia Hall Moran, *mezzo-soprano*
Tania León, *conductor*
Imani Winds

In a series of “gripping portraits of a vast social upheaval” (*Chicago Tribune*), Alicia Hall Moran and Jason Moran’s deeply personal *Two Wings* explores the Great Migration of six million Black Americans from the rural South to northern cities and beyond.

Feb 17
ZELLERBACH HALL

calperformances.org/illuminations
VÂN-ÁNH VANESSA VÔ is an award-winning composer and one of today’s most celebrated performers of Vietnamese traditional instruments. In addition to the đàn tranh (zither), Vân-Ánh performs as soloist on the đàn bầu (monochord), the đàn t'rung (bamboo xylophone), and trống (traditional drums). She dedicates her life to combining the traditional music of Vietnam with other genres, creating fresh, new compositions.

Since settling in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2001, Vân-Ánh has focused on bringing Vietnamese traditional music to a wider audience and preserving her cultural legacy through innovation, collaboration, and teaching. Her albums, which include Twelve Months, Four Seasons (2002), She’s Not She (2009), and Three-Mountain Pass (2013) have garnered praise from NPR, the BBC “The World,” the Los Angeles Times, and others.

Vân-Ánh has collaborated with artists including the Kronos Quartet, Yo-Yo Ma, Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Apollo Chamber Players, and the Oakland Symphony. Additionally, she has composed and arranged for the Academy Award-nominated and Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner for Best Documentary, Daughter from Danang (2002); the Emmy Award-winning soundtrack for Bolinao 52 (2008); and the winner of multiple Best Documentary and Audience Favorite awards, A Village Called Versailles (2009).

She has performed at venues such as Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, NPR, and the Yerba Buena Performing Arts Center, and has participated as a screening judge in the world music category for the 2015, 2016, and 2018 Grammy Awards. During the = Obama administration, Vân-Ánh became the first Vietnamese artist to perform at the White House receiving the Artist Laureate Award for her contribution to communities through the arts.

Vân-Ánh has received numerous awards for her projects from foundations such as the Hewlett 50 Arts Commission, California Arts Council, Alliance for California Traditional Arts, City of San Jose, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

BLOOD MOON ORCHESTRA is a global musical collective whose mission is to advance traditional music through innovation, cross-genre collaboration, and social impact education. By relentlessly charting new pathways for artistic expressions, Blood Moon Orchestra aims to make unequivocal the role of traditional music in forging radical possibilities for the future. Blood Moon Orchestra seeks not only to preserve but also to propel traditional arts into the 21st century and beyond, and in doing so, create a vision for and commitment to a more expressive, connected, and socially just world.

KEV CHOICE is a rap artist, MC, pianist, producer, composer, educator, and activist hailing from Oakland. He began studying piano, rapping, and producing music at age 11 and went on to earn degrees in piano performance from Xavier University of Louisiana (bachelor’s degree) and Southern Illinois University (master’s).


In 2018, he composed Soul Restoration Suite for the Oakland Symphony under the direction of conductor Michael Morgan. For a 2020 collaboration with the San Francisco Symphony, he wrote and composed Movements, which combined elements of hip-hop and classical music with socially conscious lyrics.

Choice is on the faculty at Oakland School for the Arts, serves on Oakland’s Cultural Affairs Commission, and is board vice-president of the Recording Academy’s SF Chapter.

JOEL DAVEL’s diverse career ranges from traditional folk and classical to highly experimental and electronic. He is best known for his
collaborative efforts with composer Paul Dresher, performing in duos and with the Electro-Acoustic Band. Often working in the worlds of dance, opera, and theater, Davel is music director for dNaga Dance Company. He collaborated with electronic music pioneer Don Buchla for 20 years, and the resultant marimba lumina has become Davel’s signature instrument. Davel holds a bachelor’s degree in music from Northern Illinois University and a master’s from Mills College.

**KAI ECKHARDT** is an Afro-European musician who has made a significant contribution to the evolution of the electric bass since 1989. Heavily influenced by the emerging fusion of funk, rock, and jazz in the late 1970’s, Kai developed a unique style on his instrument long before attending Berklee College of Music in Boston, the renowned music college from which he graduated with honors in 1987. Kai Eckhardt has performed at such distinguished international venues as the Royal Festival Hall in London, the Philharmonic in Munich, and the Esplanade in Singapore. Festival engagements include the Montreal Jazz Festival, North Sea Jazz Festival in the Hague, Womad World Music Festival in Spain, and Glastonbury in the UK. Kai has also performed for the King and Queen of Norway. In the educational field, Kai teaches clinics and master classes internationally. Engagements include Berklee in Boston, the Musician’s Institute in Hollywood, the Bruckner Conservatory in Austria and Amsterdam Conservatory in the Netherlands. Perhaps the most unique band in Kai’s career was the pioneering jam-band Garaj Mahal, which he co-led between 2000 and 2010, producing nine albums and performing roughly 1,000 concerts in the US and Canada.

**TUNJIE (BABATUNJIE JOHNSON)** was born in Portland, Oregon and grew up on the Big Island of Hawaii. Though never formally trained as a child, Babatunjie was always moving his body to the beat. At age 15, he discovered the art of hip hop. Following more than a decade of self-taught street performance, he has developed a unique approach to various styles of hip hop, including breakdance, popping, and krump. While cultivating his own movement language, Babatunjie simultaneously trained in ballet, modern, and contemporary dance, going on to work and perform around the world with Alonzo King LINES Ballet for six years and with other inspiring companies. In 2015, Babatunjie was awarded a Princess Grace Award as well as a Chris Hellman Award for his outstanding achievements and promise in the world of dance.

**JIMI NAKAGAWA** hails from Tokyo, Japan. He started playing drums when he was in high school and performed with local bands before coming to the US in 1981. In 1987, Jimi joined the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, directed by Grand Master Seiichi Tanaka, and became a performing member and instructor to adults and children. He has studied **taiko** with Sukeroku Daiko Hozonkai and Master Kenjiro Maru, **tsuzumi** (a Japanese hand drum) with Master Saburo Mochizuki, and jazz with drummer Robert Kaufman, a former professor at the Berkelee College of Music. In 1999, he and three other members founded a San Francisco Bay Area-based **taiko** group Somei Yoshino Taiko Ensemble and started the Oakland **taiko** school OH-IN TAIKO. Nakagawa left the ensemble in 2011 to pursue his solo career and expand his **taiko** school. Jimi has collaborated with artists including Peter Erskine, Habib Kahn, Ali Ryerson, and Charles Loos. He has also been a part of the VAV Ensemble, working with Van-Anh Vo since 2002.

**MAHSA VAHDAT** is a prominent performer of Persian vocal music and a strong advocate of freedom of expression in music, a dedicated singer and musician in her musical path and artistic cause. Her career has communicated deeper knowledge about Iranian poetry and music to large audiences in Europe, America, Asia, Oceania, and Africa.

Mahsa has developed her personal style based on the Persian vocal tradition of classical and regional folk music, but conveyed with a contemporary expression. She has always searched for ways to make her music relevant...
to the present world. Even if the origin of her styles is Iranian, she believes in her music’s ability to express a universal message of humanism and freedom. Her collaborations with musicians from Iran and many other parts of the world have contributed to the development of her personal expression.

Since 2007, Mahsa has been one of the ambassadors of Freemuse Organization, an independent international organization that advocates freedom of expression for musicians and composers worldwide. A recipient of the 2010 Freemuse Award, she has developed a long and intense pedagogical experience in teaching classical Persian singing to Iranian and non-Iranian students and led many projects with her students as a mentor.

**PRODUCTION TEAM**
Allen Willner, lighting design
Jesse Austin, sound design
Pamela Wu, creative consultant
Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ, artistic director

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**
FROM VÂN-ÁNH VANESSA VÕ
I wish to express my deepest thanks to my husband, Steven Huỳnh, and my two daughters, Nicole Huỳnh and Andrea Huỳnh, for their unconditional love and support. My extended gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Jerome and Thao Dodson, Dr. Alexander Cannon, the Kochan Family, Ms. Thiên-Nhiên Lương, Ms. Cathy Lâm, Mr. Mike Kane, Ms. Linh Huynh Howard, and Ms. Hằng Lê Tô for their sponsorship, encouragement, and guidance over the years.

Special acknowledgement for the Blood Moon Orchestra Board of Directors: Thuần Lê and Geoff Adam, Irene Nguyên and Ron Lue-sang, Khuyên Vũ Nguyên, and Ashley Walker.

Ashley Walker and Khuyên Vũ Nguyên deserve kudos for their incredible work on the program book.

Warmest appreciation for my fellow artists and collaborators on this project: Kev Choice, Joel Davel, Kai Echkardt, Jimi Nakagawa, Tunjie, and Mahsa Vahdat.

This project could not have come to fruition with the generous support of the following organizations:
- Vietnamese American Non-Governmental Network (VANGO)
- Âu Cơ Vietnamese Cultural Center
- Vietnamese Educational and Cultural Association (VECA)
- Việt Báo Daily News

Finally, many thanks to the entire staff of Cal Performances and our sponsors, supporters, and volunteers for making this project possible.
NOTES ON THE SONGS

How About Us
Composed by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
and Blood Moon Orchestra

Inspired by Amanda Gorman’s poem “The Hill We Climb” and the idiom “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” In addition to Covid-19, we have been living another pernicious pandemic known as racism and bigotry. This pandemic has been spreading like wildfire in our communities and homes in recent years. This song is my plea for us to embrace our differences and to come together as a beloved community. Let our humanity, our creativity, and our passions take us into the future.

Lullaby
Poem by Atabak Elyasi
Translated by Mahsa Vahdat
Music and vocals by Mahsa Vahdat, based on Bakhtiar Gooshe in Homayoun
Arranged by Blood Moon Orchestra

La la la
The lonely tulip flower
The flower with sigh and burn
Swallow went to bring the Sun
to plant in our fields of Hope

La la la
Restless flower of the home
Sing with us, our hearts are filled with pain
The lark went to bring joy
to plant in the our sorrowful fields

13
WAYNE SHORTER & ESPERANZA SPALDING’S

…Iphigenia

West Coast Premiere
A Cal Performances Co-commission

Wayne Shorter, composer
esperanza spalding, librettist and performer
Lileana Blain-Cruz, director
Clark Rundell, conductor
Members of the Wayne Shorter Quartet
Frank Gehry, set designer
Montana Levi-Banco, costume designer
Jen Schreiva, lighting designer
Mark Grey, sound designer

A living legend of jazz collaborates with one of the brightest lights of the younger generation in this new work that reimagines what opera can be, and asks us to reexamine the stories we have inherited and the choices we make as a society.

…Iphigenia is co-commissioned by Cal Performances; The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; The Broad Stage, Santa Monica, CA; ArtsEmerson Boston, MA; Carolina Performing Arts; and Mass MoCA.

Produced by Real Magic, Cath Brittan, and Octopus Theatricals

Feb 12
Zellerbach Hall

calperformances.org | 510.642.9988
Born to Rise

Composed by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
English lyrics by Kev Choice
Vietnamese lyrics by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Arranged by Blood Moon Orchestra

Inspired by Maya Angelou’s poem “Caged Bird,” Kev Choice and I co-composed “Born To Rise” to celebrate the strength and resilience of people of color in the face of systemic violence and historical oppression. Like our musical collaboration, I believe there is much to be gained in coming together to face our struggles.

I was born to fly
I was born to rise
Even through all this oppression still dignified expressions of culture I amplify

Like words of our ancestors prophesized
Eyes on the prize as I look to the sky
And know even through tragedies
I can defy laws of gravity
Soar above negative energy, poverty, violence, Police brutality,
In my community, I am light,
Strength in our spirit
Despite all our plights
Stand up for rights
Demand equality
Extend a hand to uplift our society

They can not lock me down
They can not hold me down
This is a new day and age
You’d be amazed
The beauty, the love, from sounds of a soul of bird, even locked in a cage

I remove every doubt
and take route with the wind
And forget all my pain
Living on land that’s been occupied
Colonized, genocide, homicide, slavery modernized
They can’t lock me down
They can’t hold me down
This a new day and age
You’d be amazed
The beauty, the love, from the soul of a bird, even locked in a cage

Where is my freedom they never will answer
It can’t be defined by the terms of oppressors
Whose privilege allows them to abuse their power
And leave it to them we will never move forward
But i’m free in these melodies, harmonies, rhythms
And I use em to tear down the system
We come together we prosper
These are my prayers at the altar
Fears I will overcome
Tears from my sorrows
Cleanse the hopes of tomorrow
I will transcend all the clouds that still hover
Nothing can hinder expression connected to presence

From which is our essence wings get spreaded
They can not lock me down
They can’t hold me down
This is a new day and age you’d be amazed
The beauty, the love from the sound of a bird even locked in a cage

No limitations, No hesitations
Living my dreams
My self esteem
Make me feel I have wings
Anything’s possible
Jump over obstacles
Touch constellations

I am part of a flock that has endured generations
Solid as rock my foundation
My inspiration
How I maintain
Nothing to lose
So much to gain
My minds in the clouds

Một con chim bay theo gió nhẹ trong nắng vàng
Sải đôi cánh đầy luôn cùng với gió và máy
Ô най của song những đôi cánh trong nước nguồn

Thoái mái vậy vững dưới bầu trời tự do khao và hy vọng!

Ô bèn kia sông có chú chim bị giam cầm
Những thành sắt nhỏ kim kep đôi cánh tìm tự do
Dù đôi cánh kia đã bị chặt và trôi bước
Làm sao dùng được lời hát của sự khát khao và hy vọng!
Tôi sẽ là gió, tôi sẽ là Mây
Bay đi bay di tới khung trời mơ ước
Tôi sẽ là cánh chim, cánh chim
Bay dưới bầu trời tự do!

Chim trong lòng hót
Chim trong lòng ca
Và vẫn mơ ừ mong,
Ngơ ngơ vọng
Trong ve, một ngày tự do.

Tôi sẽ là gió, tôi sẽ là Mây
Bay đi bay di tới khung trời mơ ước
Tôi sẽ là cánh chim, cánh chim
Bay dưới bầu trời tự do!

Chế Sư
Chẳng phải Ngô mà chẳng phải ta
Đầu thì trọc lóc áo không tà
Oản dâng trước mặt năm ba phẩm
Vãi nấp sau lưng sáu bẩy bà
Khi cảnh, khi tiu, khi chũm choẹ
Giọng HÌ, giọng HỈ, giọng HI HA
Tu lâu có lẽ lên sư cụ
Ngất nghều toà sen nọ đó mà.

Mocking A Monk
Not a Chinese, nor really one of us
With his shaved head, robe without flaps
Cakes are placed before him, four or five kind
Behind him, nuns hover, six or seven
Sometimes he strikes a cymbal, sometime a bell or gong
Chanting hee, chanting haw, chanting hee – haw – ho
Perfecting that, maybe he'll be a Venerable
Perched high up there on the Lotus Seat of Buddhas

NOTES ON THE SONGS

16
Don't Leave Me
Poem by Rumi
Translated by Mahsa Vahdat and Erik Hillestad
Music and vocals by Mahsa Vahdat
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ

If my vision, wisdom and reason disappear, don’t leave me
I value your presence more than all of them, don’t leave me

Don’t leave! If you do, bring my heart with you
Bring me along when you depart from this gathering, don’t leave me

Your presence turns the world into a rose garden
In the winter, when the blossom decays, don’t leave me

Don’t leave! Your farewell is so stone hearted
You turned the Badakhshan stone into ruby, don’t leave me

The letter of my heart has the length of eternity
From the beginning to the end it spells: “don’t leave me.”


to mero

گر رود دیده و عقل و خرد و جان تو مرو
که مرا دیدن تو بهتر از ایشان تو مرو
تو مرو گر بروی جان مرا با خود بر
گر مرامی نبری با خود از آین خوان تو مرو
با تو هر جزو جهان باغچه و بستان است
در خزان گر برود رونق بستان تو مرو
هجر خویشمنه من‌ما هجر تو بس سنگدل است
ای شده لعل زتو سنگ بدخان تو مرو

TO MERO

ملودی: مهسا وحدت
شعر: مولوی

NOTES ON THE SONGS

17
My Endless Treasure
Poem by Rumi
Music and vocals by Mahsa Vahdat
Arranged by Nguyen Le

You, the life and the world,
the rest of Earth is vain!
You, the endless treasure!

Who counts loss and gain?
My sustenance, my breath!

My wine in times of pain!
Stranded alone, the turn of
stars drags me in the bane!
I cut my ties with them all,
and I tore up the chain;
In hiding no more; yet unseen
I stroll amid the plain...

I desire no mate, your love
has earned its reign!
I gave up baits and preys; now
All Yours to detain!

Khóm Vi Lau
Poem by Hàn Mặc Tử
Music and vocals by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Arranged by Nguyen Le

“Don’t Leave Me” and “My Endless Treasure” are two of my favorite poems by Rumi, and I could not be more thrilled to collaborate with Mahsa Vahdat on performing these compositions for this Blood Moon Orchestra world premiere. I was highly motivated by the desire to shorten the distance between Iranian and Vietnamese cultures, a desire that led me to explore several extended techniques on the đàn tranh (16-string zither) in order to “extend” my ability to learn and appreciate Persian traditional music and culture.
Gnossienne #3 and Purple Haze Mash-up
Gnossienne No. 3 by Erik Satie
“Purple Haze” by Jimi Hendrix
Arranged and transposed for monochord
by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ

When I first looked at the piano score of Erik Satie’s Gnossienne No. 3, I immediately wondered how it would sound on đàn bầu, the Vietnamese monochord. When I started to experiment, I felt energized by the many layers of possibility that this beautiful composition unfolded for me. The first time I listened to “Purple Haze” was in my first year of moving to America (2001). I did not know much about Jimi Hendrix at the time but I felt deeply moved by his brilliant artistry. To mash up an avant-garde minimalist composition against an inventive rock number and place them in conversation through đàn bầu and đàn tranh continues to be one of my favorite creative challenges to date.

• • •

86,400
English lyrics by Kev Choice
Vietnamese lyrics by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Composed by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
and Blood Moon Orchestra

Inspired by Dr. AnhLan Nguyen, I collaborated with Kev Choice to write “86,400.” In her talk, Nguyen posed the question: “Imagine if you have $86,400 in your bank account every day. Start of the day, you have all $86,400 to spend, but you have to spend all of it throughout the day because at the end of the day, it will all be gone. You can’t put it in the savings bank account. You can’t invest it. You must spend it all because at the end of the day, you will lose it all! How would you spend this money?” Indeed, each of us wakes up in the morning with that amount of precious commodity at our disposal, which is the 86,400 seconds in each day that we have. This song is Kev’s and my answer to the question.

NOTES ON THE SONGS

Cuộc sống rất dễ khi bạn nghe tôi nói
Cuộc sống rất khác khi bạn biết mỉm cười
Buổi sáng lạnh lẽo mỗi ngày ta thực hiện,
Mỗi ngày trôi qua đều là một món quà!

Ô trước mắt ta
The sound of time (Rồi một ngày bạn sẽ nghe
thây tiếng thời gian sột soał)
Slips away through your fingers like sand (như
những hạt cát khi trầm qua những kẽ ngón
tay)
Tiếng phút giây như hạt mưa rơi trên miệng đất
cằn khô.

Tạm sau ngắn bốn trăm giây
Mỗi ngày đã trôi qua
Tạm sau ngắn bốn trăm giây
Thời gian cũng sẽ kéo bạn đi

Giờ trôi chậm – but the days go fast
The sound of time… slipping away …

[86,400 seconds in a day
Can’t let em slip away]
Trở thành đôi cánh, bay – đi, bay – đi, đi xa
Rồi tự do bay đi, Bay – đi, bay – đi xa!

Trở thành đôi cánh, bay – đi, bay – đi, đi xa
Rồi tự do bay đi, Bay – đi, bay – đi _____ BAY DI XA!

Every Moment is so crucial
I’m thinking what would Huey, what would Martin, what would Malcolm do
I’m wishing that I had the mental discipline of Coltrane
Practice all day, I’m just out here trying to maintain
They say time is money,
I say time is knowledge and wisdom,
And science, religion, and rhythm not a minute
To waste, as I chase life’s luxuries trying to keep up with the pace and still find peace
Can’t let it slip away

Set intentions, step relentless, towards the vision
Stay committed, no permission, nothing hindering
goals I’m listed, bold prediction, I’m gon get it,
My whole existence, so persistent, I know I’m limitless
I know my impact infinite
Keep distractions at distances
Tryna build like my ancestors did constructing pyramids
My emotional intelligence, motivation, regulation, self awareness
Can’t let it slip away

Put it all in perspective
It’s all about relationships we all connected
I walk the intersection Between Struggles and blessings
Learning life’s lessons

You will be uplifted if you listen to the message
Every second, is destined,
no time like the present
The mind full of jewels like treasures
Can’t let them slip away
No ideas, no thoughts, motivate
86,400 seconds in a day
Can’t let em slip away

• • •

On Sharing A Husband (Kiếp Chồng Chung)

Poem by Hồ Xuân Hương
Translated by John Balaban
Composed by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ and Blood Moon Orchestra

This composition draws its power from a famous poem by the renown feminist Vietnamese poet Hồ Xuân Hương. This particular poem conveys a woman’s anger toward—and ultimate rejection of—sharing a husband with other wives.

I use ca trù singing style for storytelling. Originated in the 12th century in northern Vietnam, ca trù features many different shades of vocal timbre, which allows for multiple expressive possibilities.

Kiếp Chồng Chung

Chém cha cái kiếp lấy chồng chung,
Kẻ đắp chăn bông kẻ lạnh lùng.
Năm thì mười hoạ chăng hay chớ,
Một tháng đôi lần có cũng không.
Cố đấm ăn xôi, xôi lại hẩm,
Cầm bằng làm mướn, mướn không công.
Thân này ví biết dường này nhỉ,
Thà trước thôi đành ở vậy xong.

NOTES ON THE SONGS
On Sharing A Husband
Screw the fate that makes you share a man.
One cuddles under cotton blankets; the other's cold.
Every now and then, well, maybe or maybe not,
Once or twice a month, oh, it's like nothing.
You try to stick to it like a fly on rice
but the rice is rotten.
You slave like the maid, but without pay.
If I had known how it would go,
I think I would have lived alone.

• • •

The Trouble (Xẩm Lưu Lạc)
Northern Vietnamese Traditional Folk Song
(Xâm)
Translated by Translated by Hùng Nguyễn
Arranged by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
and Blood Moon Orchestra
Inspired by a traditional folk song (xẩm) about
the insurmountable injustices women have faced during wartime, each member of the orchestra takes on a solo section based on a given structure and scale to narrate his/her own view toward “the trouble” that we are facing in the contemporary moment. I wish to offer “The Trouble” as not only a social commentary on the entrenched nature of social oppression but also as a site for collective enunciation and renunciation.

Why, oh why has it come to this, fire raging in my heart
I had to take my mother -in-law to this place
Deep in the forest with savage beasts and wild tigers.
People wanted to gouge my eyes.
Sacrificing my eyes to save my mother’s eyes;
now I am blind and in darkness.
Oh heaven!
Sacrificing my eyes to save my mother’s eyes;
now I am blind and in darkness.
Playing the strings and singing to survive, and to feed my mother.
Cutting into my flesh, cutting into my fingers
O my husband Truong Vien, did you even know that I have succumbed to this misery?
Could you even feel my agony?

—Program notes by Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
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to play a critical role as we come to terms with what we have experienced and move together toward recovery.

I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, to coming together once again to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can’t wait to share it all with you during the coming year.

Cal Performances is back. Welcome home!

Jeremy Geffen
Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances

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