MASON BATES

AFTERLIFE

for mezzo, orchestra & electronica

poetry of Judith Wolf, Emily Dickinson, & Christina Rossetti

10/7/13

AFTERLIFE

commissioned by Judith G. and Edwin H. Wolf
for the Phoenix Symphony

2 flutes (2nd = piccolo)
2 oboes
2 Bb clarinets (2nd = bass clarinet)
2 bassoons (2nd = contrabassoon)

4 horns in F
3 C trumpets
1 tenor trombone
1 bass trombone

laptop *(see performance notes)*
percussion (3 players)

harp
piano / celesta

strings

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The piece requires simply two stereo speakers, placed on the left and right sides of the stage, a few onstage monitors, and any kind of laptop. A monitor placed near the conductor, as well as a few additional monitors placed within the orchestra, will help the performers stay in precise tempo with the electronic part. Please see the tech info.

An assistant conductor or percussionist triggers the sounds on an electronic drumpad (included with rental of materials), following the instructions in the electronic part in the score. No expertise is required from the 'electronic performer,' since the part only involves hitting numbered pads that correspond to rehearsal numbers. Because the electronic part is primarily ambient — and because the score is carefully cued when the electronics become more beat-oriented — a click track is not needed. A live, more performative version of the electronic part can be realized when the composer is present.

Movement titles should be listed in the program as follows:

I. FROM THOSE LEFT BEHIND
II. BITTERSWEET
III. FROM THOSE DEPARTED

I.

A Shade upon the mind there passes
As when on Noon
A Cloud the mighty Sun encloses
Remembering

That some there be too numb to notice
Oh God
Why give if Thou must take away
The Loved?

Emily Dickinson

You left when we couldn't follow
got off at the wrong stop
breathed in a cloud of red dust
dropped off the face of the earth

Pieces of our hearts
kept you company
on your journey
through other worlds

Till you reached the place
of timelessness

and scattered us into the rain.

"Loved One" *by Judith Wolf*

She spoke to me
through sounds of
night

sleepless
I heard
her silence.

"Eva Died" *by Judith Wolf*

I.

A Shade upon the mind there passes
As when on Noon
A Cloud the mighty Sun encloses
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That some there be too numb to notice
Oh God
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"Loved One" *by Judith Wolf*

She spoke to me
through sounds of
night

sleepless
I heard
her silence.

"Eva Died" *by Judith Wolf*

Eugenia

will she

wake to

hover

above

where

inspiration

lost through conversation

penetrates our veins

filling us with

brilliance

Emily Dickinson

'Tis not that Dying hurts us so—
'Tis Living—hurts us more—
But Dying—is a different way—
A kind behind the Door—

The Southern Custom—of the Bird—
That ere the Frosts are due—
Accepts a better Latitude—
We—are the Birds—that stay.

The Shiverers round the Farmers' doors—
For whose reluctant Crumb—
We stipulate—till pitying Snows
Persuade our Feathers Home.

II.

Emily Dickinson

It's easy to invent a Life—
God does it — every Day —
Creation — but the Gambol
Of his Authority—

It's easy to efface it—
The thrifty Deity
Could scarce afford Eternity
To Spontaneity—

The Perished Patterns murmur—
But his Perturbless Plan
Proceed—inserting Here—a Sun—
There—leaving out a Man—

"Don't Let Them Throw Away the Clothes"
by Judith Wolf

He lives in the closet now
among the shoes and shirts,
hanging over the dirty laundry
where he used to toss his
used up pants.

I visit his coat on Monday
but save the tux for Saturday
and then pretend to dance
among a crowd

with only the robe
for company.

III.

"After Death" *by Christina Rossetti*

The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him; but I heard him say:
"Poor child, poor child:" and as he turned away
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:
He did not love me living; but once dead
He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm though I am cold.

Emily Dickinson

I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—

The Stillness in the Room

Was like the Stillness in the Air—

Between the Heaves of Storm—

The Eyes around—had wrung them dry—

And Breaths were gathering firm

For the last Onset—when the King

Be witnessed—in the Room—

I willed my Keepsakes—Signed away

What portion of me be

Assignable—and then it was

There interposed a Fly—

With Blue—uncertain stumbling Buzz—

Between the light—and me—

And then the Windows failed—and then

I could not see to see—

Score in C
Duration: ca. 25'

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I. From those left behind
"A Shade upon the mind"

Emily Dickinson

Mason Bates