



Wrong Ocean for string quartet

| 1. Brack | 1:12 |
|-------------------|------|
| 2. Rush | :48 |
| 3. High water | 1:52 |
| 4. Torrent | :49 |
| 5. Dissolve | :57 |
| 6. Stream | :49 |
| 7. Counterstreams | :47 |
| 8. Feed | :48 |
| 9. Low water | 2:19 |
| 10. Source | :50 |

Cornelius Dufallo, violin Jennifer Choi, violin Lev 'Ljova' Zhurbin, viola Yves Dharamraj, cello

Recorded at EastSide Sound

Blind Huber

| Te | ext by Nick Flynn | |
|----|--------------------------|------|
| | 11. Blind Huber (i) | 1:42 |
| | 12. Swarm | 1:00 |
| | 13. Blind Huber (ii) | 1:38 |
| | 14. Workers (attendants) | 1:20 |
| | 15. Blind Huber (v) | :49 |
| | 16. Geometry | 1:39 |
| | 17. Burnens (i) | 1:58 |
| | | |

David Bloom, conductor Jamie Jordan, soprano Eric Dudley, tenor Kathleen Supové, piano Nadav Lev, guitar Rachel Golub, violin Vasko Dukovski, clarinet Amy Garapic, marimba Daniel Linden, trombone

Recorded at Dubway Studios

18. Seven Testimonies from

The Captain Asks for a Show of Hands
Text by Nick Flynn
Victor Poison-Tete, voice
Anthony Coleman, keyboard
Ron Anderson, guitar
Dave Hofstra, bass
Mike Pride, drums
Guy Barash – digital signal processing

Recorded at EastSide Sound and Studio zOaR

19. **Proteus** - electric monologue 8:24
Text by Nick Flynn
Andrew Struck-Marcell, voice
Guy Barash - digital signal processing

8:53

Blind Huber

Blind Huber (i)

11

Opaque glow where my eyes should be, what remaining light, eyelids thin against it. Soothing, as if all I pass were encrusted in wax, dipped upright—wax bush & wax bench, wax man, wax tea, waxy cup to waxy lips, my eyes now more like their eyes, morning filtered beyond translucence as the acolytes cover their queen. By the sound they will soon swarm, clockwork, the frenzied heat of wings forms droplets on the walls of their city, their city softening, now twisting just out of shape.

Swarm

12

When you see us swarm—rustle of

wingbeat, collapsed air—your mind tries to make us one, a common

intelligence, a single spirit untethered. You imagine us merely searching out the next

vessel, anything

that could contain us, as if the hive were just another jar. You try

to hold the ending, this unspooling, make it either

zero or many, lack

of flurry. **I was born**, you begin, & already each word makes you smaller. Look at this field—

Cosmos. **Lungwort**. Utter each & break

into thousand versions of yourself.

You can't tell your stories fast enough. The answer is not one, but also

not two.

Blind Huber (ii

13

I sit in a body & think of a body, I picture
Burnens' hands, my words
make them move. I say, plunge them into the hive,
& his hands go in. If I said,
put your head inside,
he would wear it. Think of my body, every day
the same chair, angled
thus, Burnens
every day, think of his body, think of
a hive, each bee, each thought, the hive
brims with thought. Move it into shade, I think,
& the body moves to shade. Whose
fingers, which word, each surges
from inside my head, but always returns
as Burnens.

Workers (attendants)

14

Nights we lie beside her, our mouths at her belly, counting

her breaths, the buzz, the gathering, long done. We all began inside her, like those lined up

inside her now, mere idea of ourselves unborn. We wash her body

ceaselessly, move our tongues until all her hairs loosen. She

roams the brood, finds another empty cell

& fills it. Morning comes & she calms us, keeps us inside until the dew burns off. This sodden

world. All winter

we huddled around her, kept her warm. Those on the outside, those farthest from her, died

first, their legs gripped the others like a shawl.

Blind Huber (v)

15

Before shadows I saw the rose, saw its thorn, a bee navigating, never impaled. I no longer know what is outside my mind & what is in.

Geometry

16

Essential, with heaven nearly empty of

stars, with mountains still rising from plains,

like music,

only it can't be heard.

Before wax

we'd use it to build, carve pine resin into cells,

fields within hollow trees, hexagons wired into

our sleep. Vein

of amber, ploughed under by ice—golden lozenge—

we are still inside.

Burnens (i)

what is seen.

17

Never a question of saying, the end never named. His words move my hand, he speaks then listens, the lid pried free, the brood-hum now open to the sky.

They have a very nice sense of proportion
& the space required for the movement of bodies. My ruler measures the gap, I count each worker
& feed him the number. His words move my hands, but I name

Seven Testimonies

three a.m.—I woke up I asked why—my

children, my family, my leg. What happened

next? Outside on

my head & my hands, it was cold, rainy,

a tent, there were others, I heard

my brother, cold water at night, they let me go

once, my hands were always laughing.

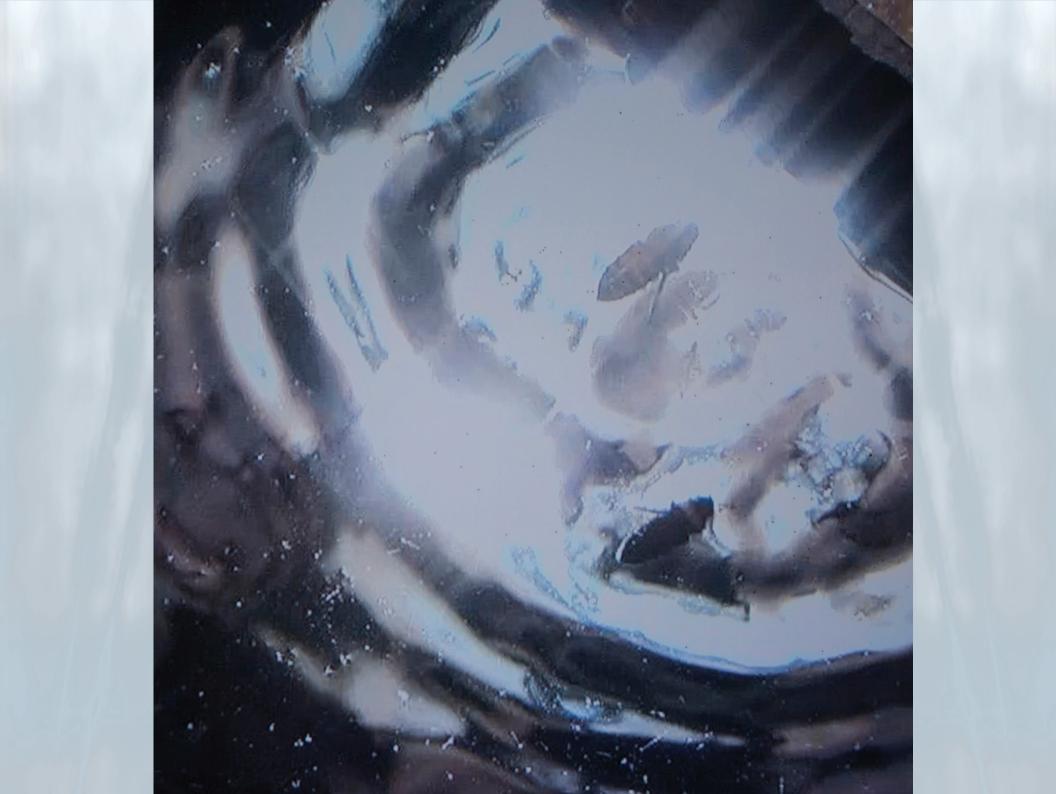
2.

One blanket under & one to myself, & fifteen days of food.

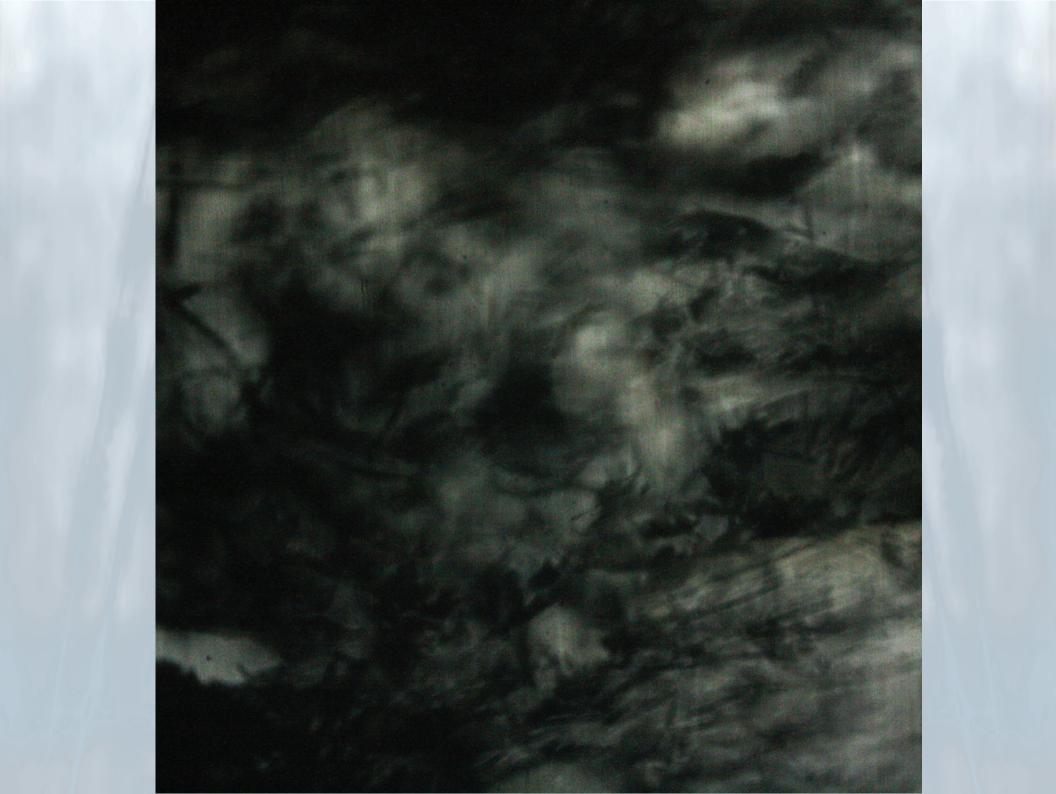
One man had a heart, he asked for a pill to put under his tongue. They

released a dog, it bit a broomstick, they said they knew I was

innocent. My house was on luck, they woke me at three



| & gave me summer clothes. We threw stones & peed, | 5. On the way to the toilet count five & pee—no one | 7. Did you ever see? Yes. Did this happen? Yes. |
|---|---|---|
| we all lasted until six | | |
| 3. | told me why. One night I woke up, they chose | Do you recognize this? Yes, I saw she had |
| For twenty-two days, one other thing happened—I did not | & start giving, I had five to forget— | a sister. Did you ever see? Where |
| have a beard. That night in | | |
| that tent, one on each | they gave me three more. | did this happen? In the showers? Did you do this, |
| side, the photographer | Forty days later & he was | |
| lifted the ground. The next day | the one, he took the body of | to be with men? Yes. Yes. Yes. I had to do |
| to Garso, a cold tank of | the dead to the gates | |
| water, sometimes | | this, I was naked, yes, |
| | 6. | she came to me & wanted |
| with ice, they were going | I am a farmer, twenty-two on the | |
| & coming | ground—my hands, my feet | me. Did you see this cloth? Did you see this |
| & then they went back, I | his fists, his blood, the cell & | |
| tried to find myself all night. | | cloth? Do you know |
| | the hood. They told me to | |
| 4. | undress. I removed my underwear | where this was? Do you recognize |
| I had a beard, they were men | | this? Do you? Did you? |
| with beards, who looked like | I walked naked in front | |
| I T | The door closed to breathe | |
| I remember. Two | 11 11- | |
| dava latar agreembara alaa a dag | the door opened a crack | |
| days later, somewhere else, a dog barking, I remember those days. | The third day would want | |
| Two others | the third day she want | |
| TWO Officis | the third day she want | |
| were also there. They said, | my hand outstretched—to kiss, | |
| Did that happen to you? I | to touch— | |
| remember | | |
| | until I could see & was still | |
| two days, laughing | | |
| | | |



Proteus

18

Call me Proteus. I live at the bottom of a steep cliff, down a treacherous path, at the edge of the sea. You can see me from the top of the cliff, lolling on a flat rock, staring into the endless nothing of the sea, but to reach me is difficult. You've been told that I have the answer to your question, and you are a little desperate to have this question answered. As you make your way down, you must be careful not to dislodge any loose gravel, careful not to cry out when the thorns pierce your feet. You must approach me as quietly as you can, get right up on me, get your hands on me, around my neck. You've been told that you have to hold on while you ask your question, you've been told that you can't let go. You've been told that as you hold on I will transform into the shape and form of that which most terrifies you, in order to get you to release your grip. But the promise is that if you can hold on, through your fear, I will return to his real form, and answer your question.

2.

Here's a secret: everyone, if they live long enough, will lose their way at some point. You will lose your way, you will wake up one morning and find yourself lost. This is a hard, simple truth. If it hasn't happened to you yet consider yourself lucky. When it does, when one day you look around and nothing is recognizable, when you find yourself alone in a dark wood having lost the way, you may find it easier to blame it on someone else—an errant lover, a missing father, a bad childhood. Or it may be easier to blame the map you were given—folded too many times, out of date, tiny print. But, if you are honest, you will only be able to blame yourself. If you are lucky, you will remember a story you heard as

a child, the trick of leaving a trail of breadcrumbs through the woods, the idea being that after whatever it is that is going to happen in those woods has happened, you can then retrace your steps, find your way back out.

3

The question, then, is not how Proteus knows what most terrifies you, but how it has come to pass that you don't recognize your own innermost fears. Maybe Proteus is simply another name for "shadow"—the shadow you drag behind you with every step, except when you walk in darkness, when you yourself become the shadow.

4

One form I take, as you hold onto me with your question, as I refuse to answer your question, as I try to terrify you into loosening your grip, as I try to terrify you by changing into the shape of that which most terrifies you, one of these terrifying forms that I change into is a waterfall.

A waterfall? Who's afraid of a waterfall?

5

Here, God says, here is your cupful of days.

If you don't believe in God, you still get your cupful of days. Some will be spent making love, some will be spent high, some will be spent reading Ulysses, and some will be spent alone. Some will be spent around a table, a meal about to be passed, a steaming bowl of rice, some sauteed kale. It's someone's birthday, someone you have known for ten, no twenty, years. To your right is a woman you slept with seven years ago—at the time you thought it might work out, but it didn't. Across from you is the woman you are with now, and at this point it could be forever, whatever that means.

Some of the days you are given will be spent in a strange city, and at the end of the day you will know that you have spoken to no one except the girl you got your coffee from, no one except her. There will always be days like this.

6

Let's just accept that I know your innermost fear, and that I play on these fears, hoping you will let go, hoping you will give up, hoping you will stop asking your question, hoping you will lose hope. This, then, is a vision of me, of Proteus, as both torturer and tortured. I play on your fears, I want you to lose hope, but at the same time you are the one with your hands around my neck, asking your question.

7

Some Buddhists believe that as you wander through the bardo, that realm between living and dying, you will encounter the physical manifestations of that which terrifies you, over and over they will appear before you—this is your karmic debt, and only those who are enlightened will walk unafraid. Some believe that enlightenment often comes at the moment of death, just as it can often come at the moment of birth. Most of us, though spend our given time— our handful of hours, our teaspoonful of years—hovering between these two poles, muddying the water. Monkey-mind, some call it. Samsara.

8

A friend tells this, perhaps apocryphal, story: while living in Hawaii, a volcano erupted, and after the initial blast, which destroyed the top of the mountain and everything else in the vicinity, the lava continued to ooze slowly out, over the next several months, so slowly that you could walk up to the wall of it, put your hand on it, feel its warmth. How high was it? I imagine twenty feet, more or less. So high you'd have to tilt your head back to see the sky. The town my friend

was staying in was downhill, spared the initial blast, but the lava kept coming. Then the scientists came, to calculate its movement, to predict how long it would take to reach the village, to mark which house would be the first to be swallowed beneath the slow-motion wave. Is this better than a flood, better than a fire? It gives you time to move out what you most value, time to move everything, if you are able. If you are able you could move the entire house, but I had the idea that the island was small, the village against the sea, the only option would be to uproot the house and put it on a raft and float it to the next island. I had the idea that most simply went each day to the wall of lava, put their hands to it, hoped it would slow down, hoped it would run out of juice, hoped it would simply stop.

a

Here I am—the maniac tied to the chair before me is Proteus. I've been told that a bomb is about to go off, potentially killing hundreds, or even thousands, of innocent people. As I hold onto Proteus, as I ask him my question, as I listen for his answer, he transforms—into a dog on a leash, into a man dancing with panties on his head, into a bruise, into a madman, into a waterfall, into a cockroach in a bowl of rice. Into a man strapped into a chair, into thirty men strapped into thirty chairs, refusing to eat, thirty tubes forced down their noses.

So here I am, my fingers tight around Proteus's neck, asking my same question, over and over, as if the answer exists, inside the maniac, inside the prisoner, inside the beloved, inside my mother, inside my father, inside me, as if the answer is there and just needs to be released.

And so here I am, holding my own head, dunking it into a bathtub full of water, repeating a meaningless question over and over, knowing that I will never get the question right.

And here I am, holding my breath, and then letting it go.

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Images by Jared Handelsman. Used by permission. They are taken from his video projections for **Blind Huber**.

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