

ANNUNCIATION

an opera

libretto by olivia ephraim pepper
music by david carlton adams

CHARACTERS:

LILY, a human being, suffering

THE STRANGER, summoned & stricken

VOX SINGULARIS, the voice of god

VOX ANGELIS, the chorus of angels

GOD

ACT I, SCENE II

[LILY, solitary, minimally lit, lights candle]

[VOX ANGELIS, unlit, contribute from the shadows]

LILY:

alone
always alone
but tonight, behold me spirits, i am alone

the moon is black and faceless
just like the book says that it should be -
every new moon is a strange man
hiding in the shadows of the sky

[LILY startles, orchestra clamor]

[VOX ANGELI I vocalizes]

LILY:

wind,
only wind

see, my heart still works
beats like a drum
why was i ever so — stupid

LILY: VOX

everybody warned me
please, if you don't mind
told me not to go
i think i had too much to drink
but i let me call a car honor
it has been such an honor
ever the adventuress honor
i have to go
always trying something new...
at first i didn't know
but i have the hospital records from the next day

and now.....

i will cast the circle
just like the old book said
i will fill it with roses
and symbols of the dead
i will shake the bell
i will make the call [vowels]
i will burn the candles to their nubs
walk seventy-seven times
with salt spilling from my hands

there! i speak the name i never want to hear again
[rapid speech of many names]

there! i make myself ashamed
[chorus sobs and keens and whimpers]
my heart flies

there! i am at the edge of things
no more room
the edge of things
wind, only wind [noisy, unvoiced]

and so tonight
the moon is black
tonight
the stars are hidden [aaah]
my hands are full of tears i cannot cry

and i
i cast the circle (weakening)
i speak the words (growing tearful)

bring back my power to me
stolen as it was

take away the fear

i petition for mercy (mercy) (in unison)
i petition for revenge.....

the dawn is nearly here
someone's painted the horizon
i have waited,
listened
_ heard not a thing
but the wind
and my heart
losing

it is empty
lost
I am alone

ACT II, SCENE X

[LILY, suddenly enchanted with the actuality of her decision]

[THE STRANGER, standing in the fullness of his dark luminance]

LILY: if, what you say is true...
[suspicious] what of broken promises i knew?

THE STRANGER: there is no such place as trust
you know this by now...

LILY [becoming furious and defensive]:
your words are empty
you only speak freely
because you have never had a hand on your throat

this punishment goes
on like a trail of blood
across the snow

voiceless, they have made me

THE STRANGER: then speak!
let the fingers 'round your neck turn to dust!

[THE STRANGER holds out his hand and over the next few lines, LILY very slowly moves her hand from her throat into a handshake with him]

LILY: i would turn them all to ashes in their beds

THE STRANGER: this and more can be done

LILY: a hundredfold sufferings

THE STRANGER: thousandfold if you will it so

LILY:
my name my name tattooed upon their torn-out tongues

THE STRANGER: their fingers will be dead man's candles,

LILY: all shall behold me

THE STRANGER: their eyes will melt like ice in spring
when the world is born anew
all their doings will slip away

LILY: and die

[THEY JOIN HANDS]

LILY:
i can hear already

the quiet of it all
the peace

the new world will be made upon a battlefield with lilies
sprouting from the hasty graves

the emptiness in me
floods the whole of what i know
_ to winnow it to nothing
_ to make it into nothing
like i was made into nothing

[THE STRANGER MAY JOIN (A BIT) IN SUPPORT]

once a worthless girl among many faceless girls
i shall be the queen of heaven
crown'd in crimson stars of war
they will never sleep again

THE STRANGER: or if they do

THE STRANGER & LILY (in unison, or alternating):
we shall craft such nightmares for them
 all the suicides forced by their bejeweled hands
rain death upon their own sons
 let them watch these dead girls
 whose names were never known
punish the punishers with their own sins
 their daughters made wretched before them
glory in the unmaking of them
glory in the unmaking
glory
glory in the blood
glory