



FRIDAY FEBRUARY 18TH, 2022 & SATURDAY FEBRUARY 19TH. 2022

THE CEDAR CULTURAL CENTER

All photos courtesy to Buck Holzemer.

416 Cedar Avenue S, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55454



CARLISLE EVANS PECK (THEY/HE)

ICONOCLASM

CONTENT WARNING:

These stories contain references to domestic abuse and suicide.

The Band:

Peter Morrow - guitars
 Willow Waters - acoustic bass
 Tarek Abdelqader - drums
 Sarah Larsson - vocals, auxiliary instruments
 Emma Evans Peck - vocals

Set design by Olli Johnson and Pete Talbot
Digital backdrops by Bryce Burton

Special Thanks:

My parents, my grandparents, and my ancestors, known and unknown, for their stories. And to the Cedar for their faith and support. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to bring this work into the world.

Songs Performed:

1. Prologue
2. Love Like A Freight Train
3. Ash To Ash
4. The Phoenix of Orange Township
5. Take It or Leave It
6. All Coming Home
7. Epilogue

*"And all shall be well and
 All manner of thing shall be well
 When the tongues of flames are in-
 folded
 Into the crowned knot of fire
 And the fire and the rose are one."
 - T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding*

Iconoclasm is the creation of a mythology. A reimagining of history. An ancestor cabaret. These songs give voice to forgotten or suppressed queer ancestors whose stories could not to be sung in their own time. In these pieces I draw inspiration from the stories of five of my own ancestors, singing a familial folklore in which I can see myself and my own experience reflected, and which I hope can be a beacon for queer descendants. My friend and collaborator Bryce Burton said to me once "folklore is time travel". Here, time past, time present, and time future are one. The fire, and the rose, are one. Such is the work of the bards far back in my Welsh ancestry, the holders of myth and legend in song. This is not history in a textbook or factual sense.

(Continued on page 5)



NYTTU CHONGO (HE/HIM)

NKOVU WA XIVAVU

Special Thanks:

I would like to thank God for the gift of life and my ancestors for the honor to be able to share our tradition with many different people. Third, I would like to thank all who collaborated with me on this work: Karin, Jason, Mikaela, and Svetlana brought energy and passion to this project. I want to thank my wife Erin Olson for her selfless support. A special thanks to the Cedar Cultural Center for this opportunity to express ourselves as artists and individuals.

Collaborators:

Mikaela Marget - Cello
 Jason Burak - Cello
 Svetlana Davis - Viola
 Karin Valdizan - Violin

Songs Performed (with instrument featured):

Sinyanguena (I've Arrived) - Xingoviaya
 Pfulani ti Dleve (Open your Ears) - Xitende
 Xlhokonono (Oppression) - Inanga
 Kokandindasse (The Press-Wheel Roller) -
 Inanga
 Ubuntu (Come Together) - Inanga

Nyttu Chongo is a musician and composer from Maputo, Mozambique who was raised living with music woven into everyday life. In his original work *Nkovu Wa Xivavu*, which means "A Celebration of Pain," Chongo weds the voices of Central, Southern, and West Africa through the inanga, xitende, and kora. These iconic and disappearing African string instruments from three distinct regions of the continent (Rwanda/Burundi, Mozambique, and Senegal) have never been played together in a single work. By featuring these instruments with deep African soul together at the heart of this improvised and spirit-led piece, "Nkovu Wa Xivavu" sings of an Africa divided with the opportunity to rediscover itself, illustrated through thin individual strings woven together to become a stronger, united continent.



MADDIE THIES (SHE/HER)

EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE

Special Thanks:

To my parents for their constant support.

To my collaborators.

To the members of Ginny & The Fizz; Jarod Schiebout, Michael Shannon, and Eric LeBlanc.

To all the conductors and musical leaders I have gotten the opportunity to study under, especially Pat Kelly, Stacey Aldrich, and Marion Statton.

To my friends and family, the Twin Cities and global music community, to the Jerome Foundation and The Cedar Cultural Center for this opportunity.

Collaborators:

Tate Egon - vocals, guitar

Cory Grider - guitar

Juan Miguez - drums

Songs Performed (in no particular order):

Postcard Collection

LA Shadows

Ocean Viens

Im Okay

Home Tonight

Down The Line

Mourning Song

Where do we belong? Growing up in between international cultures, Maddie found this question especially hard to answer. Maddie Thies, a queer Twin Cities bassist, was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota but grew up in Seoul, South Korea, and thus, identifies as a Third Culture Kid (TCK) - a person who spent their formative years growing up in a country different from that of their origin. While each TCK experience is personal, we can all relate to the need to belong.

To bring additional perspectives to this multifaceted identity, Maddie collaborates with recording artist Tate Egon Chavez (Egon), who himself was born in Los Angeles and raised in Singapore. Additional music support will be provided by drummer Juan Miguez, himself a TCK, and from Cory Grider.

“Everywhere and Nowhere” explores feelings of liminality, nostalgia, grief, culture shock, and a fractured sense of identity. The artists explore their fluid self images through vulnerable storytelling, creating a space for personal reflection and empathy.

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Certainly, factually speaking, my ancestry must contain gay soldiers, lesbian lovers, trans farmers, and drag queens like those spoken of here, but the five individuals who inspired these songs may not be them. As is often the way with mythologies - nuggets of factual history become the seed of a new lens that illuminates and uplifts unnamed and lost voices of the past, shifting the narrative for the future, creating truths far beyond factuality. I grew up unable to see myself in the family histories told around the holiday table. I do not wish that feeling of otherness on my descendants. Our world is built on stories, and it is earth-shaking to see oneself reflected in those stories - to be able to say "yes, me too!".

Lyrics:

"Prologue"

Come - come awake by the sea, by the sea
Braided brambles, gray cockles lying at our feet
Dawn is gathering in the east

I will stand with the tide rolling in, rolling in
Hear the laughter of the waves carried on the wind
And the voices of all my kin
As their numberless songs begin

And the wind turns the hair on their heads just as
mine

Ages before, ages hence
And their feet dance in the waves, and the sand
coats their hands
My mothers, my fathers, my children

Grandmother, grandmother rings of pearls in her
hair

And the silver of the moon a raiment rare
For a mantle the starlight fair

Arising, the horizon your earthly throne
Walking edges turning sea into sky and foam
In one hand a red red rose
In the other a knife of bone

And the wind turns the hair on her head just as
mine

Ages before, ages hence
And her feet dance in the waves, and the sand coats
her hands

My mothers, my fathers, my children

Set the blade to the blossom, petals fly from her
hand

Transforming into rosehips falling on the sand
Tears of garnet strewn along the strand

Build a fire, boil water, gather up the fruits
Drink the thicker warming liquor before it cools
What remains shall sprout and root

While in slumber so the roses shall grow and vine
While in dream so unfolding is my garden fine
A thicket, a glade, a shrine

So now this final spell is cast
And the present is surrounded, held by the past
As the fruit enfolds the seed
As time begins to bleed
Do not be afraid - she will lead

And the wind turns the hair on our heads, all in time
Ages before, ages hence

And our feet dance in the waves, and the sand coats
our hands

My mothers, my fathers, my children
My mothers, my fathers, my children

"Love like A Freight Train"

The story of my great-great grandfather David Evans' tragic death in 1906 at 23, with his only child (my great-grandfather) barely a month old, is legendary in my family. Walking to work with his brother-in-law, they were caught on the railroad trestle over the Mississippi River by an oncoming train. George scrambled out onto a pier and held on while David tried to outrun the train to no avail. This song uses that tragedy as a backdrop for a covert romance between two young men, cut terribly short.

Davey said: don't drink the water, don't lose your
head -

With a child at home, one more on the way, your
love in your bed

I know the work ain't easy, rail dust on your skin
But darling you look more handsome than you've
ever been

Davey imagine if I could love you like her
Imagine if we could be more than a pair of feral curs
A den of foxes hidden in the rail ties
Tunnels threatening collapse beneath the heavy lies

Just give it time

Davey don't quit me, you know I can't do this alone
My steps are more labored and lame with each
passing day in the sun
Summer sows her blisters on my tongue
And God and all his angels could never right this
wrong

And we ain't got time

Barefoot on gravel, the heat of the day on our backs
Swear the trains only run one way down these
tracks

Smell like cinders and river and sweat
As if I didn't know the end that you were getting at
As if I didn't know how to feel
With the deafening swell rising close at our heels
With the grit of your hand on the small of my back
Who will turn, who will run, who will leap into the
blackness

There are no shortcuts to life
Only shortcuts to death

"Ash to Ash"

Ella "Bess" Ernst (1899-1931) was always told about as a pitifully tragic figure. She died by suicide - gas asphyxiation - and she was discovered by my grandfather, her five year old nephew. Family lore has it that my grandfather climbed through a window into the gas filled house and his father, a chronic chain smoker, had to break the door down. He had just put out his cigarette on the stoop. Bess left behind an 11 year old son - Carl "Sonny" Welch - my grandfather's closest friend. She also apparently had a husband, the child's father, but I can find no record of his whereabouts after this point. Bess is buried with her parents, and Sonny

went to live with his Aunt and Uncle. His story was never mentioned. My grandfather's telling, no doubt deeply rooted in this childhood trauma, was full of judgment. This song instead imagines Bess's perspective.

I know you thought that these legs could never carry
me

After all - you had the gall to up and marry me
Hands heavy on my neck, tried to bury me
Honey, I did that myself - tread carefully

This ain't the calm before the storm, this ain't a
warning

I'm the destroyer, I'm a rip tide forming
I hit the ground and I'll never stop running
Find the father of this baby and I'll do him in...

Ash to ash, dust to dust
I'm more than one man's lust
I'm more than I can trust
I want everything or nothing

Watch me close, watch me careful, let me out of
your sight
And who knows what I'll get up to when you turn
out the lights
Is it surprising that I'd put up a fight?
It's either him or it's me - somebody's dying tonight

Give me a hope I won't know how to use
Give me a rope and I'll fashion a noose
Gave me a child that I'm bound to lose

Save one life - Put an end to me and you

Ash to ash, dust to dust
There's no "should", only "must"
My baby needs better than rot and rust

I'll give him everything or nothing

Got my baby on my arm, got his bruises on my back
Got the lipstick of my lover on a letter in my pack
Got the memory of the night you showed up drunk
and jack-
Knifed her up against the wall, tore the pearls off
her neck

Ran to the kitchen for the shotgun
I've got nothing to lose, and too much to outrun
If it's the last thing I do I'll save my son
And if I must die - well a mother does what must be
done.

Breathe in, breathe out just like the tides
The choking stab your only bride
No more a lady, no more a wife
No more a mother, no more a blight

Hush, love - don't scare the child
Sink deeper, deeper into the wild
And flooding arms, the vapor kiss
Passing... passing... passing... passing

WAIT

Who is this pounding at the door
Cigarette between fingers
Put it out
Put it out
PUT IT OUT

"The Phoenix of Orange Township"

I went with my father to find the gravesites of his ancestors last spring. These burial sites are scattered in tiny, hidden cemeteries throughout the Western Illinois countryside - overgrown with ancient rose bushes, peonies, and iris. On that outing, we found the gravestone of his great uncle Ralph Peck (1890-1968), buried with his parents, died a bachelor. My father vaguely remembers Ralph as a kind, quiet soul often not present at holidays or gatherings, seemingly ostracized. It's accounts like this that raise a whole host of questions. What is the subtext here? This wondering led me to think on the experience of a trans person in turn-of-the-century rural Illinois.

Three legged dog in the middle of the street
Three mailboxes downstream
Big flood's coming - can you feel it in the heat

Corn stalks tall enough to hide in
'Least knee high by the fourth of July, been
Waiting all summer long to catch your eye

Tell me is it right - tell me is it wrong to want to fly?
With these god-given bodies don't we have to try?
Tell me is it right - tell me is it wrong to watch the
flood take this all away?

The looks are hard, the lash is strong
Too many stakes to leash us on
Too many scars to count - a contest no one wants to
win

Losing ain't much better off
Caged in like a state fair hog
Is this the only choice for folks like us?

Tell me is it right - tell me is it wrong to want to die?
With this god-forsaken body, lord knows how I've
tried

Tell me is it right - tell me is it wrong to watch the
fire burn this all away

I'm an old sow roasting on a spit in the yard
Skin will crackle, bones hard will break
I'm a wildfire, I am the phoenix of this town

Dress me in a skirt of flame
My sunday best, my blessed change
Transcendence is my middle name
Descendants wear my crown

Tell me is it worth a damn to hope for better down
the line
With no child to my name what right have I?
Child I'll never know, long after I die
You are mine

All I want for you is home

"Take It or Leave It"

Mae Wilson (1892--1992), my grandfather's great aunt, is a fabulously looming figure in my family lore. An actress, a singer, and a diva to the core, she sang with jazz bands on the river, tried to make it in the budding movie business in Hollywood, held lavish parties at her Illinois home until the very end of her life, and famously told of how Little Ronald Reagan got his start as a child actor performing on the radio with her.

*Mae is, for all intents and purposes, my drag mother.
She's central to my queer identity. This song is for
her - a queen passed on, thinking of what remains
beneath the veneer of living.*

The flowers on the table
I can see they bloom
Been waiting here since Sunday
But baby not for you
I tell you, I'm trying
To get away

The echoes in my chambers
Throw a crystal flare
I see my reflection aging
A stranger in the mirror
I tell you she's crying
But she won't go away

Wash away the mascara
Wipe away the tears
Wash off all the rouge
Wash away the fear
Now tell me what's left of me
When it all falls away?

I'm not getting any younger
Neither is my dog
Am I just a flash in the pan
Or a slow roasting log?
I tell you I ain't dying
But I will die someday

Throw away my crystal
Pour out the champagne
Washed out by the spotlight

Watch it all go down the drain
Tell me what's left of me
When it all falls away

Tell me what's left
What have I got left?
You can't take it with you when you go

This is all that's left of me

Take it or leave it

"All Coming Home"

My true love came to my garden gate
Fool in love, fool apart
His silver eyes bewitching
He ambled up the darkened lane
So long away, so far beyond
His footfalls barely sounding

So long away you've been my love
Fool in love, fool apart

Many letters I've penned you
How the waves have battered your face, my love
So long away, so far beyond
So many nights I've mourned you

I pressed my mouth to his cold lips
Fool in love, fool apart
The briney sea upon them
What trembling chill was in his kiss
So long away, so far beyond
That never could I hold him

Now he's taken my hand, my own true love
Fool in love, fool apart
His weathered palms fair freezing
And he's led me down the darkened lane
So long away, so far beyond
Our footfalls barely sounding

Brother mine, my brother dear,
The only kin I've left I fear
Hold close my tale, hold tight the gift
And while the tides of time do sift
Carry my word to the last of your days
War at an end - love in the light of day
All coming home

"Epilogue"

What do we become:
The root?
The rose?
The silent seed?
Or all three?

WELCOME TO THE CEDAR COMMISSIONS

The Cedar Commissions is a flagship program for local emerging artists made possible with a grant from the Jerome Foundation. Since the program began in 2011, the Commissions have showcased new work by over 60 Minnesotan emerging artists in Minnesota. Artists receive \$3,500 plus a \$1,000 production stipend to create and premiere 30 minutes of new music at The Cedar Cultural Center.

In the second and now third year of the COVID-19 pandemic where shifts in daily life have been ever-present, these artists have been riding the waves. They've been composing, exploring new ideas, and assembling teams of musicians to bring their work to fruition in a mix of virtual and in-person work sessions. Over the two nights of the Eleventh Annual Cedar Commissions, audience members will witness performances about uncovering hidden truths of one's ancestors, uniting African music traditions across drawn lines, illuminating the Third Culture Kid experience, pushing oneself to the ultimate limit, the relational process of self discovery, honoring the disrespected beauty of our planet, and so much more.

Are you a musician or composer interested in applying for a Cedar Commission? Application guidelines for the 2022-23 round will be posted on our website (www.thecedar.org/cedar-commissions) on Monday, May 2nd.

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